

Ely City Council Public Hearing Minutes – February 25, 2013

The Ely City Council Public Hearing was called to order by Mayor Petersen at 6:00 p.m. on February 25, 2013 at the Ely Senior Center, 27 S 1st Ave E, Ely MN.

PRESENT: Council members Kess, Nikkola, Omerza, Polyner, Sheddy, and Mayor Petersen (6)

ABSENT: Council member Debeltz (1)

Introduction: Mayor Petersen stated that this was the 1st of 3 public meetings. Tonight's meeting will be mainly to discuss the accessibility of the Community Center and City Hall and to discuss the cost of renovating the old buildings and making them ADA compliant. There will also be a recap on the various building options.

Attorney Klun discussed the ADA Law (Americans with Disabilities) and how it applies to the City of Ely. The law was enacted to protect those with disabilities to be able to access public buildings in order to conduct business. Cities with less than 50 employees must comply with the ADA Law by making special exceptions for those who wish to access the city's public buildings. The City of Ely complies with this law by allowing citizens who need special assistance to call City Hall with their request and special arrangements will be made for that person to conduct their business in a timely fashion.

Tony Mancuso, St Louis County Property Manager Director, relayed to the public the process they went through to make their buildings ADA compliant. They were the first public agency to go through Project Civic Access with the Dept of Justice which took three years and approximately One million dollars to complete.

Clerk Langowski discussed the current building costs & the utilization of each building. The Community Center and City Hall have a combined square footage of 53,000 which costs \$540/day to heat. Only 1/3 of the Community Center and 3/4 of City Hall are being utilized. According to a 2008 Space Study, 37,000sqft of space is needed to house the necessary departments currently using the Community Center & City Hall. At that time, the cost to build a new building was \$7.487 million.

Introduction to Building Alternatives: Mayor Petersen stated that the public is welcome to come to City Hall to look at the proposed options plans for the buildings.

Clerk Langowski gave a review of previous facility recommendations:

- 2004- \$710,000 cost to make the Community Center ADA compliant
- 2005- \$200,000 was spent on CC Stone Repair
- 2005- estimate \$4.35 million to fix the CC roof, windows and mechanical system
- 2009- introduced option to build new complex on the Old City Garage site at 50 W White St
- 2009- the City debt limit was \$5.5 million
- 2011- the City debt limit was \$5 million (\$1 million was in bond debt)
- 2013- the City tasked JPJ Engineering to work on options for renovating existing buildings estimated needed space of 20,000 sqft

Open Forum:

Speakers and their comments:

Joe Folio:

- I'd like to see the old buildings saved if possible.
- Joint Maintenance facility is too far out of town for walking convenience.

Pam Brunfult: (Pattison St)

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- It would be sad if the Buildings were lost. They hold great architecture. The \$4 million should be put into renovating the old buildings which are valuable and hold historical significance.
- The Community Center is underutilized because there is no elevator.
- The community needs a gathering place.
- ISD 2142 built a new building which now costs more to maintain and heat than their old buildings. Sometimes new is not necessarily better.

Matt Favet: (Pioneer Rd)

- I am opposed to abandoning the old buildings
- The City has over 100,000sqft of abandoned buildings. Is this what we want our city to look like? Is there a plan for the old buildings?

Barb Schultz: (Harvey St)

- City Hall should not be moved.

Todd DeNio: (Camp St)

- The cost to rent the Community Center is too high. The building could be rented out to vendors for a permanent flea market. Each vendor could pay \$40/day. This could potentially raise \$200,000/yr for the building repairs.
- A boiler house could be built on the old clinic lot which would then heat City Hall, the Community Center and possibly the Post Office.

Angela Campbell: (Chapman St)

- The heart cry of the citizens of the City is to save the old buildings.

Celia Domich: (Van Vac Rd)

- The old buildings give the City structure and a sense of permanence. We have solid functional buildings that hold historic value. Saving the buildings would be saving the town and if we did that, we would be doing something great.
- The Community Center is also one of the “safe” places for the public to go to in an emergency.
- The state offers ADA funding which the City could apply to receive. They would have to match the funds.
- The City needs to find alternative strategies and possibly build partnerships with the surrounding communities.

Phil Hogan: (Little Long Lake)

- The City discourages the use of the Community Center by the short hours it is open and by being closed on Saturdays.
- If the City builds new buildings, then the plan should include what will happen to the old buildings.
- Why is the City not looking to the other Townships for help? Both entities need attitude adjustments.

Joe Owens: (Eagles Nest)

- The Library needs to be an ongoing part of the community. It needs 3 full time employees and should be open longer hours and on Saturday.
- The Friends of the Library has 469 membership units. They raise between \$18,000 & \$20,000 per year. They have purchased many things for the library including: the book drop; books; tapes; shelving; computers. They have saved \$130,000 which they will put toward the new or renovated library building once the City has a definite plan.

Kayla Tedrick: (Camp St)

- The main concern should be making all buildings ADA compliant.

Jeff Sundell: (Morse)

- A Feasibility Study is being done for a Community Complex and should be presentable to the public by April or May of 2013. There are 6,250 people within a 12 mile radius of the City.

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Jim Lah: (Harvey St)

- Clarified that the re-roof on the Community Center costs \$117,500.
- Asked for the cost to make City Hall ADA compliant. Clerk estimated \$800,000-\$900,000.
- Would the City want proposals and ideas written down and turned in before the next public meeting? (The Mayor said “yes”)

Greg Mangold: (Hematite)

- The costs of living in the City limits
- We can only work from today forward and we should leave history in the past.
- The citizens need to bring their ideas and concerns to their town supervisors.

Thea Sheldon: (Chapman St)

- More emphasis needs to be placed on energy efficiency whether renovating or building new.

Bill Kray: (Conan St)

- New buildings could incorporate old deco from the old buildings.

Jeanne Tome': (Washington St)

- Our downtown needs to remain centralized. The children should not have to cross Hwy 21/Central Ave to get to the Library.

Gil Knight: (Camp St)

- There are good points for both building new and maintaining the old but it is definitely time to do something.

Betty Firth: (Klondike)

- The City should put out requests for proposals for those who would want to rent space in the Community Center.

Mauro Caruso: (Sheridan St)

- Everyone wants to save the old buildings but no one wants to pay for it. The business owners pay the bulk of the property taxes in Ely. The City should not be in competition with the Ely businesses.

Barb Berglund: (submitted comment via email)

- Keep library on the main floor and expand facility using the Friends of the Library to staff “auxiliary” rooms.
- Get rid of steam heat and add modern electric boiler to the Community Center.
- Move all city administrative offices to the cafeteria and ballroom. Use cubicles for walls if needed. Part of ballroom or cafeteria can be used as council chambers for meetings and committee hearings. Put in the elevator the law has required for over 20yrs for handicap access.
- Keep fire and police in City Hall temporarily. Look to private entity to operate a jail and Huber law facility to pay the bills and help update the building. Assuming a private detention facility works out, sell them the building with covenants and rent space for EPD & EFD.
- If it doesn't work, sell City Hall. Join with townships to establish emergency district for fire, police and ambulance.

Conclusion: Mayor Petersen

Next building needs public hearing will be on March 25, 2013 at the Senior Center from 6:00pm to 8:00pm.

Adjourn:

Sheddy/Polyner moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:45pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Claire Huisman

Deputy Clerk