

CITY OF FOLEY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL MEETING – January 21, 2025

The Foley City Council held a closed session at 5:30 p.m. on Jan. 21, 2025, at Foley City Hall in order to conduct the performance review of the City Administrator. The regular open meeting was convened at 6 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Brandon Voit and Councilmembers Jeff Gondeck, Deb Mathiowetz, Gary Swanson, and Stephanie Lloyd.

Members Absent: None

Brandon Voit convened the regular public meeting at 6 p.m. and stated for the record that the City Administrator's performance review was completed and found to be satisfactory.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

Motion by Gondeck, seconded by Swanson, to approve the agenda.

Mathiowetz asked if items 7 and 8 on the agenda could be swapped as she needed to leave the meeting early.

Motion by Voit, seconded by Lloyd, to swap items 7 and 8 on the agenda.

Motion carried, unanimous.

Consider Approval of Site Plan for Foley Family Restaurant

Brunn gave an overview to the council. The Planning Commission discussed the site plan for the Foley Family Restaurant at their meeting last Monday and are recommending approval of the proposed sketches. It is a small breezeway on the front of the entrance to the restaurant. No significant change in drainage or parking. Staff has no concerns and Planning approved it with no conditions.

Motion by Mathiowetz, seconded by Gondeck, to approve the site plan.

Motion carried, unanimous.

Topics of Discussion/Goals/Priorities – Review and Discuss

Voit introduced the topic to the council. This is a continuation of the discussion from the last meeting of what other topics need to be discussed as a group in a workshop session. Some of these topics are forward thinking and may not require action for years to come.

Gondeck stated he'd like to hear from the Police Department and Public Works on their priorities first as citizens.

Mark Pappenfus, Director of Public Works, stated he'd like to see the city grow their tax base and find some way to help keep taxes in line. He also said he'd like to expand items for the community.

Chief Katie McMillin agreed that the city should work to expand their tax base with new housing. For the department, she said given the increasing call volume more staff will be needed. The pool is a good attraction, but adding a waterpark would also be nice. If you bring in attractions, more people will come to visit and support other businesses while they're in town.

Voit asked for the council and staff to do more forward goal planning and focus on the growth of the city and look at where we're heading. What do we want and how do we prioritize? Housing development is important as it will help with taxes. We have a proposal on the table for development. We could ask for another RFP now that we have more time and we're not so rushed.

Voit asked the council to discuss the Southside housing project. Discussion and questions followed. Swanson said he saw the development as a priority. Swanson asked if Public Works, Fire, Police Departments would require additional buildings in the next 2-3 years. Discussion turned to city building needs such as a new Public Works building and more space for the Police Department. There is also an item in the budget for a City Hall remodel in order to add an office this year.

Brunn explained a formal facilities plan would look at the needs of all the departments and how they would need to grow as the city population grows over the next decade or more. The council had previously tabled the discussion on developing a formal facilities plan due to the cost. Voit said that with the growth of the city a facilities plan should be part of the discussion sooner than later. More discussion and questions followed.

Gondeck stated with the housing development the council needs to decide what is the city willing to do to help the process more forward? We can't give away the farm. Discussion continued. Gondeck agreed with sending out another RFP for the Southside development. Lloyd agreed. Discussion continued.

Gondeck stated his biggest concern is the WAC/SAC fees. He didn't think the city should budge on those since the project still needs to be paid for. He would be open to TIF financing. The council should also look at their parking ordinances. Information from staff says there has been interest in downtown properties, but the parking ordinances are a hindrance to getting new development. Swanson agreed. Discussion continued. Voit agreed the council should look at how the downtown parking ordinances could be modernized. The council agreed this would be a good topic to explore. Discussion continued.

The discussion turned to the industrial park and industry in general. Gondeck stated that industry goes hand in hand with housing and asked what would the council be willing to do? Voit said he thought that TIF could play a huge role with industrial development. A letter of intent from a manufacturer would allow the city to apply for grants to help with infrastructure. Voit also stated the city's collaboration with the Benton Economic Partnership (BEP) was also very helpful. Tax

abatement could also be another option for the industrial park. Brunn added that some grants are tied to the bonding bills so that means state legislators need to constantly hear from the council and staff. The state can sometimes go more than two years without passing a bonding bill. Discussion and questions continued. Questions followed regarding infrastructure for the industrial lot. A letter of intent would be preferred first step. Unknown if the city can do design work before applying for a grant. Brunn said she would look into it.

Voit stated with the TIF districts some buildings might be too far gone to repair and it might be better to rebuild completely.

Swanson asked if the new well project would begin in the near future. Pappenfus confirmed that was the plan. The funding is pending. Voit added he saw this project as a priority. Brunn said the rate study will help. The priority list at the state keeps growing. State mandates are tough.

Foley's 125 Year Anniversary

Discussion turned to the 125th year anniversary. Brunn asked the council for their thoughts. A few ideas: fireworks, invite the sister city of Colstrip, MT, to Foley. Staff will work with the Civic Group. Brunn asked the council's interest in a possible council panel event for Q&A during Foley Fun Days. Voit expressed support for an informal council panel or game idea. Discussion and questions continued regarding fireworks.

Animal Shelter Contract

Discussion turned to the dog/cat shelter agreement – shelter vs. rescue. Mathiowetz visited Ruff Start in Princeton. There is also an animal impound in Milaca. Ruff Start does not think they'd be interested. Mathiowetz suggested trying to negotiate with Tri-County. Swanson said the city will have to budget more. Brunn will try to work with Tri-County and come back with contract to review. The city can push more communication and education on licensing dogs. Discussion and questions continued.

Mathiowetz had to leave the meeting early.

Park and Recreation Improvements

Discussion on priority items that would rank high among citizens. Pickle ball and tennis court resurfacing will be finished this spring. Residents want more trails and connections. Brunn asked the council for more ideas and priority list.

Gondeck indicated we have good parks and trails. What do we want for the future? Gondeck suggested a municipal cannabis and liquor store to help with revenue. Foley used to have a municipal liquor store. Discussion and questions continued. Brunn added that Sauk Rapids has brought in a lot of revenue with money from their municipal. Swanson expressed support for off-sale municipal liquor. Voit added that Sauk Rapids net profit for their municipal liquor store in 2023 was over \$800,000. The funds could be used for upgrades, equipment, and parks and trails. Brunn suggested a municipal liquor/cannabis store could be located in the new industrial park area. Discussion and questions followed. The council expressed support for staff to research what it would look like. Discussion continued. Brunn said there are still a lot of questions the

state has to answer on the cannabis regulations. Voit said he would put this in the top five in priorities to at least explore the idea of a municipal liquor/cannabis store in the future.

Discussion turned to other park issues. There is some older equipment that should be removed. Gondeck said he'd like feedback from residents on what they would like to see improved or changed in terms of the parks. Swanson said there is definitely some equipment that should be replaced. Brunn asked if staff should take down old equipment if it will take a year to replace it? Council agreed that issue should be discussed further.

Media and Live Council Meetings

Brunn shared that the new mics for the council room have been ordered. She recommended waiting for the mics to be in place before doing a live broadcast of the council meeting. Brunn stated her main concern with the live broadcast is you need people to run it. Staff will need to research how to make that happen.

Benton County New Building

Gondeck stated that the city should support Benton County with their plans to build a new building. Voit agreed as it will benefit the city. Discussion and questions continued. Brunn added that the county is getting ready to launch their community engagement sessions to get more feedback from the public on their new facility. The new building is a push by the county to get more employees working on site instead of remotely. This will benefit the city by having more people working in the downtown area.

Four-Way Stop

Swanson added that a problem he's heard about is the need for a four-way stop at the post office. Brunn explained that it is a county road so the city would not be able to make that decision to add the four-way stop. Discussion and questions continued. Brunn said staff could reach out to the county to see if they would consider it. It's been brought up before.

Other City Needs

Gondeck asked as the city grows what additional needs will the Fire Department have? Pappenfus said as apartment buildings get taller a ladder truck would eventually be needed.

Brunn asked if the council was supportive of Public Works moving to the gray storage shed area and City Hall and the Police Department staying in the same building. Council agreed. Discussion and questions continued on city facilities.

Vacant Houses

Discussion turned to the issue of vacant houses that are not being marketed. Sauk Rapids is buying old houses and redeveloping the land. Topic turned to budgeting for possible facilities plan. Discussion and questions about other priorities.

Community Feedback/Engagement

Lloyd expressed interest in getting a survey for community feedback. Voit agreed and would like to see a community engagement event.

Lion's Park Pond

Gondeck said the Lion's Park pond decommissioning and what's next should be a priority. Still waiting for state to approve plan for decommissioning.

City Staffing and Other Issues

Brunn asked the council for thoughts on other department needs such as staffing, equipment, space, and technology.

Housing Project

Brunn asked the council for next steps on housing. Voit said next step is to figure out the RFP – reject the current. There was discussion to simplify the RFP and put it out again. Suggested another discussion with the council and the attorney. Discussion and questions continued.

Council Training

Brunn gave an overview of annual council training. Foley is a statutory A city. The city administrator and staff takes care of day-to-day things. The mayor has limited authority on making decisions on own. Council provides direction on goals and priorities and delegate to staff to carry out things. Mayor can call an emergency meeting. The city has a communication plan. Enterprise funds such as water/sewer must be self-sustaining. The budget is prepared as a draft at the staff level and reviewed in the summer. A preliminary levy is approved in September and approved in December. Special meetings require a three-day notice unless emergency meeting. The official posting is at City Hall. The rules for remote attendance are different. You can attend remotely, but not all the time. You have to do roll-call vote if members are attending remotely. You have to disclose where you are calling in from (e.g. hotel). Do not respond "Reply All" to emails. You can't conduct business outside of a council meeting. Staff can help communicate to all the councilmembers if you want to share info with the entire council. The mayor controls the meeting. The council does not have to allow for public comments during the meeting. The attorney recommends limiting time and topics for public comments. It's recommended that council doesn't respond to comments during open forum. Brunn explained the difference between motions, resolutions, and ordinances. Brunn explained conflict of interest. Council should not accept gifts over \$5. The council will not always agree on the final decision, but should always respect the individuals and decisions of the council. Brunn encouraged the council to check out the resources through the League of Minnesota Cities.

Old Business

None

New Business

New workshop topic for Feb. 4 meeting. The housing RFP at this meeting.

Mayor's Comments & Open Forum

Debra Olson, 600 Dewey Street, addressed the council about the complaints she has about the parking. She believes the city doesn't follow state statutes. Drivers are not supposed to park up to the crosswalks.

Motion by Gondeck, seconded by Swanson, to adjourn.

Motion carried, unanimous.

Meeting adjourned 7:50 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah A. Brunn".

Sarah A. Brunn, Administrator
(Minutes By: Sara Judson Brown, Administrative Assistant)