



RIVER FALLS CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP REGARDING CITY FACILITIES

February 28, 2023, 5 p.m., Training Room, City Hall

City Council Members Present: Todd Bjerstedt, Jeff Bjork, Sean Downing, Scott Morrissette, Diane Odeen, Nick Carow

Members Absent: Mayor Dan Toland, Alyssa Mueller

City Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; IT Specialist Jon Smits; Library Director Tanya Misselt; Assistant to the City Administrator Jennifer Smith; Human Resources Director Karen Bergstrom; Assistant City Administrator Jason Stroud; Public Works Manager Erica Ellefson; Facilities Maintenance Manager Joe Moran; Deputy Clerk Jackie Hanson; Management Analyst Fellow Ellen Massey; Community Services Director/City Clerk Amy White; Facility Maintenance Supervisor Tom Schwalen; Senior Financial Analyst/Deputy Treasurer Kristine Basom; Finance Director Josh Solinger

Others: Patricia La Rue, Ben Fochs

At 5:02 p.m., the workshop was called to order by Council President Morrissette. City Administrator Simpson talked about the agenda.

Simpson began with city buildings by the numbers. He showed a map of city facilities followed by a slide showing the timeline when city buildings were constructed. As the community grew, city priorities were established and additions were made to city facilities. Simpson reviewed current city facilities. He asked councilors if they had been to the facilities.

Simpson provided an update on debt service and budget consideration when we are looking at projects for facilities. He talked about impact fee funds, how they are used, and some of the restrictions. Simpson covered the impact fees fund that have remaining balances for Park \$528,000, Library \$158,000, and Fire \$29,000.

Simpson talked about a fair amount of borrowing in the early 2000s. He suggested the next opportunity to consider a large facility option is in 2028, when City Hall is close to being paid off. He reminded council in past workshops discussing Glen Park that if it was decided to spend money on Glen Park other items would have to wait. He talked about the library mortgage paid ahead of schedule.

Scot went through possible future projects that could be going forward if we can find some other funding. Simpson showed a projected timeline and talked about funds needed to do them.

He talked about the biosolid facility project. He showed map and building design. It will likely be geo backed to help with the levy limit. This project will not compete with other things you want to do. Morrissette had a question. There was discussion.

Simpson moved onto the fire station. He showed a slide with a design and talked about Wold concept testing. Can we do the fire station at the current location? Simpson covered the different options for the current location. We would need \$16 million for new construction of a fire station. We \$8 million to convert the current location to mostly meet city needs. He talked about a timeline of 2028-2029. Simpson talked about asking the federal government for money for this project and how the city's representatives stood on earmarks. Simpson talked in depth of renovating the building at the current location. We think it is an \$8 million proposal. He talked about asking congress for the additional funding. This location puts us closer to reality for congressional

directed spending. Councilors had follow-up questions on site design. Alderperson Bjerstedt asked if they said yes, how soon we would need to have the money. Simpson said it would need to be done in 12 months. He explained there would have to be some significant decision making happening. Simpson provided further timeline details. He said we would have to spend \$3.5-\$4 million to get \$4-4.5 million in funding. He also talked about the possibility of getting a grant(s).

Alderperson Downing said it's reasonable to say if we get those funds, that's a good location. He asked about it being reasonable to use the River Falls Creates money to memorialize the Bee City/Tree City/Monarch City mural. Simpson indicated when a project is approved, the council will set an amount of up to one percent.

There was a question about the use of TID funds. Simpson provided details on what TID funds can be used for. Downing clarified River Falls Creates is for an amount set by council but TID use of monies are used for something else.

Simpson went into the vision and plans for future needs, Fire, Public Works, and Library are identified as needs and council has the most recent information regarding those facilities.

Downing asked the library's master plan will be included in the if the comp plan. Simpson said yes, the comp plan references most of these things.

Downing said about it comes to the pool, he is in favor of having an inclusive engagement process. There are companies that will do that for us. It could take five years. He provided more details.

Simpson talked about rate funded facilities are reasonable to address. They are reasonably taken care of. He said rate funding can't be used for other projects. The conclusion is we have limited general debt service available to address projects. Choices have to be made. You can say we want to make these capital investments, but we have to free up monies, so go find it and cut. You could raise more money, but it would likely end in a referendum. Council can prioritize how they want to move forward. Simpson talked about funding options. He said likely council will need to be disciplined and determine their number one priority and take care of that.

Morrisette thought council had a choice to make between fire and then we don't get a lot of room to do anything else. We don't get a warming shelter, ice skating rink or pool for a while. We live in the reality of other taxing jurisdictions impact our residents namely the school district. He talked about the school district coming back again for a referendum. He doesn't think we want to force people to decide between kids and fire. He doesn't think a giant increase to levy would be a great idea either. The discipline is going to have to be there. If we get fire money and pull this off, we have to be disciplined enough not to look at the next shiny object.

Assistant City Administrator Stroud noted we think we can function out of the current fire station in its current condition until 2028. Staff is prepared to do that. We still need to upkeep that building while they operate out of it.

Bjerstedt asked if we don't do this scenario, do we still have to find ways to come up with \$16 million down the road and it may be more? Simpson suggested that is not in the plans unless the community is prepared for a referendum. He doesn't see how you can fit the \$16 million in the next ten years. Simpson talked further about a fire station and the costs. He talked about the pros and cons of getting the money. Simpson said council will see a proposal about getting the fire station done in 2028 as staff has heard from council that it was the priority. You will give us feedback in the CIP process as to whether that is correct.

Morrisette asked if everyone was on board. He wanted to give staff direction. He asked if the application process has been started. Simpson said we are actively pursuing federal money for the fire station as we have heard it is the priority. The fire station is the best match based on the council's priorities.

Morrisette asked about concerns. Bjerstedt said I would go for it. Odeen talked about the getting federal monies to pay for some of it. She thought it would be an error not to try. Downing said it seems logical. Bjork thought we should push forward with it. Carow thought you start with the need and assessment. It would seem prudent to go forward. He is not holding his breath about getting federal money. Carow asked if Representative Sean Duffy was in favor of earmarks. Simpson said there wasn't an earmark process. He believed that neither Duffy nor Ron Kind was in favor of earmarks. Simpson provided further information.

Downing asked is there other funding we are considering? Would lobbying help advance that? Simpson said yes, we should consider some state funding, but we have not found the right avenue.

There was discussion about fire station grants. Simpson talked about opportunities the city has. He asked if there was interest in a second facilities workshop. Only one expressed interest. Simpson said the priorities from your existing processes the requests are fire, public works, library, and a number of park facilities. There are other things people want but he doesn't believe it is in the cards. He talked about community requests.

The workshop adjourned at 6:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristi McKahan, Deputy Clerk