

2010 MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 5, 2010

August 12, 2010

November 17, 2010

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Friday, February 5th, 2010 – 12:00 Noon
Grand Forks City Hall Planning Conference Room**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Gary Malm called the February 5th, 2010 Finance Committee meeting to order at 12:00 Noon.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Gary Malm, Warren Strandell, and Dick Grassel.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Executive Assistant.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Malm declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE

A MOTION WAS MADE BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY GRASSEL, TO APPROVE THE SEPTEMBER 25TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Malm, Grassel, and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF RECLASSIFICATION OF EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO OFFICE MANAGER

Haugen reported that the reason for the reclassification request is due to the shifting of responsibilities from the City of Grand Forks back to the MPO. He explained that for many years the Grand Forks City Human Resource Department personnel managed the MPO's benefit packages, however, when the city shifted over to NDPERS they were no longer able to include the MPO on their plan, therefore the pension, as well as the other benefits were shifted back to the MPO to manage on their own, thus creating additional responsibilities for the MPO Executive Assistant.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2010**

Haugen stated, then, that because the Executive Assistant is now doing different work than what was included in her present job description, we worked with the Grand Forks Human Resource Department to determine how to best to acknowledge these additional duties, with the result being to create an Office Manager job title, and ultimately an Office Manager job description.

Haugen distributed copies of a memorandum from the Grand Forks City Human Resource Department indicating that they did work with the MPO, and did determine that they do not have a position that is all inclusive of the duties the Executive Assistant is currently performing, so they created a new Office Manager Position and job description, and then reviewed other positions in order to come up with a salary range to fit the new job description.

Haugen commented that, today, we are asking the Finance Committee to approve forwarding a recommendation to the MPO Executive Policy Board that they approve the reclassification of the Executive Assistant to Office Manager, the new Office Manager job description, a pay grade increase from 32 to 35, as described in the memorandum from the Grand Forks Human Resource Department, and a pay increase to be retroactive to January 1, 2010. He added that the result of the increase would be an additional \$2,300.00, which is easily absorbed in the 2010 budget.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY GRASSEL, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THE THEY APPROVE THE RECLASSIFICATION OF THE EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT TO OFFICE MANAGER, THE AMENDED JOB DESCRIPTION, AND THE CORRESPONDING STEP INCREASE RETROACTIVE TO JANUARY 1, 2010.

Voting Aye: Malm, Grassel, and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

OTHER BUSINESS

1. **Final 2009 Budget Report**

Haugen distributed copies of the final 2009 budget report. He referred to the report, and reminded everyone that at the last MPO Executive Policy Board meeting we talked about end of the year adjustments. He said that we actually had the auditors in earlier this week, and there is one more adjustment they want us to do. He referred to the final report, and pointed out that by adding this adjustment it has once again put us in the negative, just under \$11,000. He explained that the adjustment they want us to do is the result of our having contracts with two firms that bridge 2009 into 2010, and as part of our payment reimbursement to those consultants we retain 10% of each of their invoices so that there is an incentive for them to do a good job at the end in order for them to receive the full 10% withheld. He stated that in prior years the auditors have never made this an issue, but they have this year, so even though we haven't paid these retainages, because the contract obligation occurred in 2009 they want us to include them in our December 2009 billing.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2010**

Haugen reported that he has asked the NDDOT how they want us to deal with this since the payments haven't actually occurred, and there is always the very slim chance that they may not occur at all should the project not be finished satisfactorily, so do they just want us to show it as a paper loss at this time, or do they want us to do a budget adjustment to cover the negative numbers shown. He stated that he just wanted to keep the committee informed that there is a possibility that an additional budget adjustment could be needed if the NDDOT feels one is necessary. He added that, ultimately, it was a clean audit, and we should have no issues with it.

2. Bacon Road Closure Study

Grassel asked if any public hearings on the Bacon Road Closure Study had been held yet. Haugen responded that they haven't. He stated that the input meetings are scheduled to occur on February 23rd. He added that he has received a lot of calls on it.

Haugen reported that he has initiated talks with the NDDOT about the fact that the Mill is talking about bringing in 110 car units in, and Gateway Drive already has problems handling the 25 to 30 car units they currently bring in, so if they increase them to 110 car units, there will be even more problems, so he has the NDDOT's Rail Division looking at how we can handle this issue should it occur. He stated that the short-term solution might be to close Bacon Road, but a longer-term solution might be needed as well.

Grassel commented that at times there is quite a mess there on Gateway even with a few cars, so if they increase that he could see some real issues. Malm suggested that they should look at putting in some more tracks, they have the room to do it. Haugen agreed that, while they may not have a lot of room up in the Mill area itself, they do in the neighborhood areas.

3. Stimulus Money In Minnesota

Grassel stated that he has heard that there might be some stimulus monies available that they could use for the quiet zone, to maybe do that other crossing. Haugen responded that it doesn't look too good. He explained that the Minnesota ATP meet yesterday, and the rail division submitted what they thought were the next rail crossings for consideration of funding, and that crossing didn't show up on their list of about twelve crossings, so you would have to lobby really hard to get it moved up in their minds. He stated that he and Nancy Ellis discussed this issue on the way back from the meeting, and they wondered if it might be a possibility that the reason this crossing was not included might be a tactic of the rail division to try to get East Grand Forks to reconsider closing Central Avenue, as that is everyone's preferred option, so he doesn't know if it is a negotiating ploy, or what it is, but the table they submitted did not include that crossing. He added, however, that it is an eligible project; as is 23rd Street, which has actually been submitted; and as is the Mallory Bridge project, which will be submitted as well.

Grassel asked what the Mallory Bridge project entailed. Strandell responded that it involves an overlay. Haugen added that it involves some fairly simple things, and won't even cost a \$1,000,000 to do. Malm commented that it is amazing how people talk today, that it won't even cost a \$1,000,000, when a \$1,000,000 used to be a lot of money. Haugen pointed out that a

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2010**

traffic light costs over \$500,000 now. Grassel added that it wasn't that long about that on a bridge it was a \$1,000,000 a lane, now we are talking more like \$10,000,000 a lane.

Haugen reported that the MPO Executive Policy Board will be looking at approving a T.I.P. amendment for the Sorlie Bridge Replacement project to add an additional \$3.1 million dollars just to start trying to figure out what to do with it, and then possibly another \$3.1 million dollars or more just to come to some kind of conclusion on what to do with it. Grassel asked why the high cost. Haugen responded that they are worried about environmental issues, historical issues, how it will tie into the flood protection system, local demands for enhancements, and finally the fact that there are two states and two federal regions involved so there will be a huge coordination effort required as well. He stated that ultimately they feel it will end up being over \$6,000,000 before they even decide if there will be a total replacement or a major rehab.

Grassel commented that when he went to St. Paul a number of years ago to discuss the possibility of them allowing them to repair the northern side of the bridge, they argued over the historical issues concerning the bridge, and they wouldn't let them do anything at that time, therefore he doesn't feel that it will ever be replaced. Strandell added there is also the concern with elevation, because if you raise it up you will have all kinds of problems. Malm suggested that they may have to consider going with what was originally there, a floating bridge, which they just let loose in the winter to float up on one side of the river.

4. Thompson Bridge Progress

Strandell reported that there has been a website created on which you can see the progress on the Thompson Bridge construction project. He stated that there is a link to it on the Polk County Website.

5. MPO Executive Policy Board Meeting Date

Haugen reported that the next MPO Executive Policy Board meeting has been rescheduled for Friday, February 19th instead of Wednesday, February 17th.

ADJOURNMENT

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GRASSEL, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO ADJOURN THE FEBRUARY 5TH, 2010, MEETING OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE AT 12:26 P.M.

Voting Aye: Malm, Grassel, and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis, Executive Assistant

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Thursday, August 12th, 2010 – 9:00 A.M.
Grand Forks City Hall Conference Room A102**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Gary Malm called the August 12th, 2010 Finance Committee meeting to order at 9:00 A.M.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Gary Malm, Warren Strandell, and Dick Grassel.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Office Manager.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Malm declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 5TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE

A MOTION WAS MADE BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY GRASSEL, TO APPROVE THE FEBRUARY 5TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Malm, Grassel, and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF ADDITIONAL PLANNING FUNDS

Haugen stated that, as you will recall, at the July MPO Executive Policy Board meeting the board approved the MPO accept an additional \$300,000 in planning funds, and we now have to determine how we want to use those monies.

Haugen reported that, in addition to working with staff from both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, we were also required to do public notification soliciting work activities for these funds. He stated that ultimately they were able to identify four corridor studies on the North Dakota side, which, he explained was because of a stipulation from the NDDOT, that they preferred to

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12TH, 2010**

see the work done on the North Dakota side unless there was a project that benefited the entire metro area, which was shared with staff.

Haugen commented that Service Safety received these recommendations from staff, and forwarded them on to the City Council without much comment. He said, however, that the one concern they had was that the dollar amounts that are shown as a preliminary budget. He referred to the City's Staff Report, and explained that these are estimates that include the consultant and MPO staff costs required to complete these studies, and we are fairly certain they are pretty accurate as to what we will receive for consultant costs.

Haugen reported that one thing he is requesting as part of the approval of this amendment to the work program is to also approve the creation of a contract position. He explained that with these additional projects, the work involved to do them will be above and beyond the work we already have scheduled, therefore we are proposing to create a position titled "Planning Technician", at a pay grade 30.

Haugen commented that, just to give you an idea of where that grade fits with our current staff salary levels; the Senior Planner is at a grade 47, the Planner is at a grade 40, the Office Manager is at a grade 35, and the Executive Director is at a grade 66. He stated that the end result, provided the position is approved, we would have a contracted position that will last until December 2011, with an annual salary of just over \$32,500, or \$42,000 with benefits.

Haugen reported that the person we are considering for the position is our current intern, Matt Leal. He stated that Matt started working for us this past January, and has been diligently working on the Land Use Plans for both Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, and by all reports has been doing a very good job. He added that in addition to working on these additional projects, Matt will continue to work on the Land Use Plan Updates as well.

Haugen gave a brief summary on some of the additional work involved with these new projects, including traffic counts, etc..

Haugen commented that it is understood by both parties that this is a temporary contracted position, and that we don't expect it to become a permanent position in the future.

Strandell referred to the staff report, and asked about the wording for the second project; specifically where it states: "South of Target, and East of Columbia Road", and whether or not that is correct. Haugen responded that it is not. He referred to a map and pointed out where the project is located, explained that it is actually West of Columbia Road. He explained that this is a study that we were asked to do back when the Wellness Center was proposed to be located here. He stated that the Park District has park land there, and the drainway is located there, and there is a disagreement between the Park District and the City as to whether or not the right-of-way actually exists. He said that the Park District believes it does not, but the City believes it does, so they asked the MPO to try to help resolve this by determine what the basic grid pattern for that area should be.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12TH, 2010**

Haugen referred to Project #3, and pointed out that you get back to the issue of the Wellness Center siting issue. He explained that because they are proposing the Wellness Center be located out here, therefore this study will assist in helping ensure the necessary traffic infrastructure is in place. He added that there is also speculation that the Library may also locate out here as well.

Haugen stated that the intent is to start the RFP process for Projects 1 and 2 right away. He said that Project 3 will start sometime before the end of the year. He explained that the reason for waiting until then is to try to identify all the developments that might be locating there. He said that the last thing they would want to do would be to get a study going based on a certain set of assumptions, then have those assumptions thrown out and a whole new set of assumptions come in on us, so, because of the risk involved here, we aren't going to jump into this study right away.

Haugen mentioned that they did not identify here, but staff strongly considered doing a study on University Avenue. He explained that with the change in presidency, there has been a little more focus on making that corridor more pedestrian friendly. He stated that back in 2002 we did a study to try to accomplish just that, but the president at that time was not interested in the findings, so that study was ultimately thrown out of our planning books, so we are now back at looking at what could be done on University Avenue to make it more pedestrian friendly.

Haugen commented that another thing UND has done is to develop a Climate Action Plan. He said that one of the actions included in that plan is to ultimately see University Avenue closed to through traffic, so we need to help walk them through all the ramifications doing that would create. He stated that we will be doing that study under our next normal work program, so we aren't saying we won't do it, just that we aren't going to do it this fall.

Haugen reported that, with the additional \$300,000 in funds, we will also need to have an additional \$75,000 in local match. He explained that if we create the contracted position, we will utilize about \$50,000 to \$55,000 of that \$375,000 for that position, and the remainder would be used toward consultant costs. Strandell asked where the \$75,000 will come from. Haugen responded it will come from the City of Grand Forks. Malm asked if they agreed to give that amount. Haugen responded that they did.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY GRASSEL, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO APPROVE FORWARDING A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THE THEY APPROVE AMENDMENT #3 TO THE FY2010 UPWP, AND APPROVE THE CREATION OF A PLANNING TECHNICIAN JOB DESCRIPTION.

Voting Aye: Malm, Grassel, and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
THURSDAY, AUGUST 12TH, 2010**

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

***THE AUGUST 12TH, 2010, MEETING OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
ADJOURNED AT 9:36 A.M.***

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis,
Office Manager

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Wednesday, November 17th, 2010 – 11:00 A.M.
Grand Forks County Commissioners Board Room**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Gary Malm called the November 17th, 2010 Finance Committee meeting to order at 10:50 A.M.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Gary Malm and Warren Strandell.

Staff present were: Earl Haugen, GF/EGF MPO Executive Director and Peggy McNelis, GF/EGF MPO Office Manager.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Malm declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 12TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE

A MOTION WAS MADE BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY MALM, TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 12TH, 2010, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

Voting Aye: Malm and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Haugen reported that the two-year term for our current officers expires at the end of the year, and per our by-laws, Mr. Malm will move into the “immediate past-chair” position, Mr. Strandell will move into the “chairman” position, Mr. Grassel will no longer be an officer, and we will need to elect a “secretary” from Grand Forks. He added that this election can occur at next month’s meeting, or it can wait until the January 2011 meeting.

Haugen stated that he was just made aware that Mr. Adams’ term does expire in December, however, a letter has been sent to the Grand Forks Planning Commission asking that they either

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 2010**

reappoint Mr. Adams, or appoint a new member to the Executive Policy Board, therefore, it might make sense to wait until that occurs before holding the elections in order that either Mr. Adams, or the new representative are present for the elections. Ms. McNelis reported that the Grand Forks Planning Commission will meet, and should act on this issue prior to the December 2010 Executive Policy Board meeting, therefore it should be okay to hold elections at the December meeting if the board wishes.

Haugen pointed out that over the years it has been our practice to allow the incoming Chair to determine where they would like to hold the meetings. Mr. Strandell stated that it would be his preference to hold the meetings in the East Grand Forks City Hall Conference Council Chambers.

Information only.

MATTER OF EQUIPMENT PURCHASE

Haugen reported that we are looking for approval to purchase up to three computers, not to exceed \$3,500.00. He pointed out that the staff report indicates that the Finance Committee can approve purchases up to \$5,000.00; and he can approve purchases up to \$1,000.00 without board approval. He explained that two of the computers will be lap-tops, one for Ms. Kouba and one for himself; and the other will be a tower for our interns.

Haugen commented that we do handle our purchases through the City of Grand Forks' IT Department, who has provided us with the specifications and costs for these computers, with a cost estimate of about \$1,200 for each of the lap-tops and \$850 for the tower.

Strandell asked if there would be any need to update software as well. Haugen responded that the computers will come with Windows 7 installed, and the rest of the software will be transferred from our existing computers to the new ones.

A MOTION WAS MADE BY STRANDELL, SECONDED BY MALM, TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF UP TO THREE (3) NEW COMPUTERS AT A TOTAL NOT TO EXCEED \$3,500.00.

Voting Aye: Malm and Strandell.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF PLANNING TECHNICIAN REVIEW PROCESS

Haugen stated that this is a discussion item through which staff is attempting to garner guidance from the Finance Committee as to how we should handle the Planning Technician three month review process we were directed to perform.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 2010**

Haugen reminded the Finance Committee that when MPO staff requested a Planning Technician position be established; it was suggested that the position be placed at a pay-grade 30, with a starting salary of \$32,554. He explained that this put the position at 80% of midpoint, which is where most new hires are placed.

Haugen stated, however, that when the Executive Board approved the request, the motion included a review for a possible salary increase at three months, and was approved unanimously.

Haugen referred to the staff report, and pointed out that he laid out the procedure we normally follow for new hires, which requires a probationary period during the first six months, with two evaluations; the first at three months and the second at the end of six months, so, while it is typical that a three month evaluation is done, the difference here is that the motion included the possibility of a salary increase with that evaluation, and he isn't sure how to proceed, and what will be the basis of looking at the salary review process.

Haugen stated that when the three-month evaluation is done, it will show that the employee we hired is doing the job as expected. He added that we knew going in that this was the employee we were going to seek for the position, so there aren't any surprises there. He stated that the one complication, however, is that this is a contracted position, with a definite ending date of December 2011, and there aren't any plans at this time to extend the position beyond that time frame, so it is a bit confusing as to how we should proceed with this possible salary adjustment.

Haugen explained that when they pegged the position at a pay grade 30, it fit with what we were finding for similar positions at the national level, as well as with the City of Grand Forks' pay grade scale for technician positions within the City.

Haugen pointed out that he also included the different percentiles, and explained that there have been occurrences when the City of Grand Forks has hired people above the 80% midpoint, but that usually occurs when the person has more than the minimum qualifications for the position they are being hired for.

Malm asked what Mr. Haugen's recommendation would be for handling this situation, which, he added, got fouled up with Mr. Christensen's actions. Haugen responded that if there is a desire to increase the salary, his recommendation would be to promote the position to a higher pay grade, and keep it at 80% of midpoint rather than to keep it at the current pay grade and increase the pay, thus putting it above 80% of midpoint. He added, however, that the other side of this is that he feels we established a competitive wage when we set the position at a pay grade 30.

Malm stated that his preference would be to just leave it alone, and follow the normal procedures for new employees.

Discussion ensued.

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
GF/EGF MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH, 2010**

Haugen commented that in December the City of Grand Forks will be adopting a 2011 Salary Plan. He stated that at that time there is a possibility that the whole planning market will have shifted upward, as there is a history of that occurring, which would then mean that we would have to make a market adjustment to keep the technician pay in line with the market. Malm responded that that is fine, that the position is currently within market now, so we don't have any reason to change it, and it would seem to make sense that we should wait until the new salary plan is approved.

Strandell asked if he understands correctly that this is a contracted position. Haugen responded it is. Strandell asked what the contract says about pay. Haugen responded that the contract states that the salary is for the entire life of the contract. Strandell stated that we should follow what the contract says. Haugen commented that one thing we might have done, based on the motion made, was to amend the contract to include the request that there be a three-month review and possible salary increase, however, that was not case. Strandell agreed, adding that we could re-negotiate the contract, but he isn't sure that is appropriate either.

Consensus was that the salary should remain at its current rate.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

***THE NOVEMBER 17TH, 2010, MEETING OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE
ADJOURNED AT 11:10 A.M.***

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis,
Office Manager