

EAST BETHEL CITY COUNCIL WORK MEETING

November 13, 2024

The East Bethel City Council met on November 13, 2024, at 6:07 p.m. for the regular City Council Work meeting at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Lewis Brian Mundle Bob DeRoche
Tim Miller Jim Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Matt Look, City Administrator
Nate Ayshford, Public Work Director

1.0 – Fire Relief Discussion

Troy Lachinski gave the annual update on where they stand with the Relief Association, including information regarding the Pension Plan, goals, current status, contributions for 2024 and beyond, pension levels, and member requests.

DeRoche asked where the other miscellaneous money comes from. Lachinski stated that it is any other amount that typically comes from the State when a firefighter retires to help pay taxes.

Lewis asked what the rate of return was on the \$79,000 of earnings. Lachinski stated that the rate of return was 3.6% as of October 31.

DeRoche asked what monies are being discussed at the Capital Committee Hearings. Lachinski stated they like to discuss the State Aid and whether they can tax them on this money.

DeRoche asked if the firefighters have a choice between a payout or getting a certain amount per year. Lachinski stated that their Relief Association is a lumpsum payment.

DeRoche asked at what point the City would become liable and have to pay. Lachinski stated that the City would have to pay if they fell below 95% funded, they would look at the amount they are underfunded and then the City would pay 10% of that each year.

DeRoche asked if the election will have any effect. Lachinski stated that it took a big jump after the election but has been strong for the last few years.

Lewis asked if there are any payouts involved in the numbers. Lachinski stated that the liability assumes that everyone will be fully vested, but the current liability is \$2.3 million.

Lewis asked about the reality of what the return on assets is. Lachinski stated that he is unsure of how they came up with the number, but it is a tool they can use to decide where they stand.

Lachinski stated they are requesting an increased benefit level from \$7500/yos to \$8000/yos starting January 1, 2025.

Lewis stated that his number one priority is the safety of the firefighters and the other residents of East Bethel.

Lewis stated that after talking with Jerry Streich, he is inclined to table this item for now because they are in a time where lots of things are in flux at the Fire Department.

Mundle asked how any of the changes would affect the requested increased benefits from \$7500/yos to \$8,000/yos. Mundle also asked if Lachinski accounted for additional people. Lachinski stated that the number they assumed was 29, which is the number of firefighters they have today.

Mundle asked if between right now and February they had 10 additional recruits, are they able to come back to City Council and say they need to re-evaluate and move the numbers. Lachinski stated that this needs to be sent to the State by the end of the year, so if they were to pause on this now they would have to come back next year.

Lachinski stated that the evaluation comes out in July/August from PERA, and then they crunch the numbers and decide what they want to do for the following calendar year. He stated that if they going to put a pause on this now, he would like to come back to the City Council before the year is out.

Lewis stated they he would like to buy the time between now and the first City Council meeting in December.

Miller stated that the City workers and staff got a 3% increase last year, and the Fire department got a 25% increase for the pension.

Lachinski asked when the feedback regarding edits and changes would be given to Look. Lewis stated that they would give feedback to Look by December 9, 2024.

2.0 – Facility Access Policy

Look discussed the document drafted with the Personnel Committee regarding the Facility Access Policy and asked if the Council could review it and note any changes to be brought back to a future City Council meeting.

Look stated that it can be all East Bethel facilities, but this document was crafted for East Bethel, and any changes can still be made.

3.0 – Security System Quotes

Nate Ayshford stated they were asked to review security upgrades to access some of their buildings such as Fire Station #1 and City Hall. He stated that for Fire Station #1, each firefighter would have their own card and key number to get in the building and it would be recorded each time. He stated that the price to switch over to this system would be \$6,300 and \$2,700 fee to cut the lock-blocking mechanism into the doorjamb, giving a total cost of \$9,400.

Ayshford also stated that they got a quote for security cameras for the exterior of Fire Station #1 at \$3,600. He also stated they got a quote for the East Bethel Recycle Center due to illegal dumping at \$4,800, which would come out of the Recycling Fund. He stated the quote for the East Bethel Ice Arena for 4 exterior and 1 interior camera was \$4,300. He stated that to streamline the cameras at City Hall with the other buildings would be \$3,600.

DeRoche asked how the system at Whispering Aspen would work. Ayshford stated that when the space is rented out, they would come to City Hall and get a card to give them access to the building.

Look stated that they have set aside \$50,000 in the Building Improvement Fund for undefined projects, so that money would be the responsibility of that fund, besides the Recycling Center and Ice Arena which are self-funded. He stated the new cameras are more high-def.

DeRoche asked if all the systems are interchangeable and can communicate with each other. Ayshford stated that they are all cloud-based and the System Administrator would have access to all the systems from a mobile device.

Lewis stated that he is very supportive of this to protect the assets of the residents and limiting liability.

4.0 – Adjourn

Work Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Submitted by:

Lilian Rokosz

TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.