

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**COOK COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**  
**COOK CITY COUNCIL**  
**NOVEMBER 20, 2014 – COOK CITY HALL – 4 PM**

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**TIME AND PLACE:** A Special Meeting of the Cook City Council was held at 4 PM on Thursday, November 20, 2014 at the Cook City Hall.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Harold Johnston called the Special Council Meeting to order at 4 PM.

**ATTENDANCE:** Present were Mayor Harold Johnston and City Councilors Jody Bixby and Karen Hollanitsch. Absent were City Councilors Kim Brunner and Elizabeth Storm. Also present was Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer Theresa Martinson, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Cindy Palm, Andy Hubley and Nicole Peterson – ARDC, Rock Gillson – Redwater, Inc. and The Timberjay.

The City of Cook does not have an existing Comprehensive Plan. The city has received a 2014 IRRRB grant and has contracted through ARDC to complete a plan. The Cook City Council is serving as the planning committee for the process. The IRRRB will require a comprehensive plan in place for future funding and this is an opportunity for the community to view its future direction as communities are changing.

The Council is serving as the Planning Commission for the Comprehensive Planning Process with Members of Planning and Zoning also invited.

The ARDC Agenda:

Review the Cook Draft Comprehensive Plan

Review final draft and allow a public input session

Schedule of next meeting date – Staff and council members will meet before the December Council Meeting to review, re-draft and re-write any changes with the goal to adopt the final draft at the December 18<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting.

Lake Vermilion Trail Plan

Andy Hubley presented the Lake Vermilion Trail plan which would connect the City of Cook to Lake Vermilion and Tower for biking and hiking.

The first goal is to coordinate the jurisdictions within the proposed trail corridor (townships and cities) to manage the trail by forming a Joint Powers Board that would administer, construct and find funding for the proposed trail plan. Through the Joint Powers Board, townships and cities would collaborate to construct and maintain the trail. Mayor Johnston was concerned that the trail would

impact private properties and asked if eminent domain was involved along these routes. Hubley stated that eminent domain is not generally used in recreational trail construction.

The exact trail route is not yet determined. The initial phase would require appointing an administrator, seeking construction funding and working with an engineer on a trail plan which could take up to 4 years to assign a route.

Andy Hubley has met with Vermilion, Kugler, and Beatty Townships and the City of Tower and stated that some are optimistic and the others are cautiously optimistic. ARDC has also scheduled meetings with Field, Greenwood, and Owens Townships in December.

Mayor Johnston asked if there was positive economic development from the bike trail versus snowmobiling revenues that bring positive impact to the area. Hubley provided a handout on "Economic Benefit of Trails Success Case Stories" and commented that the spending of cyclists is surprising with a market of "empty nesters" traveling through communities for biking trails and spending money on lodging and food, etc. He also added that under the Joint Powers Board, townships and cities could charge for use through memberships and sticker fees for minimal revenues to assist with maintenance costs but would need to have enforcement to follow these fees. He mentioned that the Mesabi Trail has trail fees, as an example.

If a Joint Powers Board is not formed, there could be significant delays with completing the project. The question was asked if a city or township could back out once they joined the Joint Powers Board. Andy replied that it depends on the Joint Powers Board agreement and what the Board decides.

Trail maintenance efforts could be volunteer efforts or contracted out and may require specialized equipment for clearing and maintaining. Under the Joint Powers Board, all groups would determine who is responsible for what sections of trails. The long term goal for completing this trail from start to finish could be 10-15 years.

If interested in moving forward with the plan, Andy will provide the city with a more formal budget and language.

### **Draft Cook Comprehensive Plan**

The draft document provided includes comments, additions and changes from the last planning committee meeting on October 23, 2014. Nicole Peterson, ARDC provided an agenda to follow which left off with Transportation in October and starts with Utilities and Community Facilities for this meeting.

Nicole explained that the large size of this document includes an appendix section (pages 48-100) covering community history which is referenced through the Cook MN website [www.cookmn.com](http://www.cookmn.com) by local historian, Don Simonson and a library book of "Cook's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary" published around 1953. It was noted by a council member that there is a more current book for 75 years of Cook which is most current.

The action steps are listed in the beginning pages 14-47 which will be reviewed for this meeting.

**Action Step Comments:**

**Transportation Strategy B: Make street environments safe and enjoyable to walk, roll and bicycle-  
Improve human-powered transportation network (sidewalks, crosswalks, trails, bike lanes, etc.)**

Action Step 7 (page 22) Doug Johnson Park – non-motorized walking area and path:

Item should remain in the document even though it is not a high priority at this time. The 2014 St. Louis County SHIP program initiative promotes healthy fitness and the dedicated efforts should be recognized. Demographically, Andy feels should also be left in.

**Transportation Strategy C: Support public transit**

Action Step 2 (page 23) Research and encourage a public park and ride lot.....

Questioned if needed and Andy advised that it should be kept in, as there is MNDOT funding possibilities and park and rides are becoming more popular in remote areas for commuters and to reduce travel costs. The intent is to clear a lot for public (not construct a building) use which eliminates burden on private property owners.

**Transportation Strategy E: Maintain and improve local streets, alleys and sidewalks on a routine and established schedule**

Action Step 2 (page 24) Capital Improvement Plans.....

City currently utilizes for annual review tool for airport and general city planning.

**Transportation Strategy H: Continue to work with neighboring jurisdictions in regard to traffic concerns outside the City**

Action Step 2 (page 24) Capital Improvement Plans.....

Action steps are redundant and feels more of the history items should be moved towards back pages and draft reduced. ARDC will thoroughly review for final draft.

Utilities and Community Facilities Assets and Issues

Water (page 26) and Sewer and Storm Water (page 27)

Maintenance Superintendent Bud Ranta and City Engineer John Jamnick reviewed the Utilities and Community Facilities Assets and Issues with minimal comments. Bud recommended the word “majority” be added to describe the amount of lines replaced from 2004-06.

Ambulance and Fire Hall (page 29)

Remove numbers of fire and ambulance volunteers as numbers constantly change. Add ambulance meetings in addition to Fire meetings as two separate entities in one location.

### Utilities and Community Facilities Goal, Strategies, Action Steps

#### **Utilities and Community Facilities Strategy A: Cook will maintain high-quality utilities and promote improvements to private utility services.**

Action Step 3 (page 31). Bud Ranta recommends leaving in plan to promote water tower space for cell phone receivers.

#### **Utilities and Community Facilities Strategy B: Cook will maintain high-quality Community Facilities including City-owned buildings, parks, and recreation facilities.**

Administrator Martinson will review with Nicole to condense and reword action steps 1-10. Action Step 10 (page 32) (a.) repetitive and could be condensed with other CIP items in previous document. (b.) keep in document.

### Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Assets and Issues

#### **Assets**

Not all assets are located within the City of Cook limits and should be noted as nearby – Wakemup Hill, Lakes and Fishing and Golf Courses.

#### Issues – Opportunities (page 33)

Wilding – Bio-Diversity was an item from the initial planning meeting and the group discussed its meaning. Rock Gillson added that wilding means “gathering” food from the wild.

#### Food Access (Agricultural Resources)

Food distribution sources should include the Cook Area Food Shelf and the Northwoods School Food Program. The nutrition site is administered through St. Louis County and is not a local clinic program.

#### Lake Vermilion (page 34)

Reference to Lake Vermilion shoreline of 15,000 miles may be inaccurate as noted by Rock Gillson, Redwater, Inc., and resort owner on Lake Vermilion. He commented that the shoreline is closer to 1200 miles not including islands which are not considered shoreline.

#### Cultural Organizations (page 35)

Ashawa Chapel spelling correction needed.

Add: Cook’s Country Connection – new farm business in 2014 with family history of 100 year old farm.

**Agricultural, Natural and Cultural Resources Strategy A: Cook will promote and maintain its existing resources and assets.**

Action Step 1 (a.) (page 36) add Cook Area Food Shelf

(b.) spelling correction – surrounding

(c.) spelling correction – Comet Movie Theatre

**Economic Development Assets and Issues (page 38)**

**Assets**

Major Employers in Cook: Hospital/Clinic should be changed to “approximately 140” and Hill Wood Products “approximately 55” as numbers are constantly changing.

**Income Demographics (page 39)**

**Cook Income Key Findings**

The majority of Cook residents have a household income.....references (see graph below) and no graph is listed (page 39). It is in appendix so needs to be corrected.

**Land Use (page 44)**

Administrator Martinson commented that zoning and annexations needs to be identified and addressed as part of comp plan. Andy will research IRRRB funding opportunities for community rezoning.

Andy also commented that there are township properties connected to city utilities and most community planners recommend utilities to remain in city limits.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business brought before the Council, motion to adjourn at 5:36 PM was made by Councilor Hollanitsch and second by Councilor Bixby. **MOTION CARRIED**

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Harold Johnston, Mayor

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Recorder: Cindy Palm, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer

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Attest: Theresa Martinson, Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer