

**MINUTES**  
**SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING**  
**LIBRARY-PARKS AND BEAUTIFICATION**  
**COOK CITY COUNCIL**  
**SEPTEMBER 25, 2014 – CITY HALL – 5 PM**

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**TIME AND PLACE:** A special meeting of the Cook City Council was held at 5 PM on Thursday, September 25, 2014 at the Cook City Hall.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Harold Johnston called the Special Council Meeting to order at 5 PM.

**ATTENDANCE:** Present were Mayor Harold Johnston and City Councilors Jody Bixby, Kim Brunner and Karen Hollanitsch. Absent was City Councilor Elizabeth Storm. Also present was Administrator-Clerk/Treasurer Theresa Martinson, Deputy Clerk/Treasurer Cindy Palm, Librarian Crystal Phillips and Cook News Herald.

The purpose of this meeting is to hold monthly special study sessions to discuss budget planning for 2015. Study sessions will be held at 5 PM prior to the monthly regular council meetings for the remainder of the year to discuss the budget and levy for 2015.

The September Study Session focuses on the budgets for Library and Parks and Beautification.

**Library**

Mayor Johnston asked Librarian Crystal Phillips if she felt current library hours were enough to cover the demand for library users. Crystal commented that the library traffic is very busy and that she will continue to monitor the traffic into 2015 to see if future hours could be added.

The library equipment fund is utilized for building improvements as approved by the library board. There are no anticipated projects for 2015 but there are some long term remodeling projects such as carpet replacement, interior painting and shelving replacement.

The library budget covers operational and maintenance expense. Major purchases come from designated accounts such as donations, ALS Reimburse, ALS Best Seller and the Library Equipment Fund and Book Fund. Librarian Phillips monitors the designated account balances as funds are to be expended annually and to promote circulation for the library.

Librarian Phillips sees a high demand for the use of public computers for all age groups with thirty minute blocks for users. Computers and software are continuously updated through library donations. The library now has fiber optic through Arrowhead Library System and offers free WIFI.

Volunteer help, public promotion and press releases for the library are utilized to promote library services. Book sales reduce old circulation with funds put back into the library. Books that don't sell are donated to local groups for further community circulation.

The Summer Reading Program was successful by utilizing volunteers and a minimizing budget impact with Friends of the Library purchasing supplies. The program was offered to pre-school, grade school and older/advanced audiences with theme based reading and activities. Community interest remains positive.

The Teen Summer Reading Program was held Wednesday evenings for June and July. The evening hours will be decreased from 10 PM to 8 PM with two hours added to the morning for the Summer Program needs and due to lack of late evening participation.

The library space is limited for hosting certain events and other spaces are utilized within the community when needed.

Library traffic is monitored through the use of a door counter and circulation and literature requests continue to be monitored as well.

Cook Public Library was selected for a public art project funded through the Legacy Program offered by the Arrowhead Library System for 2014. Artist Ron Benson has completed the beautiful project and Librarian Phillips would like to host a future meet and greet with the artist and incorporate a fundraising activity into this as well.

### **Parks and Beautification**

Primary expenditures are for parks maintenance and beautification in downtown Cook with focus on maintenance free beautification due to time and resources. Annually, \$2000 is designated towards the purchase of one table, bench and grill for River Street Park.

The Parks and Beautification Committee will meet over the winter months to outline beautification needs for 2015 and administration will develop a maintenance rotation plan for budgeting. A small window of opportunity is available in the spring to maintain parks for Timber Days and other summer events.

Beautification efforts will be needed for weed control and mulch for 2015 in River Street Park, by city hall and the River Street and Highway 53 flags.

A concrete pad near the gazebo for seating in the park or a designated picnic area will be discussed with the maintenance department for location and security for damage considered as well.

The River Street Park murals were stained and ultraviolet protectant applied, on the front of the murals, for 2014. The back side of the murals will need to be completed in 2015. The re-leveling of the murals will also be done in 2015, by volunteer members of the Trinity Lutheran Stewardship Committee. Funding is provided through the parks and beautification budget.

The garden club will continue to maintain the city gardens as they have each year, with the city budgeting for the purchase of supplies.

Ditch mowing is not a high priority as there is no safety issue involved but more of a beautification issue. Discussion was held as to the possibility of providing wildflower seeds to residents or complete by maintenance to disperse in ditches annually. Some communities do this for a cheaper alternative to beautification in lieu of ditch mowing. Council members did not indicate that this is a high priority at this time and commented that deer may feed on the flowers causing traffic obstruction.

Sidewalk weeds have taken over in many areas and research is needed to see if there are any programs to eliminate the weeds or if this is to be done in-house.

Community beautification efforts are acknowledged by sending letters to improved properties and blight letters have been recently mailed for specific properties to be cleaned up. There are numerous service organizations available to assist with clean up as some property owners cannot physically take care of their properties. Councilors have also identified that commitment comes from self-pride for your community as well. Certain buildings are in need of demolition due to safety and health concerns but the city would also lose the tax base if the buildings are not replaced. Blight needs to be identified as opinions are different on how one views a property versus another.

Maintenance of the water tower logo, installed 2011, will be reviewed on a 5 year rotation under the Water Tower Maintenance Program. Additional art logos and funding will be determined as part of this plan, as costs could be around \$10,000 for this project.

Councilor Hollanitsch discussed the possibility of transferring any remaining funds from Parks and Beautification to Recreation to assist with completion of the community center. The auditor will be contacted to see if this is possible.

Riverfront Park was discussed, as at one time, the Lion's Club had considered improving this park but was considered cost prohibitive. Future bridge replacement on North River Street and beautification of the river area will be considered as it does not appear navigable with the railroad bridge and brush along the banks. There may be waterway environmental factors to address for this project.

The October Budget Study Session will review the Recreation and Airport Budgets.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business brought before the Council, motion to adjourn at 5:50 PM was made by Mayor Johnston and second by Councilor Brunner. **MOTION CARRIED**

CITY OF COOK – Cook, MN 55723

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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