

2018 MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 13, 2018 Minutes

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Thursday, September 13th, 2018 – 12:00 Noon
East Grand Forks City Hall – MPO Conference Room**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman, Ken Vein called the September 13th, 2015, Finance Committee meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present, Mike Powers, Ken Vein, and Clarence Vetter.

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

Guest(s) present were: Todd Feland, Grand Forks City Administrator.

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Vein declared a quorum was present.

APPROVAL OF THE JUNE 15TH, 2015, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE

MOVED BY VETTER, SECONDED BY POWERS, TO APPROVE THE JUNE 14TH, 2015, MINUTES OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE, AS SUBMITTED.

Vetter said that because this is two years later, anything that they've done is it ratified, should they have taken action on those items without the minutes being approved or is that two separate things. Vein responded that he thinks it is two separate things. He explained that he doesn't think you have to wait for the minutes to be approved for action because he the Grand Forks City Council doesn't get minutes until months later for approval.

McNelis suggested that the Finance Committee could request that the minutes from the Finance Committee be submitted and approved by the MPO Executive Policy Board in the future since, as these minutes show, the Finance Committee doesn't meet on a regular basis. Vein said that he actually recommends that we do that because this is just too long to go without approving the Finance Committee minutes, plus we would be bringing the information to the full board so they know what happened at the meeting.

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Consensus was that the Finance Committee Meeting minutes will be submitted for approval to the MPO Executive Policy Board in the future.

Voting Aye: Powers, Vein, and Vetter.

Voting Nay: None.

MATTER OF APPROVAL OF EXECUTION OF THE CONTRACT FOR THE GRAND FORKS DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Haugen reported that at the August 22nd, 2018 MPO Executive Policy Board meeting we discussed how the RFP for this study was trimmed back before we released it, but due to some miscommunication, the submitting consulting firm was under the misconception that they should still propose what was in the original full RFP as it was drafted.

Haugen commented that as they were negotiating with the consultant and Grand Forks City staff, the thing that City staff wanted to have focus on was updating the Parking Study that we did in 2011, so that was one thing that we wanted to make sure this scope of work included; and then the second thing this scope of work entails is how to deal with special events in the downtown area, so this will create a special event parking plan for those events to help get the word out as to where people should park.

Haugen stated that with the Downtown Action Plan there are some places, not so much parking, but there are other vacant places that it is hoped will be developed that will generate a need to maybe use some parking on a more permanent basis than is currently available now on a come basis because there are more permanent offices or residences in those redevelopments, so the event parking management will be an important component of the draft scope that we are asking you to authorize.

Haugen said that one of the things that we lost, that was in the original RFP as released, was to look at the one-way pairs of North 3rd and North 4th Streets. He explained that there was a study done ten years ago on the one-way pairs. He added that the traffic patterns haven't changed much, the land uses haven't changed, and the only real change has happened with Simonson Lumber moving out but their retail traffic has actually been replaced with the apartment resident traffic usage so the 2008 study is still relevant thus we felt that the pairing study could be eliminated from the scope of work.

Haugen commented that the other thing that was removed from the scope of work was the downtown to UND University Avenue study. He added that there is a mill and overlay project scheduled for that corridor in 2020, and as part of that project they will have to do a project development process, and if there are some things that this study was supposed to look at they will already be looked at in that project development process. Vein asked if this study will be from 3rd all the way to Columbia. Haugen responded that it goes all the way to State Street. Vein said that they are proposing a coulee to Columbia plan too, but he doesn't know to what detail or how complex that project will be. Haugen responded that he knows that the mill and

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overlay is going through that stretch of roadway, and the City tried to apply for the Main Street grant to do a lot of that coulee to Columbia enhancement, but it was not awarded them, so he isn't sure where UND and the City are at with trying to incorporate some of those things still with the mill and overlay project; and obviously the federal funds that are tied to the mill and overlay could be used to pay for some of those enhancement since they were asking for federal funds to do them, but that would mean you would shorten your mill and overlay project, or with the recent sales tax increase the City has additional local revenue that they would contribute towards that enhancement part of it, but he knows that the mill and overlay is from 3rd Street past the coulee to either State Street or Stanford Road.

Haugen stated that another thing that the Executive Policy Board took out, based on the Technical Advisory Committee's recommendation, from the scope of work that KLJ originally proposed, was the whole downtown street network and taking a multi-modalism look at it. He explained that it was removed for a couple reasons; one was the concern of what really the redevelopment action plan would be like from the effort that is going on, and what the outcome of the DeMers Avenue project would be and with the DeMers Avenue project in place we didn't believe we would get good traffic data to assist in that plan. Haugen commented that one of the things that we are going to, when we do that study in the future, is with the parking study we are still going to look at some of those "what if" scenarios because they will impact the demand of parking similarly to how they will change the demand of our street network, and so with the KLJ study that we are asking you to execute we will get these scenarios of the increased ride hailing or the increased modal split, and then also a little look at what autonomous vehicles might do.

Haugen reported that something that is going on with parking nationally is; the airport in the twin cities is building a half-billion dollar parking ramp, but what they are doing is to try to make it so that their levels are actually level and not inclined because the thought is that the demand for vehicles being stored there will decrease significantly, and then you have a floor in a parking structure that is more easily converted into other space use, whether it be housing or retail or something else. He stated that we are getting kind of glimpse of that kind of thing in this parking study that will help us and inform us when we do that other stuff and give us some benefit even though we aren't doing the full network analysis of the whole street system.

Haugen said that we have a budget of \$60,000 and this scope of work will now fit that budget. He added that we are comfortable with this scope of work that is being presented to you that we are asking you to authorize we award to KLJ. He said that the NDDOT is also comfortable with it.

Vein stated that he understands that this was discussed with Meredith Richards and this is the solution you both came up with for the scope of work. Haugen responded that it is. Vein said that he was concerned because he does think we need to do the intermodal study for the downtown because we have always questioned where the bikepaths should be, how to deal with walkability and such, and you also identified the fact that we don't have good data right now because of what is happening with the Kennedy Bridge, so it is kind of a bit of a, as we are redoing DeMers Avenue and what we want to say because we didn't have bike paths on it, the

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idea was we would use Kittson or 1st Avenue or whatever, so he thinks it is important that we do the study, so the question really is when will we do that and what makes the most sense because he thinks sooner rather than later because we have such a great focus right now on development downtown, and to manage that development we need the study, so it is kind of like the cart before the horse, he isn't sure how to do that. Haugen responded that after they talked briefly last night, it make him think, and we are going to start a new two year work program and are asking for projects; and we talked a little bit that the DeMers Avenue project, we have the Kennedy project now, and then starting in the spring the DeMers Avenue reconstruction project, so we have that concern about when we can collect data, but as he mentioned last night we've been collecting traffic data through the video camera counting for two years and so have a strong breadth of data telling us what is really going on with the main roadway there, not just on a seasonal basis but on a month and daily basis and we could also identify that that is part of what the event management of this scope will do is when we have those events we will notice what the peaks are, when they are occurring and what they generate in traffic; so the short answer is that there is no reason why we couldn't ask to do that study starting next year and do a separate RFP for it and focus on just that multi-modalism on the whole street network. He added that another thing that we will have to tie into, and get East Grand Forks and MnDOT to participate in, is they are also recognizing that DeMers Avenue on the Minnesota side has some capacity and mobility issues as well and so they are needing to develop a plan on how to address that issue as well, and with that for those side streets that we were concerned about, counts, he thinks before the actual DeMers Avenue reconstruction starts we can squeeze in those counts quickly and get traffic from those areas, so while DeMers is actually being reconstructed we could work on that plan you desire to have done and not wait for it to be done.

Vein commented that some of this it is with our consultant, as we try to redefine a little bit of what our downtown looks like, and some of it not just analyzing current traffic but also where we want future traffic to go and how we would make that happen because, if you go back to when we talked about that split or ring road on DeMers, which was because of what we had projected for traffic issues then, well that's not going to happen but we still need to look at how best to deal with that projected traffic. He said that he understands that there is now technology out there that can make us more efficient, and he doesn't know if he knows what those technologies are. Haugen responded that we are using some of those technologies with our current studies, such as using data from our smart phones. He gave a brief explanation on how this technology works, and how we could use it for this study.

Discussion ensued.

***MOVED BY VETTER, SECONDED BY POWERS, TO APPROVE AUTHORIZING THE
MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD CHAIRMAN AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH KLJ ENGINEERING TO DO THE GRAND FORKS
DOWNTOWN TRANSPORTATION STUDY, NOT TO EXCEED \$60,000.***

Voting Aye: Powers, Vein, and Vetter.

Voting Nay: None.

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Haugen commented that we will need to have both City Councils work with their staff to ensure that when it comes back to the MPO Executive Policy Board to do the intermodal portion of the study next year it goes through smoothly. Vein asked if it would go through the Technical Advisory Committee next. Hauge responded that it wouldn't. He explained that it is internal to each City so on the Grand Forks side it will go to its Engineering and Planning staff. He added that they would already be working on coming up with a list of work activities for the next two years; and on the East Grand Forks side it would be your Consulting Engineer and City Planner. He stated that also on the Minnesota side we would need to get MnDOT engaged and on the North Dakota side, while NDDOT is important, they typically not the players that bring things to the table.

MATTER OF DISCUSSION ON MPO OFFICE RENTAL SPACE

Haugen reported that the MPO lease agreements that we currently have with both Cities will expire at the end of this year and need to be renegotiated. He stated that on the North Dakota side it is the execution of another option on a lease, and each year we have to work with the Grand Forks staff to update the agreement with the latest cost index inflator. He said that on the East Grand Forks side we signed a one-year lease for 2018 and then the language states that both parties agree to the conditions. He added that typically East Grand Forks will use the same cost inflator that Grand Forks uses, so our cost per square foot is roughly around \$12.50 a sq. ft.

Haugen stated that we do need to start having a conversation with both Cities about our lease agreements and getting them so that we are good to go in 2019 with our space, so included in the packet were the two actual agreements.

Haugen referred to the Grand Forks City Hall agreement and explained that we are now basically occupying one cubicle and are paying our pro rata share of one person to nine total people through all of the space so we do have use of that space.

Haugen referred to the East Grand Forks City Hall agreement and explained that back in 2014 we surrendered the space we were occupying in Grand Forks City Hall and moved into our current office space in East Grand Forks City Hall. He pointed out that we rent three rooms on the east end of City Hall. He added that we have actually been renting these three rooms for ten plus years, even though we didn't have the same staff level we do now; and then when we moved in 2014 we also rented another small office at the opposite end of City Hall as well.

Haugen said that our staff is split. He added that when we did move out of Grand Forks City Hall to allow them to bring in their Community Development Department, which was housed outside of City Hall, the agreement was that it would be a temporary move for the MPO as the City of Grand Forks was going to be doing a major space study to see what kind of improvements could be made to make more space available, but nothing really happened over there and we settled in and found that the space in East Grand Forks City Hall works well for us.

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Haugen commented that recently an opportunity has come up, the Grand Forks Herald Building. He referred to a diagram of the Grand Forks Herald Building and explained that a couple of well known developers are tentatively purchasing it and are looking for tenants and Grand Forks City Hall is looking for space for some of their employees and have tentatively identified that the yellow space would be available for the Grand Forks Planning and Community Development staff, and back to that original thought when we moved out in 2014, that when space would come available we would try to move back in, so co-locate with those staff people.

Haugen referred again to the diagram and pointed out that you will see that for the most part instead of cubicles there would be individual offices like we currently have here in East Grand Forks City Hall. He said that another part of this is that the front part of this space would be converted into a board room with state of the art technology that would be offered and hopefully used for our Technical Advisory Committee and MPO Executive Policy Board meetings on a monthly basis, as well as other meetings that the MPO might want to hold there. He stated that the room shown in blue is a community space and could potentially hold a satellite library among other things.

Haugen pointed out where the old printing press room is located in the building and commented that we had held community meetings there when the Herald owned it. He stated that at that time we just had to ask a Herald employee to sponsor us and it was a free space for us to have our meetings, so we were able to do that at no cost to us. He then referred to a sheet with the cost breakdown and explained that these are the square foot costs as it would breakout. He said that for us, if we are paying our pro rata share of all of these, when you add them up it is almost double what we are currently paying for space. He explained that we currently aren't paying any of the CAM costs at either City Hall.

Haugen reported that utilities would also be another potential cost that we currently aren't paying to either city, and then the meeting space, which is the most expensive amenity, would be something that you would need to decide if you want to hold your meetings there. He said that our traditional practice is that every two years when a new Chairperson takes over that person has the discretion as to where our meetings are being held; and while we used to rotate more often, the past several Chairs have decided to continue holding the meetings here in East Grand Forks, but that would be something that we would have to ask.

Vein commented that one of the values of holding the meetings here is parking; but there would be parking available across the street from the Herald building.

Feland stated that, again, this is probably the first Mr. Vein has seen of this, but he was tasked with taking a look at this building. He said that there are three parts; there is the community room and how to make it into a shared space on behalf of the community, the red area is really an executive board room and/or on-line classroom, and the yellow area is the office space, and the area in gray is where the Economic Development Corporation is currently housed.

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Feland said that they are looking at ways that would allow us to bring similar staff together, so obviously Planning, Community Development, the MPO along with the EDC are all like departments.

Feland commented that another thing that Mr. Vein asked him to do; and they did do a space study on their City Hall so he has a 2014 Space Study, was to look at the existing City Hall and how could this fit in these three kind of different silos so he is working on that. He added that the other thing the Grand Forks City Council has asked is to see if there are any other partners that might be interested, including the MPO, so he is also working with the School District, UND, etc., to try to get as much fact finding as possible, and then get back to the developers to let them know if they should go to the next step with formal communications on this or not; how serious are we about this space.

Vein stated that ?? of departments in discussions as they are trying to take that building that is for sale and try to keep it doing the right things in the right hands and not use it for other purposes that may not be in the best interest of the downtown, or not maintained in the appropriate conditions that we are looking trying to do, we thought it was an enhancement to utilize that building, so he thinks, from what he heard earlier, the City of Grand Forks is willing to expend some funds to make that happen, but only if we can get everybody to come together.

Feland said that Mr. Haugen did say, however, that it wouldn't make sense for the MPO to move if Planning and Community Development don't, if we can't put it all together, and he thinks we all agree with that.

Vein stated that this is just on the agenda for discussion only. Haugen explained that it was put on just to bring you up to date. He added, again, that we do have to renew our leases, and this is something that needs to be considered with that. He said that we have informed the City that if their Planning and Community Development Departments didn't locate there it made little sense for the MPO to be there without those like-minded departments, and the plan was for us to only be here as our main office temporarily and we would move back so this is just an extension of that plan. He said that from a staff perspective we would try to maintain at least one office space, or back to our original space with three offices. He added that we always want to have a presence in both City Halls, which we have had since the early 1990s.

Haugen said that we aren't asking for a decision, but just want to introduce the topic to you so you know that we will be having discussions with your staff about space leases. He added that he can see that if the Herald building were to fall into place, what he is hearing it would be a May/June timeframe before we might make the move so we would need to have at least an extension of our current leases to cover part of next year regardless, and whether we negotiate to have the full year there our leases allow, with proper notification, for us to cancel or change them so he would try to advocate to just sign another year extension on them. He said that he isn't sure if either City Hall are going to try to, obviously we might be paying for things we currently not paying for, whether they will use this as an opportunity to say, hmm, there might be some charges we can get, so we will have to see if that's also involved.

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Haugen commented that, as Mr. Feland mentioned, there is sort of a decision the City Council has to make on their staff prior to us having to make a decision on where our staff location will be. He added that with the process, typically, the use of the Finance Committee is to give a recommendation to the full board, so that when the board meets there is a recommendation before them from part of the board membership.

Powers asked if Mr. Haugen is basically recommending a one-year extension in relation to the timeframe we are talking about here. Vein responded that there is no doubt that we will have to do some kind of extension. He asked Mr. Feland what kind of timeline they are under in making a decision. Feland responded that the developers, and he knows that sometimes they give you timelines that might not be hard and fast, but they have a date of early October that they told the Forum that they would make a decision. He added that they have a contingent offer in, and it already moved another month, and he said that we would work as hard as possible to at least let them know how serious we are by that time, but to be frank he thinks, its being marketed by Kevin Ritterman, so it is basically a phone call to Fargo to ask for more time because we are still working through it, but he doesn't want to let it linger either, so if we don't think it is going to work out or we can't get partners he would rather let them know sooner than later, so he is thinking by early October we should have some sense of whether we are going to continue forward with it or not.

Vein commented that we have our MPO Executive Policy Board meeting next Wednesday. Haugen said that this is correct, but there wasn't really going to be a specific agenda item; but you, as Chair, in the past have informed them of the latest development on this under Other Business. He added that if the Finance Committee makes a motion to allow us to try to get that one-year lease extension for both City Halls, we will work towards that. He said that on the Herald building he thinks we will be waiting to see what Grand Forks is doing with their staff, and once there has been sort of movement on that end we can reconvene this committee to start talking about what our desire with the MPO staff is and the possible leasing of the space. He added that at that time perhaps we will know more on what these numbers are, these square foot costs we might be asked to participate in so we will know what our potential rent costs will be.

Vein said that the only question he would ask is should we authorize six months or a year. Feland responded that he doesn't think that anyone wants to move in the winter, and it is going to take some time for us to get everything worked out so he would say extend it another six months, you can always extend it another six months if necessary. Haugen commented that he would have the opposite approach and extend it for a year with that clause in the agreement that allows us to give notice, so he thinks that clause that is already there functions as a way to not have to bring up something mid-year to extend it.

Vetter asked if he heard correctly that if we move to the Herald building that our rent is going to double. Haugen responded that that is what the current figures are suggesting. Vetter asked what the likelihood that they would come down that far, probably not good. Haugen said that the question; part of it could come down is, as we are our host halls are absorbing some costs, so this is assuming that we are paying our share of all those other cots, so that is a possibility that they

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hold us harmless from that point of view. He added that the meeting space, you guys would have to decide if that is where you want to have your meetings, and, again our past history has been that it is the Chair's discretion and we rotated every two years, we just haven't done that recently, so we might not be having our monthly meetings there so are we paying for space we aren't utilizing, so that would be another way we could adjust the cost down. He said that this is kind of just the worst case high point, it is likely to be less.

Powers asked who Mr. Feland was talking to at UND. Feland responded that they have a meeting next week with President Kennedy. Powers asked if he has given any indication of who or what would be going into that building. He said that he finds it kind of unsettling that they would even consider moving when they are tearing down buildings and are consolidating, why would they go off campus. Feland responded that they are looking at probably something like Adult Education, having a downtown presence where they can put a UND flag up. He said that he thinks there is some pressure that they should have a downtown presence so they are looking at different programs that may help their students, maybe attract enrollment by having a downtown presence; or may some internships or things that they can work through here. He added that they did speak to the Provost and their Facilities Manager, so there are some ideas that they have, and they did say, like you just said, that they have more than enough space but maybe this is more of a strategic space for them and their brand in Grand Forks.

Vetter commented that when he looks at this there are two issues for him; one is money, and if indeed we are going to pay twice as much or it then he isn't in favor of moving to the Herald building, but that is yet to be ironed out; and the second is where would our staff be best housed, do they do their job better in this office or are they interacting more with Grand Forks individuals and therefore it would be better for them to be over there with the Grand Forks people, that is something that our staff needs to let us know that in order to do our job in the most efficient manner we need to be house here or there. Vein agreed that those are two important things we need to look at, operations and financially, what makes the most sense, and it could vary, but we certainly need the fact to make the decision.

Vein stated that what he is getting here is that we need some more information, so we should hold this in this committee for the time being. Vetter said that if both of our contract have the clause where we can get out with 30-day notice, then you just go ahead and negotiate the contracts as we normally would, keeping in the back of our mind that the possibility of the Herald building is there, and as things progress with the Herald building we will take a look at it down the line but between now and then we just negotiate our contracts as if we are going to stay where we are at. Powers agreed.

Feland commented that these quick conversations with the developer, he just thinks it was a good touchpoint to say that the committee thought that there is no way we are going to do that so that they know it now rather than later at some point. He said that this gives us some focus, talking with the ??, we're in at these things, you know there is a possibility but if it's not then it's likely that it is pretty low, so at least it gives us some sense of guidance in trying to finalize things with the developer and bring it back.

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Vein stated that he thinks what would be probably worthwhile then is if we do extend the contracts, continue that process, but also make note that we are looking at this at the same time too so it wouldn't be a surprise later on. He added that in their earlier conversations they felt that there was value to having our staffs working closely together, and he thinks that maybe you are getting that here, not as much, but there is some value to having Community Development, the Planning Department, and the MPO there; as well as having the Economic Development Department all on the same level that would bring us some cohesiveness and communication to up to a place that we don't currently have, so there are some things that it is hard to put a value to that would be important to us in the long run.

Haugen said that from a staff perspective we would still try to maintain space in both City Halls; that is what we would be advocating. Vein commented that that would have to come back as an agenda item; but he wonders if we wouldn't want to continue to have discussion here in the Finance Committee before a recommendation would be made. He said that there are two subjects here; one would be the idea of extending the current contracts and the second would be looking at this as an option.

Vetter stated that, as he said before, he thinks we should just negotiate the current contracts as if we are going to stay where we are, but keep in mind that the Herald Building is an option. He added that for him in regard to the Herald Building the cost would have to be pretty close to what we are paying now to justify making the move; the efficiency end of it he can't see paying twice as much rent to increase that efficiency because staff on both sides of the river already are interacting and even if Grand Forks would decide to move to the Herald Building our staff would still have a presence with the Planning and Community Development Group, it would just be one office rather than a larger office space, so they would still have interaction, so the finance end of it is going to weigh greater on his mind than the operation side of it. Vein commented that for him he would say it just depends on how big that dollar gap is because he does think there is a value to it, there is a value wherever they are at, and he thinks there is a value to it depending on how much interaction there would be and what that cost is, can you justify the additional money.

Haugen commented that what he heard was that we are in both City Halls; if Grand Forks moves their Planning and Community Development office, we are there in the Herald building, it is just a question of how much of a space. He added that if it is too costly the space will be shrunk down, but if it is a reasonable cost the space can be expanded.

Haugen stated that we try to host interns in both City Halls at the same time so even though we only had one full time equivalent working here in these three spaces, we had space for that intern to work usually 20-hours during the semesters and 40-hours in the summer, so even though some people looked at three places for just one MPO staff, we use the space and it is a comfortable set-up, so when we talk about the Herald building it wouldn't be just, perhaps, one office for one employee, we would try to have space for that intern to be working there as well.

Haugen said that we will move forward and try to negotiate a one-year lease with the two agencies.

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OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

***MOVED BY VETTER, SECONDED BY POWERS, TO ADJOURN THE SEPTEMBER 12TH,
2018, MEETING OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE AT 12:56 P.M.***

Voting Aye: Powers, Vein, and Adams

Voting Nay: None.

Respectfully submitted by,

Peggy McNelis,
Office Manager