

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Municipal Building Council Chambers on March 3, 2014. Mayor Dehen called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. asking that everyone join in the Pledge of Allegiance. The following were present for the meeting, Mayor Dehen, Council Members Steiner, Norland, Freyberg and Spears, City Administrator Harrenstein, Finance Director Thorne, City Clerk Gehrke, Planner Fischer and Public Works Director Swanson. Absent: City Attorney Kennedy.

Approval of Agenda

Council Member Norland moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to approve the agenda as presented. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Norland, Freyberg, Spears and Dehen, aye; no nays. Motion carried.

Approval of Minutes

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Norland, to approve the minutes of the Council meeting of February 18, 2014. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Norland, Freyberg, Spears and Dehen, aye; no nays. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda

Council Member Freyberg moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to approve the Consent Agenda which includes:

- A. Bills and Appropriations.
- B. Res. No. 13-14 Approving Donations/Contributions/Grants.
- C. Res. No. 14-14 Declaring Costs to be Assessed for Municipal Charges – 2460 North Ridge Drive.
- D. Large Group Permit for Mankato Family YMCA 5K and 10K Runs, Benson Park, July 19, 2014 from 6 a.m. to 11 a.m.
- E. Parade Permit for Mankato Family YMCA 5K and 10K Runs, July 19, 2014 from 8 a.m. to 10:30 a.m.
- F. Audio and Large Group Permit for “Picnic in the Park,” Spring Lake Park, Monday, June 23, 2014 from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Vote on the motion: Steiner, Norland, Freyberg, Spears and Dehen, aye; no nays. Motion carried.

Public Comments

Library Director – Announcement of Book Title for 2014 Community Read

Library Director Lucy Lowry appeared before the Council and announced the book for the 2014 Community Read is *When the Emperor was Divine* by the author Julie Otsuka. She introduced Beth Christensen of Delta Kappa Gamma, who will be leading the book discussion on April 3, 2014. Other events for the Community Read include a presentation on March 20, 2014 by Sally Sudo of the Japanese American Citizens League and a Documentary-Time of Fear on March 27, 2014. The Library Director thanked the Civic & Commerce Association and the Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund for their donations enabling 500 books to be purchased for the 2014 Community Read.

John Hurd, 732 Garfield Avenue

John Hurd, 732 Garfield Avenue, appeared before the Council and presented a proposal for a Historic Farmstead Interpretive Center at 1610 LorRay Drive. He asked the Mission Statement for this proposal be made a part of the record. It reads as follows:

“PROPOSAL FOR AN HISTORIC FARMSTEAD INTERPRETIVE CENTER

MISSION STATEMENT:

The main purpose of this project is to preserve and restore an historic 6.7 acre farmstead located at 1610 LorRay Drive near the geographic center of North Mankato, Minnesota. The purpose of the restoration is to create an **interpretive center for an authentic farmstead** that's been in the same family since its origin in the late 1800s; one that is **accessible** to area residents and to major highways (U.S. Highways 14 and 169 intersect just a few miles away); and one that is **highly visible** as the property is situated on a regularly traveled thoroughfare.

AUXILIARY PURPOSES:

While the main purpose of the project is to take advantage of the unique piece of land that has been kept intact by the owners, it can also serve a number of other purposes to serve the needs of North Mankato and its surrounds. These include:

- 1) **Preserving the Burr oak grove** with trees approximately 200 to 300 years old. According to old photographs, these trees stood right at the place where the western prairie extending from Wyoming met the Big Woods that extended to the East Coast. These are commonly called “Sentinel Oaks” because they were best able to stand up to the prairie fires. North Mankato, by its very geography, is at a unique place in North America.
- 2) **Creation of a North Mankato History Center.** North Mankato is in Nicollet County, home to the Nicollet County Historical Society and the Traverse Des Sioux Treaty Site in St. Peter, located some 14 miles north. However, North Mankato, unlike Mankato and St. Peter, has no history center. There is no place to store historic artifacts that tell the story of the town, no historic registry of important landmarks and no place where students can visit and see maps and other historical records of the town. One of the buildings on the property, whether the house, or part of the barn, or a re-instituted granary, could serve as a repository of North Mankato's past.
- 3) **Providing a formal connection between North Mankato and the Native American community** that formerly occupied these lands. The site could be a place where the two cultures can make a new covenant, a place where the cooperative aspects of settlers and natives can be acknowledged and extolled; or perhaps a monument with a Native American woman and pioneer woman sharing knowledge about crops. The ravine behind the farmstead provides an excellent location for a nature trail that shows the woodland species that were special to the Mdewakanton Dakota who occupied the territory.
- 4) **Creating a cultural center** where readings, musical events, and barn dances could be held. The barn would be a distinctive venue for such events.
- 5) Ultimately, providing future generations with a highly visible, highly accessible **educational view into the past.** There could be an array of antique farm machinery, some hands-on displays like a hand corn sheller, heritage gardens of both a native and pioneer plantings, a small field of blue flax, or a native butterfly garden. This farmstead could be a defining feature for North Mankato, a place to honor its past and to acknowledge its Pioneer and Native American heritage.

WAYS AND MEANS:

The cost of acquiring the land along with the preliminary costs of restoring the farmstead could be as much as \$1.5 million. The initial cost of protecting the property from commercial development is negotiable at this time, but a commitment by some fiscal agent may help in procuring finances to purchase it. Some sites similar to this one have been purchased by individual donors (“angel donors”) and held for a time while further funding and plans are developed.

Presently, the City of North Mankato has informally expressed interest in supporting the project, but is waiting for a proposal to be able to act officially. FarmAmerica has been informally receptive to the idea of the site as a satellite center that would help spread the theme of agriculture as well as spark interest in their comprehensive site near Waseca. Finally, The Nicollet County Historical Society has said that they would look into the possibility of being involved in the project.

There appears to be many entities who could serve to help one of the three above-mentioned fiscal agencies with the funding. In particular, the project would be perfect fit for the Legacy Fund, which often supports projects that include multifaceted purposes.

Other potential donors that have been suggested include: farm groups, environmental groups, individual donors, Indian communities, and local fundraisers/donations. Many sites like this incorporate the cheerful assistance of volunteers.

TIMELINE:

There may be some urgency in purchasing the property as it is publicly for sale at this time. The realtor representing the owner has suggested that the owner would have some interest in seeing the farmstead saved for posterity, and as such she may be open either to the purchase of an “option to buy” or to a contract for deed.”

Business Items**Res. No. 15-14 Accepting Feasibility Report and Ordering Improvement Hearing for Project No. 13-02AC, Roe Crest-Noretta-Belgrade Ravine Improvements**

Engineer Sarff gave a PowerPoint presentation for the proposed Project No. 13-02AC, Roe Crest-Noretta-Belgrade Ravine Improvements. He reported the feasibility report was authorized by the City Council in 2013 and was included in the Capital Improvement Plan for 2014. The proposed improvements include trunk sanitary sewer, trunk storm sewer, watermain and access road/trail for the ravines and sanitary sewer, storm sewer, watermain and street and surface improvements for Belgrade Hill. He reviewed the existing services in this area and the proposed services. Engineer Sarff reported the estimated total project cost is \$1,714,000; \$982,000 for improvements in the ravine area and \$732,000 for improvements on Belgrade Hill. The estimated costs include allowance for contingencies, administrative, engineering and financing costs. Assessments are proposed for street and utility reconstruction on the Belgrade Hill portion of the project. Utility improvements in the ravine area will be financed using sewer, water and storm sewer utility funds. Engineer Sarff reviewed the assessment process noting an assessment hearing is scheduled for the fall of 2014. Discussion was held regarding sidewalks for the Belgrade Avenue area which would require easements. Council Member Spears reported he attended the neighborhood meeting on this project and the residents on the Belgrade Hill are not in favor of sidewalks. Engineer Sarff stated communication to the homeowners on Belgrade Hill would be very important during this project because of the construction challenges relating to access, water service, garbage collection and mail delivery. He recapped the input gathered during the neighborhood meeting most of which were related to the proposed pedestrian/bicycle trail. **Council Member Spears moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to adopt Res. No. 15-14 Accepting Feasibility Report and Ordering Improvement Hearing for 7 p.m. on Monday, April 7, 2014 for Project No. 13-02AC, Roe Crest-Noretta-Belgrade Ravine Improvements. Vote on the Resolution: Steiner, Norland, Freyberg, Spears and Dehen, aye; no nays. Motion carried.**

Res. No. 16-14 Vacating and Rescinding Zoning Code Variances at 400 Wall Street

Administrator Harrenstein reported a discussion was held at the Port Authority Commission and a resolution adopted requesting the City Council vacate and rescind the zoning code variances which were approved by the City Council on March 18, 2013. The City Attorney and the League of MN Cities Attorney both recommended this action and staff is recommending adoption of the resolution. **Council Member Norland moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to adopt Resolution No. 16-14 Vacating and Rescinding Zoning Code Variances at 400 Wall Street. Vote on the Resolution: Steiner, Norland, Freyberg, Spears and Dehen, aye; no nays. Motion carried.**

Set Public Hearing to Amend City Code, Chapter 52, Water Service, Section 52.03, Repair of Leaks for 7 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 2014

Mayor Dehen reported this action is in response to the freeze-up of water pipes due to the extremely cold winter this year. **Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Norland, to set a public hearing to amend City Code, Chapter 52, Water Service, Section 52.03, Repair of Leaks for 7 p.m. on Monday, March 17, 2014. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Norland, Freyberg, Spears and Dehen, aye; no nays. Motion carried.**

City Administrator and Staff Comments
Schedule Meeting for Land Use Discussion

Administrator Harrenstein reported that the principal consultant for the Comprehensive Plan is unavailable for the March 17, 2014 meeting. The Council stated work should proceed on the Comprehensive Plan with one consultant present. A Council Work Session was scheduled for Monday, May 17, 2014 at 5 p.m. to review Chapter 3 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Property at 410 Range Street

Administrator Harrenstein reported the inspectors have deemed the house which was purchased at the property known as 410 Range is not worthy of moving and he asked if the Council has any objection to tearing the house down. With no objection from the City Council, he reported staff would begin the process of having the house demolished.

Mayor

Coffee with the Council

The Mayor reported Coffee with the Council will be held on Saturday, March 8, 2014 from 10-11 a.m. at Perkins Restaurant, 1123 Range Street.

Public Comments

Tom Hagen, 927 Lake Street

Tom Hagen, 927 Lake Street, appeared before the Council and asking that a design committee be established with the purpose of bringing buildings in line with Central Business Development standards.

Barb Church, 102 E. Wheeler Avenue

Barb Church, 102 E. Wheeler Avenue, appeared before the Council asked if an annual performance review of the City Administrator has been completed. The Mayor reported that staff reviews are underway and once those are completed the City Administrator performance review will be conducted.

Scott Thiem, 1003 Shady Oak Drive

Scott Thiem, 1003 Shady Oak Drive, appeared before the Council speaking in favor of the trails proposed for Project No. 13-02AC Roe Crest-Noretta-Belgrade Ravine which he stated would be a tremendous asset encouraging more hikers and bikers. He presented an alternative plan for the bike trail which will be given to the City Council.

There being no further business, on a motion by Council Member Norland, seconded by Council Member Spears, the meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk