

Ely City Council Public Hearing Minutes – April 29, 2013

The Ely City Council Public Hearing was called to order by Mayor Petersen at 6:04 p.m. on April 29, 2013 at the Ely Senior Center, 27 S 1st Ave E, Ely MN.

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

ABSENT: Council member Sheddy

Mayor Petersen stated:

- The 1st public meeting was to discuss the Old Buildings cost issues and to share previous ideas and options for upgrades and renovations on the old buildings.
- The 2nd meeting was to gather public input on the various options as well as hear new ideas from the public.
- This 3rd meeting will be to discuss where we are in the decision making process and which options are being looked at more seriously.
- On April 16th, the Council passed to request a quote from JPJ Engineering on a footprint and renderings on a 6,500 sq ft building for a new library which would be placed on the old clinic building site. The quote was \$2,500 which will be on the next council agenda for approval.
- The City is looking seriously at Option C2 for 3.6 million which includes a new police garage.
- The City is stilling considering a local sales tax.

Council member Omerza gave a brief update on CGMC and LMC Boards that she is a member. She stated that legislature helped the City save money by working with them to combine the City's TIF Districts. There is a "Technical Only Bill" going through legislature which could help the City get back some bonding capacity. Also, there are no new requests going through at the legislative level for a sales tax at this time.

City Resident Speakers:

- Todd Denio stated that we need a sales tax and we need to keep the library in the Community Center which is the hub of the City and a vital part of our history. He feels it is negligent of the City to only go with one estimate on the CC renovations. He suggests a large boiler system be placed on the old clinic property to help defray City heating cost. The Community as a whole should have a say in what happens to the old buildings.
- Al Podominick stated that any option the City goes with will be costly, but all departments should be under one roof and not scattered all over the City as they are now. Buildings should have separate zoned areas with propane heating throughout. There are too many buildings that belong to the City and stated concern for what will happen to the buildings that are abandoned.
- Jim Lah agreed the City owns too much building space. All City offices could fit in the Community Center and the Fire and Police Departments could be moved to the Old City Garage site. It is not worth 2.1 million to renovate City Hall when only 12-24 people visit their daily.
- Dave Hernesmaa was born in Ely and uses the Library frequently. He also felt it was wrong to just get one estimate on the cost of renovations and feels the Community Center building could last another 50 to 100 years.
- Jane Hotesse stated that in 2003, she presented plans to the Library to use portable ramps to satisfy the ADA compliance issue. She was told they could not be used due to insurance issues.

Non-City Resident Speakers:

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- Gerald Tyler addressed his idea for renovating the JFK School Building. His estimated cost for its renovation would be \$4,968,000. This could house the Library, City Hall and Police Dept.
- Celia Domich, HPC member stated that both buildings could be saved. She proposed keeping the Library in the CC which would be expanded to include all of the first floor. A Non-Profit Organization could be created to manage the rest of the building. A preservation expert should be brought in to view the Community Center and its options for renovation.
- Gary Smith moved here 20 yrs ago because of the people that made up this City. He stated that getting rid of the old buildings is the old way of thinking. Now, old buildings are being restored to maintain a City's culture and heritage. The City does not need another building to operate and maintain. There are 300 houses for sale in Ely. Citizens who don't live within the City limits and other outlying areas that use the City facilities should help with the cost of the upkeep on these buildings. The buildings could be renovated in little bits at a time.
- Barbara Rom, Library Board member and one of the members who originated the Friends of the Library, stated that all of City Hall offices could be moved to the Community Center.

Council member Kess thanked everyone for showing up. He stated that the City was in healthy shape financially and that taxes may not go up. He feels the CC needs equal effort by the City to maintain it.

Mayor Petersen stated that the portable ramps do not meet ADA standards and they are only a short term fix. The Council is determined to make the buildings ADA compliant. He feels the Council has compromised on the building issue and has not made a final decision but once the final decision is made they will have to bond for the whole project.

Nikkola/Omerza moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:18pm. Motion carried unanimously.

Claire Huisman
Deputy Clerk