

The Committee of the Whole met on Monday, June 9, 2025, at 5:30 p.m. in City Council Chambers. The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm by Vice President Weigel. Present at roll call were: Weigel, Osowski, Berg, Lunski, Fridolfs, and Sande – 6; absent: Vein - 1.

2.1 Presentation – The Nest (Housing Authority)

Katie Jo Armbrust, Director of Program Development & Advocacy with Grand Forks Housing Authority, provided information on The Nest, which operates as a low-barrier shelter for homeless individuals who are unable to access other shelter options in the community. Information included statistics on the program, the process to accept individuals to the facility, advocacy services that are provided, with a goal of moving the individuals into permanent housing and connection to services to help them maintain a housed status.

2.2 Safe Streets For All Safety Action Plan Update

Stephanie Halford, Executive Director of Grand Forks-East Grand Forks MPO, and Blue Weber, Bolton & Menk, updated the committee on the Safe Streets for All Safety Action Plan, including public outreach and meetings help to get input and an upcoming Joint GF/EGF City Council Meeting planned for July 8 to review the data gathered. A draft document will be released next week for comments. To be most impactful, bundling identified intersections and corridors will be a goal.

Feland informed the committee that also during the joint meeting, members will receive updates on other joint projects such as the WW Interconnect and Red River Valley Water Supply Program.

3. Discussion Items:

3.1 Design Engineering Agreement for Project No. 8795, 70th Ave N Road Improvements

Christian Danielson, Assistant City Engineer, reviewed the request contract with Bolton & Menk in the amount of \$428,509.07 to complete work on Project No. 8795, 70th Ave N Improvements (Hwy 81 to ½ mile west of N 55th St) which will reconstruct the existing gravel road into a rural concrete section with street lights and some local storm sewer improvements, for which the City has received \$3.2 million in funding from the U. S. Economic Development Administration. This project would provide support for the Epitome Energy development, as well as any other development in that area. Funding will be from the Street/Infrastructure Fund 4815. Rates in the agreement are comparable to those in similar NDDOT agreements.

Motion by Fridolfs, second by Berg, to refer to City Council with a recommendation to approve as staff recommended. Motion carried unanimously.

3.2. MOU between City of Grand Forks and Grand Forks County for inspection services

Brandon Boespflug, Director of the Department of Building Safety, gave a brief overview of the proposed collaboration with Grand Forks County for inspection of properties outside the city limits in Grand Forks County. City inspectors will inspect the properties according to county adopted building codes, leading to the issuance of the Certificate of Occupancy for the structures, with a current term through the end of the year. The city would be reimbursed for mileage and would keep building permit revenue associated with the inspections.

The committee discussed extending the term of the agreement to be rolling unless terminated by either party per the terms included in the agreement, which would make this administratively better flow. Also discussed was whether the city should be the issuing party for the certificate of occupancy, or if the city should provide the approval recommendation to the County, who would issue the certificate.

Motion by Sande, second by Osowski to refer to City Council with a recommendation to approve staff recommended action with a change for the County to be the issuing party for the Certificate of Occupancy. Berg asked if language should also be included to change term of agreement to be ongoing unless terminated by either party. Sande and Osowski accepted the friendly amendment. Motion carried unanimously.

3.3. COPS Grant

Jason Freedman, Police Chief, shared information on the impact the requested 3 officers would bring to the community, in particular to allow dedication of officers to address the downtown concerns in a proactive way, while remaining budget conscious with building this into the budget over the term of the grant. He also informed the committee on collaborations that are taking place with the Mission and The Nest, as well as other partners, to address community issues.

Motion by Osowski, second by Fridolfs, to refer to City Council with a recommendation to approve as recommended by staff. Motion carried unanimously.

3.4. Agristo Tax Incentive Application and Set Public Hearing

Todd Feland, City Administrator, updated the City Council on this project, which the City Council approved an MOU earlier this year and was the basis for a \$30 million dollar ag grant program approved through the legislature this session. Work is continuing on the various permitting and review processes for the plant, with representatives from Agristo planning to be in town and available for the City Council meeting. It is anticipated that a Development Agreement will come forward in the July/August Timeframe. The requested tax incentive is a 20-year/90% Payment in Lieu of Tax, which was competitive with the proposal from the community in Wisconsin. If granted, tax will continue to be collected on the land and improvements during the construction period, prior to the PILOT beginning when construction is complete. As this incentive is for more than 5 years, it will be referred to the Local Government Advisory Committee for review as well as action to confirm participation from both Grand Forks County and Grand Forks Public Schools.

Ossowski commented that she believes Agristo will be good for the community, but is not in favor of tax incentives, especially with all the state and other program financing available, so she will not be voting for this.

Sande thanked the administration for all their work with this project, including work at the state level, and support of the community and the region for bringing this opportunity here. This is a tremendous impact on our community.

Motion by Sande, Second by Berg, to refer to City Council with a recommendation to approve the staff recommendation. Motion carried 5-1, with Osowski dissenting.

3.5 Northridge Construction Tax Incentive Application and set Public Hearing

Todd Feland, City Administrator, shared opening information regarding this project, which is the first of four that have been proposed, with the other three looking at a 2026 construction start.

This project, which is an estimated \$38 million project, will construct a multi-family development including 155 residential units with underground parking. It is infill development, and the proposed site at 4551 South 17th Street already has infrastructure that can serve the development and is already properly zoned.

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If approved, the proposed construction timeline would begin in August 2025 and have a March 2027 completion target.

Mikeala Huot, Baker Tilly, reviewed the financial analysis of the project indicating that to make the project did show a need for a tax incentive with a recommendation of a 15 year step down Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT), Years 1-5 100%, Years 6-10 80%, and years 11-15 60%). It was noted that the initial request from the developer was for a 20-year/100% PILOT. The analysis included the impacts of cash flow, increasing construction costs, and interest rates.

As the requested incentive is for more than five years, the project will be presented to the Local Government Advisory Committee for their review and require action by the Grand Forks County Commission and Grand Forks Public School Board, which would take place prior to the July 21, 2025, Public Hearing date.

Motion by Sande, second by Berg, to refer to City Council with a recommendation to approve the staff recommendation. Motion carried 5-1, with Osowski dissenting.

4. City Council Member Discussion Matters

Osowski commented and expressed appreciation to the Police Department for their proactive approach to recent community concerns.

Berg commented on recent experience with a stolen bike that was recovered and reminded all of the bike registration program on the city website.

5. Adjourn

Motion by Osowski, second by Lunski, to adjourn at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sherie Lundmark, City Clerk