

**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

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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.

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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.

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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