

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE
FINANCE COMMITTEE OF THE
GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
Friday, January 28th, 2022 – 2:00 P.M.
Zoom Meeting**

CALL TO ORDER

Jeannie Mock, Chairperson, called the January 28th, 2022, Finance Committee meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

CALL OF ROLL

On a Call of Roll the following members were present: Jeannie Mock, Clarence Vetter, and Warren Strandell.

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

DETERMINATION OF A QUORUM

Mock declared a quorum was present.

MATTER OF CONSIDERATION OF PROPOSED MODIFICATIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S JOB DESCRIPTION

Haugen reminded that the Executive Board granted this Committee the authority to act on the MPO Executive Director's job description. He referred to the modified Executive Director's job description that was included in the packet and pointed out that what is shown in yellow are the modifications or additions that were offered by Mr. Grasser. He stated that in the e-mail he did highlight that for #14 that the acronym at the end is no longer correct, it should now be MTP, which stands for Metropolitan Transportation Plan. He said that that would be the only technical correction that we would offer.

Mock asked if there were any thoughts on those changes from the committee. Vetter responded that as he was looking at them he felt that for #11 he is unsure of he wants "timely oral and written communications to all local agencies"; right now he is thinking "timely and all" should be taken out of there, he thinks we need to provide oral and written communications to local agencies but if we include all that is pretty encompassing, and "timely" is such a subjective term because timely to one person may not be timely to someone else. He said that he also isn't sure we should #14 in there at all, he gets were Mr. Grasser is coming from, but he thinks that is a

personal request from him rather than from the Cities as a whole, or for what we want to anticipate. He stated that as things change they need to go through the process to make the change in the transportation plan, and #14 just seems like it might limit the MPO's process - you need to circumvent the process and work with the local agencies when they come to you so he just doesn't like the way that one sits at all. Mock asked if Mr. Vetter is thinking that #14 is focused on local interests, is that what you are thinking than almost like the true MPO duties. Vetter responded that that is a better way to put it. He said there is enough in there to where we need to work with the local, he thinks Mr. Grasser is taking an extra step that he doesn't think needs to be there. He added that he understands that he gets frustrated with the process sometimes, but we still can't circumvent the process to get the end result. Mock said, then, that your thought would be to modify #11 by taking out "timely and all" and remove #14 completely. Vetter responded that that would be his suggestion. Mock asked what Mr. Strandell's thoughts are with this. Strandell responded that he would agree with that, it would be fine with him. Mock stated that she would be fine with that as well. Mock asked if there was anywhere, maybe up a little more that addresses responding to changes as needed, because her guess that was the spirit of #14, and maybe we want it just not quite so specific. Vetter suggested the #8 kind of addresses it. Mock said that #9 does a bit too, where you are working with other agencies.

Mock asked if we take out #14 we need to add a clause to something like #8, where you could say "explain, justify and defend MPO program policies and activities, negotiate and resolve sensitive and controversial issues, and respond to changes in priorities, and something along those lines. Vetter suggested that on the tail end of #8 add "assist and support local agencies as they amend the transportation plan". Mock agreed that that would be a better way to say it because she thinks we do want to make sure that any changes are formal, not just reactionary, but also recognize that changes could occur. Vetter said that he would agree with that. He asked, Mr. Haugen, as outgoing director, do you see any problems with that. Haugen responded that he doesn't have a problem with those changes. He said that he had initial issues similar to those you expressed. He stated that if he understood this right, #8 is now adding "assist local agencies in amending the transportation plan". Vetter that is correct, maybe using more formal wording though.

Haugen commented that, just to be honest, the only other word that raised concern for him was on #13, towards the tail end, the word "minimum"; "while meeting minimum federally mandated system requirements", it seems like a rather limiting qualifier for whatever purposes and didn't seem typical, and he talked a bit with Tangee Bouvette about whether she would have included it or not and she indicated she wouldn't. Vetter agreed that it makes it sound like we don't want to extend ourselves too far. Haugen said that that would be the concern, and it might be to the detriment with all the new programs that you are limiting yourselves. Mock asked if we would just take the word "minimum" out then, so "meeting federally mandated systems requirements", is that your thought. Haugen responded that that was Ms. Bouvette's and his thought. Strandell said that he would agree with that change. Vetter asked, what is the difference between local agencies and local operational agencies. Haugen responded it would be road authorities versus

maybe transit operators or Safe Kids Grand Forks, he isn't sure. Vetter said that that may pose a problem then also; we aren't sure what that phrase means, "local operational agencies", then we should maybe define that or change it so it is clear as to what we mean. Haugen commented that we do use local agencies elsewhere, just simply local agencies. He asked, then, you would like the words "operational and minimum" removed. Vetter responded that as he is rereading #13, he is wondering if "local" needs to be removed also to read "Provide creative solutions to maximize benefits, minimize costs and impacts while meeting federally mandated system requirements", what is the purpose of adding local in there, everything we do is going to be local isn't it, just thinking that may be redundant. Haugen stated that he thinks the word "local" is intentional, it is intentional to really be at the City level and place the City level above State or Federal level benefits, he thinks it is intentional that the word local is used so that even though all projects, etc, are local he believes it is intending to be most focused on the local municipality accounting to the State DOTs. Vetter agreed that it makes sense to leave it then.

Haugen summarized that we have a modifier to #8, modifiers to #11 and #13, and are striking #14 completely as we moved some of it up to #8.

MOVED BY VETTER, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO APPROVE THE MPO EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOB DESCRIPTION WITH THE FOLLOWING REVISIONS:

- 1) *Revise #8 to add the phrase "and assist local agencies in amending the transportation plan" so it reads: "Explain, justify, and defend MPO programs, policies, and activities; negotiate and resolve sensitive and controversial issues **and assist local agencies in amending the transportation plan.**"*
- 2) *Revise #11 to strike the words "timely and all" so it reads: "Respond to and resolve difficult and sensitive citizen inquires and complaints. Provide high quality, ~~timely~~ oral and written communications to ~~all~~ local agencies and organizations to promote general awareness and consensus building."*
- 3) *Revise #13 to strike the words "minimum and operational" so it reads: "Solicit input from the local ~~operational~~ agencies to understand concerns. Provide creative solutions to maximize local benefits, minimize local costs and impacts while meeting ~~minimum~~ federally mandated system requirements."*
- 4) *Remove #14 completely but insert some of the wording into #8 (shown above).*

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mock said that Mr. Haugen got in touch with Ms. Bouvette so we are working through Grand Forks Human Resources. Haugen responded that they chatted early this morning. He said that they understood some of the additional things, to go through some things we will be able to insert into the process right away, other things we will have to stamp toward tail end with the MPO stamp. He added that she may be waiting for this decision because they posted the job description as suggested by Mr. Grasser, so we will have to give them this revised one. He said

He's sure you have seen some announcements through our e-mail process of the vacancy; for Mr. Vetter and Mr. Strandell the bigger concern was the initial way it was put on the City's website, it had a lot of people questioning whether it was an MPO employee or City employee, so we are clarifying it is an MPO employee and the City is just assisting with the hiring process. Strandell commented that he noticed that the description said the location of the job was Grand Forks City Hall, and that hasn't been the case for a couple of years now. Haugen responded that we do technically rent space there, and one of us is over there periodically. He said that we do that, even with all of the transition that has been happening in Grand Forks City Hall with relocations and the Herald Building potential, because we are a North Dakota agency so we need to maintain a physical presence in North Dakota and that is how we are accomplishing that, so we allowing Grand Forks City Hall needs to be met with their space, but we are also working with them to keep a physical spot for us to claim our North Dakota presence.

MATTER OF APPOINTING AN INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Mock reported that just knowing how hiring processes go, we may not have someone on board before Mr. Haugen retires, so by appointing an Interim Executive Director it will allow for someone to assume some of his duties while the process is being completed.

Mock stated that she thinks Ms. Kouba has been approached by Mr. Haugen to assist with some of the Technical Advisory Committee and MPO meetings in February, so it seems like a natural fit for her to assume the Interim Executive Director position, but they wanted to bring it to this committee for discussion.

Strandell commented that he knows there are some organizations where the interim has not been a candidate for the position, is that something we should consider. Mock asked if she knows how that is done, do they just get people's intentions, or how do they know they aren't interested in the position full time. Strandell responded that he doesn't know, what would be the proper thing to do. Haugen stated that there was just an announcement in the newspaper about Unmanned Aerial hiring their Interim Director as their new director. He said that he thinks the more common practice is that you don't limit the interim from applying if they desire to, but it isn't an automatic elevation either.

Haugen stated that in the staff report they tried to give some examples of things the interim director would have to do; obviously people want to know who to contact if they want to get ahold the MPO and that is the point of contact. He added that there is a need for someone to sign timesheets, leave requests, etc., and as you know, Mr. Strandell, as the Chair of the ATP there are some meetings there that need an MPO Representative, and since day one the MPO has had the director provide that, so that is much of what the interim would do until you hire your new director, that is much of the activities and then assuming you get somebody on board fairly quickly there are some things to do with the work program, hiring consultants, and such that you can still do under an interim director, but there are other things you may want to have a full executive director do.

Mock said that she thinks that in this case we almost need somebody with knowledge of the meeting schedule and the inner goings on to takeover. Vetter stated that he isn't opposed to appointing Ms. Kouba, he doesn't know whether she is thinking of applying for the position or not, but for him it really doesn't weigh into it. He added that he tends to agree with Ms. Mock that the MPO is a kind of unique animal, so he is comfortable having Ms. Kouba appointed as the Interim Executive Director. Strandell said that he doesn't have a problem with that either, he just wanted to offer another option for consideration. Mock commented that it probably helps having more of the formal Grand Forks Human Resource receiving applications and things like that, so as long as that isn't falling on the MPO staff, she thinks it help there be a little bit of separation in case Ms. Kouba does want to apply for the position, it leaves a little bit of room, so we aren't asking for staff to take care of all of that. Strandell agreed that that should be a separation, that is good. Mock added that she thinks there is enough, we are asking Ms. Kouba to serve in an interim capacity, for her and Ms. McNelis to kind of fill in what Mr. Haugen had been doing until we can get someone else there, she doesn't want too much to fall on that staff because we are already asking for some changes that they will have to get used to so utilizing HR professionals she thinks will help with that burden just a little bit so it is only the MPO activities we are asking for them to do.

MOVED BY VETTER, SECONDED BY STRANDELL, TO APPROVE A RECOMMENDATION TO THE MPO EXECUTIVE POLICY BOARD THAT THEY APPOINT TERI. KOUBA INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURNMENT

MOCK DECLARED THE JANUARY 28TH, 2022 MEETING OF THE MPO FINANCE COMMITTEE ADJOURNED AT 2:33 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy McNelis
Office Manager