

CITY OF GRAND MARAIS / COOK COUNTY  
JOINT MEETING MINUTES  
June 24, 2008

Mayor Larsen called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

City Council Members present: Evelyn Larsen, Kay Costello, Ed Bolstad, Tim Kennedy and William Lenz

City Members absent: None

City Staff present: Mike Roth and Kim Dunsmoor

County Commissioners present: Jim Johnson, Bob Fenwick, Bruce Martinsen, and Fritz Sobanja

County Commissioners absent: Jan Hall

County Staff present: Janet Simonen, Braidy Powers, and Danna Asche

The city council and county commissioners met to discuss the library, pool, community center and the 1% sales tax.

Most of the councilors and commissioners like where the library is. Ideas for the library were to add on to the existing building and add parking spaces. If the 1% sales tax was approved, another site by the community center/school or downtown could be explored with sharing building space with Higher Education or Community Education.

The councilors and commissioners agree that the pool building is in poor shape and pool maintenance will always be a cost to the taxpayers. The commissioners agree that the city and county should share the maintenance cost, but there was no consensus on how the cost should be shared. The county is capped at 3.9% property tax increase: increased contributions to the pool would mean decreased services in other areas. If the 1% sales tax was approved, the majority felt that the community center/civic center location would be a better fit for the community. It could utilize shared locker rooms, add rooms for parties and a possible walking track. A waterslide would be a new amenity at a new pool. One concern about moving everything to a civic/community center was that it pulls people away from the downtown area and businesses. One suggestion was to approach the Lloyd K Johnson Foundation regarding pool operating expenses.

A new community center / civic center was discussed. If a new facility were built, it would make sense to combine services and seek efficiencies in one building. There were mixed ideas about a community center vs. civic center. The county and city agree that a facilitator would be necessary to discuss the future of a community/civic center. The views of what it should be are too varied and wondered if there would be a strong enough commitment to make it happen.

The 1% sales tax is in the current tax bill. It would need to go to a referendum by 2009 to see if the community would support the tax. We have the option to change the use of the funds next year. We have less than a year to determine how the sales tax revenue would be spent. The initial legislation asked for support for recreation infrastructure and programs as suggested by the Community Center Revitalization Committee. Another idea is broadband infrastructure. The county with Boreal and Arrowhead Electric Cooperative are in the process of doing a feasibility study for a broadband project. The Blandin Foundation covered most of the costs. Any project would need to address the economic benefit to the community, the number of users, and have enough time and support to pass a referendum. The 1% does not need to be looked at as one lump sum; each project could be a percentage of the one percent. This is an opportunity we don't want to miss: however, there are other ways to pay for projects that are important to the community. The city and county need to agree about the future projects that would be supported by the 1% sales tax. It was agreed that a facilitator would be necessary to work together, prioritize and plan for future projects and the 1% sales tax referendum.

The county and city will meet again on July 22, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. in the County Board Room.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:16 p.m.