

Council Study Session Minutes, April 28, 2015

Call to Order

The Ely City Council Study Session was called to order by Mayor Novak at 5:30pm on April 28, 2015 at the City Hall Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Council members A.Forsman, Kess, Debeltz, Omerza, Polyner, D.Forsman, Mayor Novak (7)

ABSENT: None

ADDITIONS OR OMISSIONS: None

REQUEST TO APPEAR:

Jeff Sundell gave a presentation to the Council on the feasibility study done for the Ely Regional Community Complex. The population of the Ely study area was 9498 and cost \$23,000 which was paid for through donations raised in a little over a two week period. He has met with both Representative Dill and Senator Bakk and they are in support of this project which Mr. Sundell has been working on for four years. Council member Debeltz asked about funding this complex. Mr. Sundell stated that they are not at the point to talk about funding. The feasibility study is to show the interest the community has in a community complex and how much it would get used. Part of the study will show options for funding. A survey was sent to 1500 residents and 494 responded which was a positive turn out. Council Omerza asked "What roll do you want the Council to play?" Mr. Sundell stated that if the feasibility study shows that it is worth pursuing the building of a community complex then the Council would need to decide whether to move forward in support of the building of this project. Council member Polyner commended Mr. Sundell on his passion and hard work in getting this project to this point.

Mayor Novak recessed the meeting at 5:47p.

Meeting was called back to order at 5:49p.

NEW BUSINESS

Doug Whitney, Ely Building Official, presented in the packet the proposed Building Permit Fee Schedule. Mayor Novak opened the floor up for discussion.

Council member A.Forsman stated that maintenance items such as siding, roofing, windows and doors are not intended to improve the home but to maintain its structure and this should be reflected in the permit fees as such. A possible flat rate on these items should be taken into consideration.

Mr. Whitney stated that flat rates aren't always fair. Certain roof structures and materials need more inspections. A valuation based permit fee is preferable.

A.Forsman stated that Ely is only 2.7 square miles. The fees should reflect that we are a small town and there is less driving distance to consider for the inspections than in a larger city.

Council member Omerza stated that they asked Doug to revise the fee schedule. She appreciates his efforts and is comfortable with his fees. This could be discussed for the next 6 months and still not everyone will agree.

A.Forsman also agreed that not everyone will agree but since all the fees are being raised and the motive was to lower the fees then we should just stay with the old rates.

Mayor Novak stated this is a very detailed topic to be discussing which he knows very little about. He feels that the discussion should involve contractors and/or construction workers who are involved in the permitting process and proposed holding a public hearing on this matter. Council member Polyner suggested adding this proposal to the next council agenda.

Tim Hogan, Hogan Remodeling & Construction, spoke against the proposed fee schedule. Most of the residents in Ely are on a fixed income and cannot afford the permit fees. This discourages anyone from pursuing projects to maintain their homes. He stated he believes in the city having a building official but not at the current cost.

Jackie Bregier, construction worker, also spoke against the building official's fee schedule. She stated that it didn't make sense to have the person receiving the fees to be the one who sets the fees.

Mayor Novak stated the formula isn't finite but he would rely on Doug's expertise in the matter. When making rules, one size does not fit all and it's a challenge to apply State Statute to our small town. He would like to hear from others on how they feel about the building official and the permit fees.

A.Forsman stated that this Study Session was in the paper for all to come forward with their opinions. The council should just make a decision.

Mr. Hogan stated that as a licensed contractor, he is insured which protects the homeowner from faulty construction work. The City could not get sued for his faulty work. Council member Debeltz clarified that if the Building Official were to be made a City employee instead of being a professional contractor then the City could get sued if something went wrong with a building that he had inspected. Mr. Hogan also stated that Babbitt does not require the permits that Ely requires. Clerk Langowski replied that Babbitt did not adopt the building code therefore is not bound by state statute.

Mayor Novak stated they are looking for information to make the best decision for the City.

Mayor Novak adjourned the meeting at 6:33pm.

Claire Huisman
Deputy Clerk