

MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE JOINT  
CITY COUNCIL/FOSSTON UTILITIES COMMISSION  
OF THE CITY OF FOSSTON, POLK COUNTY MINNESOTA  
October 30, 2019

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a special joint meeting of the City Council and the Fosston Utilities Commission of the City of Fosston, Polk County Minnesota was held in Council Chambers on Wednesday, October 30, 2019 at 7:00 p.m.

Mayor Offerdahl called the meeting to order with the following members present: Hoialmen, Anderson, Bosselman, and Dufault. Members absent: none. Utilities Commission chairman Lofstrand called the meeting to order with the following Utilities Commission members present: Offerdahl and Veum. Others in attendance were: City Administrator Chuck Lucken, Assistant City Administrator Cassie Heide, Director of Public Works David Larson, Assistant Director of Public Works Steven Lyseng, Mark Hallan, PE, Widseth Smith Nolting, Lee Cariveau of Widseth Smith Nolting (WSN), City Attorney Stephen Larson, April and Mike Wedin, Roger and ----Phyllis Sjulson, Larry and Tami Miller, Nathan and Joann Fultz, Warren Affeldt, Steve Green, Scott and ----

Mayor Offerdahl explained the purpose of the meeting is to present information to council and the public, with the invitation to the group of residents in Bransvold Township given and specifically scheduled in accordance with the groups preference, on the upcoming wastewater plant expansion.

Mark Hallan informed that the City has identified a need for expansion as the city currently struggles with capacity and meeting phosphorus limits. Hallan and Cariveau are working on a facility plan in which seven options will be included with a proposed option selected for Fosston to consider moving forward with. The facility plan will look at environmental impacts as necessary by Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Another part of the work Widseth Smith Nolting is doing is work on updating Significant Industrial User agreements (SIU's) with Minnesota Dehydrated Vegetables (MDV), J. Rettenmaier USA and Specialty Products in order to ensure all users are paying their fair share.

Lee Cariveau gave a presentation outlining the seven options that will be studied as part of the facility plan. Those seven options are: do nothing, wastewater pond expansion, regionalization, mechanical treatment, raise/reconstruct pond dikes, new ponds, and rapid infiltration basins. Cariveau provided a brief description and cost estimate with each option. An option to do nothing is really not an option for the city has we are at times thirty inches over what the ponds are designed for. An option to expand the wastewater ponds is an option that was identified in 1972 and again in 2011. Mayor Offerdahl explained that in 2011 the City worked with a different engineering firm that urged the City to first construct better aeration ponds as a phase one of expansion to the wastewater facility. The City has been operating the new aeration ponds for about eight years now and is working on phase two of the expansion needs of the City. The

expansion is necessary due to what Fosston's flows currently are and not based on any increased flows or future projections. WSN engineers will need to, as part of the facility plan, look at current needs and project what future needs may be. Wastewater pond expansion is estimated at a cost of \$7.8 million dollars.

The remaining five options range from \$5 to \$40 million dollars and each pose unique challenges for making them work in Fosston. Some options are too much of an expense for the gained outcome. WSN will study each option and look at the benefit to the entire City of Fosston and use of dollars while keeping in mind future capacity projections.

Roger Sjulson had the following questions:

- Has the MPCA asked the City to update the system?
  - No, the City continues to meet limits by adding necessary chemicals to keep the levels within the mandated limits.
- Will city taxes increase?
  - No, the payments on what is financed will be made through user rate fees.
- Will adding ponds create more odor?
  - Spring and Fall turnover will always cause some odors naturally. Typical turnover is 1-2 days. The 1964 ponds have been in operation for years and due to the sludge that is in the ponds the added capacity increases the risk of odor. By spreading out and adding more capacity, we think the risk of odor decreases. Overloading is a major contributor to odor and that was the problem that occurred a few years ago with the major odors Fosston experienced. Mistakes were made and the City and council has learned from those mistakes and works every single day at the Industrial Pretreatment facility to ensure those mistakes do not happen again.
- Residents are concerned about their drinking wells; does increasing ponds increase the chance of contamination for our drinking wells?
  - No, the additional ponds are within the required distance away from private wells by at least three times the requirement as mandated by the Minnesota Department of Health. The existing ponds leakage has not been measured, but a leakage test will be performed. It is possible that the Minnesota Department of Health will require monitoring wells on the ponds to ensure the safety of nearby private wells. That has not been determined yet.
- According to the MPCA, ponds shouldn't be located less than one quarter mile to a home or one-half mile to a cluster of homes, which we feel our groups homes are. How is the City addressing that?
  - MPCA offers guidance but it is not a regulation or requirement. Aerated ponds are exempt from that guidance. During design of additional ponds that recommendation will be considered, and engineers will do their best to keep that

distance, but, the existing ponds are outside of that recommended distance, as homes have been built closer to the ponds since their construction in 1964.

- Why didn't the expansion that was done in 2011 solve more issues?
  - As Mayor Offerdahl explained, the construction of the aeration ponds in 2011 was a first phase of necessary expansion. Because the aeration ponds that were built in 2011 have been in operation for a number of years, we now have a better understanding of the science behind the facility and how it can work to the best of its ability and what is needed for the future. The aeration pond works as one gallon in and one gallon out, so it is never used as storage.
- Is this expansion because MDV is expanding?
  - No, we are still over capacity and need more storage for the needs of today. Director Public Works explained that MDV is tested twice monthly on the wastewater that comes out of the Industrial Pretreatment Facility (IPF). The latest test showed phosphorus strengths less than what a domestic user would discharge.
- Is MDV meeting required testing limits?
  - Yes, MDV is tested twice per month. The latest test showed phosphorus strengths less than what a domestic user would discharge. The IPF pretreats MDV's wastewater before it is discharged into the City's wastewater treatment facility. The City owns the facility and MDV pays the capital and operating costs.
- Has MDV been granted exemption?
  - No, MDV has a SIU agreement. MDV is also billed for chemicals that have to treat the ponds to meet discharge limits. The updated SIU agreement and agreements for J. Rettenmaier USA and Specialty Products will ensure that every user is paying their fair share.
- Can you go somewhere else?
  - Regionalization is an option that will be looked at but the chance of that happening is slim. The reason the facility is located where it is is the location of Popple River. The ponds have been there since 1964 and will not go away. WSN will look at screening with shrubs or trees. Wind is also necessary to provide for natural aeration of the ponds to keep odor down. We cannot block all of the wind. The MPCA does not require screening. The location of any additional proposed ponds is situated on the low part of the land.
- Can you push the additional ponds back away from the road and more on the East side of the property?
  - Yes, that option can be looked at.
- Why isn't the City looking more closely at a mechanical plant?
  - This is an option that is being studied. The cost is significantly higher not only in upfront costs but annual operating costs. An additional employee would likely need to be hired. Current staff is not licensed to operate a mechanical plant and

they have to be manned at a higher rate of time. These plants tend to smell 365 days per year and work best when they are always full.

- Would infiltration be used in addition or as a replacement of the ponds?
  - Infiltration would be used in addition to the ponds. A very large sandy area is needed and an even further distance away from private wells. WSN believes the rapid infiltration system would likely need to be more than ten miles North of the current facility.

Mayor Offerdahl informed the public that the council has deemed it necessary to do something as we are at capacity and have a duty to the residents of the City of Fosston to choose the best option possible for today and for the future. If the facility operates properly the amount of odor is very minimal. The visual impact of the ponds is kept in good condition. The users pay for the facility. A public hearing will likely occur in February. The City of Fosston will work with WSN to do the best thing for the residents of Fosston and hears the concerns of the residents of Bransvold Township that have come tonight and will work to do the right thing for those involved.

There being no further business to come before the joint meeting motion was made by Hoailmen seconded by Anderson to adjourn the council meeting. Motion was made by Lofstrabd seconded by Veum to adjourn the Fosston Utilities Commission meeting. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

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Charles Lucken, City Administrator