



City of Grand Forks
Staff Report
Committee of the Whole – May 27, 2025

Agenda Item: Informational Item – City of Grand Forks/Grand Forks County Collaborations Update

Submitted by: Todd Feland, City Administrator

Staff Recommended Action: Informational Update and City Council Feedback.

Committee Recommended Action: N/A

Council Action: N/A

BACKGROUND:

Based on my initial meeting with Grand Forks County Commissioner Terry Bjerke on February 27, 2025, and as a follow up with City of Grand Forks (City) and Grand Forks County (County) administrative members, the City administration followed up information regarding the requested collaboration between the City and County. County Commissioner Bjerke provided that County Administrator Tom Ford would be the point person for the County on the collaborations.

I provided an informational briefing and update to the County Commission on Tuesday, May 20, 2025 regarding the City and County collaborations. The County Commission was appreciative and heartened by the City and County collaborations and requested to continue the work together on these valued added collaborations on behalf of the City and County taxpayers.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS OF FACT:

- Epitome Energy, Agristo, and Cirrus Aircraft - I discussed and provided business expansion updates to include property tax incentives on the noted companies and developments.
 - **Cirrus Aircraft Expansion and the Payment In Lieu Of Taxes (PILOT) Tax Incentive request is at the County Commission for consideration on Tuesday, May 20, 2025. On May 20, 2025, the County Commission approved the requested Cirrus Aircraft Expansion PILOT Tax Incentive of 10 years and 100% by a vote of 4-1.**
 - **Epitome Energy and Agristo continue to make progress in 2025 with more information and updates to come throughout 2025.**

- City Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) partnership with GF County and the upcoming Joint Powers Agreement review to include cost shares.

- **On April 21, 2025, the City Council approved the organizational restructuring of the PSAP under the Fire Department and replacement of the Joint Powers Agreement with User Agreements for Services for all entities wanting to utilize the City's PSAP services, subject to final review and approval of the City Attorney's Office.**
 - **Because the current budget preparation timeline constraints for FY 2026, the City administration recommends utilizing the cost allocation structure as defined in the existing Joint Powers Agreement with the intention of evaluating possible alternative methods of calculating cost allocation on the new Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, which will be implemented later in 2025.**
- North 69th Street (GF County Road – South of Highway 2) and GE Vernova (formerly LM Wind Power) blade hauling to the TP&L rail facility off 55th Street North/70th Avenue North – Concerns to ensure maintenance of the County gravel portion of 69th Street (e.g. blading, dust control, etc.)
 - **On March 26, 2025, City, County, Grand Forks Region EDC, and GE Vernova representatives met and had a proactive and productive meeting regarding the issue.**
- Social Detox Facility is now managed and operated by Grand Forks Housing Authority and named The NEST on 4th as a low barrier shelter - GF County Commissioner Bjerke is recommending funding reductions for the FY 2026 budget and beyond and wants to collaborate with the City of Grand Forks administratively on this funding collaboration.
 - **As part of the proposed Mayor's proposed budget, the City administration is currently offering \$130,000.00 for the City's cost share as part of the proposed FY 2026 Budget. The County's proposed cost share is \$130,000.00 for FY 2026. The State of North Dakota via the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services approved \$260,000.00 (\$130,000.00 for each year of the biennium) for the FY 2025-27 Biennium to the Northeast Human Service Center. The Grand Forks Housing Authority continues to work on other funding to include grant funding opportunities.**
- GF/EGF MPO and Commuter County Roads Grant Funding - County Commissioner Bjerke is going to push for commuter roads grants for corridors, such as 32nd Street, Washington Street, and Demers Avenue corridors and he will work within the GF/EGF MPO framework that includes currently Council Members Vein and Lunski and City Engineer Grasser from the Grand Forks MPO side.
 - **Ongoing matter.**
- The County is proposing that the City portion of the Public Health Department, Emergency Management Department, and Municipal Court to receive free rent, utilities, and other operating expenses in return for the County receiving in exchange the City Growth Fund/Jobs Development Authority (JDA) owned property at 425 Kittson Avenue (AKA Clock Tower Lot) near the Grand Forks County Courthouse. The Agreement regarding reciprocal Public Health office space and Sheriff's Departments office space (a reciprocal agreement in which both the City and County utilize space in their each other's respective buildings rent free) needs to be updated due to the upcoming move later this year of the County Sheriff's Department from the City Police Department Building.
 - **The City Attorney's Office will be working on the draft agreement for further review and approval in preparation for the County Sheriff's Office moving to their new location in the July/August timeframe.**
 - **The County requested the Public Health Department remain in the County Office Building in lieu of relocating to an office suite in the Franklin on 4th building and in return would provide free rent to the Public Health Department. Since the City and the Public Health Department agreed to remain in the County Office Building, the Public Health Department is planning to upgrade the IT infrastructure and move to**

the City's network. The work that the Public Health Department wants completed is planned to be completed without County expense.

- This Agreement will also include provisions for the City's continued use of Municipal Court located at the County Jail facility under the same terms as exist in current Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Agreement between City and County.
 - This Agreement will also provide for the transfer of the City owned lot located at 425 Kittson Avenue to the County. A review of any re-zoning of the lot may need to be pursued to accommodate the County's intended use of the lot for parking.
 - In 2021, the City JDA completed an exchange of property involving 425 Kittson Avenue and 202 North 4th Street (former GF Herald parking lot) at a mutually agreed price of \$180,000.00.
 - City owned lots at 411 and 302 Division Avenue and 310 South 4th Street, which contain parking lots (AKA Division Parking Lot) will also be part of this new Agreement because of a title restriction in favor of the County the City seeks to have released.
 - The County Title Restrictions provide for 30 parking spaces to the County and that the City lot shall be used solely for parking and if not, then the title is to be given back to the County. The City administration is recommending the noted County Title Restrictions be eliminated.
- The proposal is that the City Building Safety (Inspections) Department will perform inspections in the County and will be reimbursed for mileage and will keep inspection fee. The County will perform septic system inspections in the City's Extra Territorial (ET) area and throughout the County.
 - Collaboration with County Planning (Lane Magnuson) is complete. A MOU has been created and reviewed and approved by the City Attorney's Office. The County Attorney had one comment from her review and suggested the term of the MOU be longer as it is currently set to be addressed yearly. The City will charge mileage and collect the City adopted fees for permits. Reports will be available as requested by the County Commission, and the City Department of Building Safety plans on sending out a status report monthly.
 - The general process of the City performing inspections will be a Grand forks county resident will approach the County first to ensure appropriate zoning review and any needed or required site plans. Once that is complete and approved, the county request will be sent to the City for remainder of process. Plan review through certificate of occupancy will take place under the City Department of Building Safety process, but County adopted building codes will be utilized rather than those adopted by the City.
 - Currently, septic oversight and permitting is informally split between Public Health (in township-zone areas) and the County (elsewhere), without a formal agreement. Clarification is needed given Senate Bill 2267, based on North Dakota Department of Environmental Quality's (NDDEQ) authority, which allows for formal cooperative agreements between counties and public health units.
 - The Grand Forks Police Department will pause implementing the new Records Management System (RMS) due to concerns of the State's Attorney Office system interface concerns with the existing State of ND system. The interface issue will require a minimum of one support position for the County to integrate the two RMS systems.
 - Grand Forks Police Chief Jason Freedman and the Grand Forks Police Department have agreed to pause the implementation of the new RMS system until a more opportune, beneficial, and collaborative integration time.
 - Consider a City Planning Department agreement to support County planning and zoning needs.

- **No direct collaboration agreements are recommended for the City and County Planning Departments at this time, but they will continue to have dialogue and be open to discussions in the future if anything were to change for either department.**
- GF County Commissioner Bjerke is planning to have the GF County Legislative Committee meet on an ongoing basis to address needed legislative priorities with the State of ND and would like to partner with the City of Grand Forks.
 - **In progress and ongoing.**
- As part of the FY 2026 budget process, Mayor Brandon Bochenski and the City administration are working on a GFK Regional Airport study in collaboration with the GFK Regional Airport Authority to further examine GFK Regional Airport management and operations. The focus is on potential budgetary savings, overhead reductions, consultant integration, and consideration of GFK Regional Airport being a part of the larger City of Grand Forks. The major City additional goal is to boost GFK Airport's marketing and commercial service. Any significant changes to the GFK Airport Authority would require City Council and County Commission review and approval, among other approvals.
 - **In progress and ongoing.**

SUPPORT MATERIALS:

- N/A