

Ely City Council Special Meeting September 19, 2011

The Ely City Council Special Town Hall Meeting was called to order by Mayor Skraba at 4:00 p.m. on September 19, 2011 at the Ely Senior Center.

PRESENT: Council members Nikkola (left at 5:11pm), Omerza, Salerno, Sheddy, Mayor Skraba (5)

ABSENT: Debeltz and Zupec (2)

OTHERS PRESENT: Arrowhead Transit Representatives: Jack Larson (Director), Pam Smith, Joe Gentile and School Superintendent, Kim Belcastro (arrived at 4:14pm)

The purpose of the meeting was to gather public input on the reduction of days of service by the AEOA transit authority in the City of Ely.

Jack Larson from AEOA stated that for the past four years there has been no additional funding for the Arrowhead Transit Bus System and with sustained high fuel costs and system wide cut backs, they are only able to offer two days a week in Ely at this time. They have a \$4.53M budget of which \$1.8M comes from federal funding through MNDOT, \$2.3M comes from the state and \$740,000 comes through contracts, fare boxes and other donations.

Cost quotes to run the bus include:

1. \$138,125 per year to run the bus in Ely five days a week for 5 ½ hours each day.
2. \$65/hr to run the bus or \$552.50 per day including travel time between Ely and Gilbert, where the bus is stationed.
3. \$18,000 for the year to add one more day to the bus schedule.
4. The cost to train a bus driver includes: 28 hrs classroom time, 8 hrs behind the wheel and 2 hrs for a physical and drug test which comes to \$684.34 (38 hrs @ \$11.43/hr plus \$250 for the physical & drug test).

Mr. Larson also stated that there seems to be quite a turnover of drivers so the cost of training per year can become quite significant. Also, maintenance on the buses needs to be done by an approved DOT maintenance mechanic. The additional costs involved in order to finish a route when a bus breaks down was a big concern with Mr. Larson.

Several Ely residents voiced their concerns and ideas on the situation which included:

1. 5 days a week was not necessary. They would be fine with Monday, Thursday and Friday of each week.
2. Organizations within the community could give financial support for this service.
3. The bus could be housed in Ely, use city gas, and hire Ely driver. This would save the cost of the bus traveling between Gilbert and Ely every day which came to a \$200/day savings.
4. City could cover the cost of training drivers.
5. Not just senior citizens ride the bus but also students for college and Headstart, people going to and from work, and the handicapped.

Mayor Skraba and Council member Salerno thanked everyone for coming and asked that any additional ideas or questions be submitted to the City Clerk's Office. They also stated that they would meet further with Jack Larson and discuss the possibility of adding one or two more days to their route in Ely and the most cost efficient way to get this done.

The meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Terri Boese
Clerk/Treasurer