

**Study Session Meeting – Council Chambers, Ely City Hall
June 30, 2020**

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Novak called the study session to order at 6:30pm.

PRESENT: Council Members A.Forsman, Kess, Debeltz, Omerza, Callen, Campbell, and Mayor Novak

ABSENT: None

ADDITIONS OR OMISSIONS: None

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Ely Public Schools Bond Referendum

Erik Erie Superintendent of Ely Public Schools gave a presentation on the Ely Public Schools Referendum. The Ely School Board has approved a resolution calling for a \$10 million bond referendum election on August 11, 2020. How did we get here? In September of 2018, a \$495,000 School Safety Grant was secured from the Minnesota Department of Education that recognized the need to provide safe and secure entrances to our buildings. A community based task force of members of diverse backgrounds, parents, non-parents, business owners and district staff worked with an educational facility consultant to help identify the deficiencies in our existing school buildings and proposed solutions to meeting future needs. A community-wide survey was then conducted in the fall of 2019, which indicated that there was support for more than just linking the buildings with secure entrances. Based on the support communicated in the survey, a proposal was developed to address both connecting the buildings with a new addition and making much-needed renovations and repairs to the existing facilities. With the help of a \$7 million IRRRB grant secured in March of 2020, and contingent on a successful referendum in 2020, the Ely School District would be able to address the needs of our historic buildings, provide enhanced safety and security, and realize new 21st Century Learning spaces for our students and community.

Some of the challenges that are faced are the Aging buildings and building systems. Major building systems have exceeded their useful life after serving our community for over 100 years. The result is the need for costly repairs and replacement of roofing, windows, interior finishes, lighting and the need to improve plumbing and indoor air quality, which impacts the student learning environment. Connecting our school buildings for safety and security. Current building configuration requires all students to walk outside and travel between our three school buildings across uneven surfaces in all seasons and weather conditions, which results in safety, security, and supervision concerns. A centralized secure entry does not exist, which creates a potentially dangerous situation for our students and staff. Education and career pathways have changed significantly since our buildings were constructed more than 100 years ago. Current learning spaces lack flexibility and require new and improved space for Career and Technical Education or CTE (previously called “shop” or “industrial arts”), music, physical education, special education and Science Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEM) for which programming has changed significantly since our buildings were built. Lack of adequate gym space to meet physical education, co-curricular, and community education needs, have regularly produced conflicts adversely affecting programs.

Proposed Solutions: Increases student learning opportunities and programs. Flexible, project-based, hands on learning spaces designed for current and future educational programs to prepare students for the 21st century learning. Creates a safe building configuration to protect and provide efficient movement of students and staff. Long-Term investment in our Ely Community to attract and retain students and staff. Decisions that families make for residing in our community and making Ely Public Schools their choice are enhanced by our investment in the schools. Financial Impact – 59% of the project cost is paid by others, Ely Public schools residents would get a \$19.65 million project for \$8 million. Residential property tax refunds of up to 80% of the tax increase each year for homeowners with household incomes under \$115,020 and renters with a household income under \$62,340. An economic stimulus to our community, the \$19.65 million of construction occurring in Ely provides jobs and infusion of activity for local businesses.

Erie indicated that in order for our citizens to have the opportunity to be informed voters from the district has compiled information about the bond referendum, on our District website. We are also holding public forums that at the present time are scheduled to be a virtual format, using Facebook Live where the public can ask questions through a chat feature.

Voting for the referendum will be at the Primary election on August 11, 2020, or you can vote early via absentee voting.

Tourism Bureau Rebranding plans

Cindy Beans Executive Director of the Ely Area Tourism Bureau stated that as of now Ely has different logos in play, the chamber has their own logo, the city has another logo. Beans shared with the council the new potential logo; she indicated that the Chamber is on board if the City is. The collaborative nature of a simultaneous adoption by the City of Ely, Ely Chamber of Commerce and the Ely Area Tourism Bureau would be an informed and impactful step into the future.

Waste Water Treatment Facility Plan with EUC and AE2S to explain process, schedule and anticipated expenses

Jayne Klecker from AE2S presented on the Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvements. The plant constraints resulted in mercury exceedances and the NPDES permit required improvements with design to the MPCA by January 30, 2021 and construction finished in 2023. Some of the facility improvements will be headworks, bio solids, roof and lighting, generator, and equipment replacement along with mercury control. The total probable capital cost will be \$9,300,000 with a point source implementation grant up to \$7,000,000 and a State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) for the remaining amount.

Langowski indicated that the next step will be negotiating the engineering fees for the design, the council will need to put together an ad hoc committee with 2 council members and 2 EUC members to negotiate the terms.

ADJOURN

Mayor Novak adjourned the Study Session at 8:10pm without objection.

Casey Velcheff
Deputy Clerk