

The Mandan City Commission, the Mandan Park Board Members and the Mandan Public School District Members met in a Special Session at 5:30 p.m. on February 23, 2009 in the Mandan Middle School, 2901 12th Avenue Northwest, Mandan, North Dakota.

Mayor Helbling called the meeting to order.

ROLL CALL:

1. Roll call of City Commissioners
 - i. President, Tim Helbling
 - ii. Vice-President, Sandra Tibke
 - iii. Commissioner, Jerome Gangl
 - iv. Commissioner, Thomas Jackson
 - v. Commissioner, Gerald (Jerry) Serhienko
2. Roll call of Mandan School Board Members
 - i. President, Kirsten Baesler
 - ii. Vice-President, Dr. Donna Fishbeck
 - iii. Member, Tom Arenz
 - iv. Member, Leland Fleischer
 - v. Member, Jill Goetz
 - vi. Member, Dan Leingang
 - vii. Member, LouAnn Nider
 - viii. Member, Dr. Tim Rector
 - ix. Member, Tim Tausend
3. Roll call of Mandan Park Board Members
 - i. President, Tracy Porter
 - ii. Vice-President, Terry Kraft
 - iii. Commissioner, Jason Arenz
 - iv. Commissioner, Bruce Brucker
 - v. Commissioner, Wanda Knoll

NEW BUSINESS:

1. *Discussion regarding the long term plans for the Mandan Community Center.*
Mayor Helbling: The intent of the meeting tonight is to discuss the long term plans for the Mandan Community Center. All three Boards have been working together to come up with a positive solution in the best interests for the citizens of Mandan. These decisions not only affect the current years but for many years to come. The other key element is that after the three Boards share their thoughts that the public will be invited to comment and provide feedback on the subject matter.

To get started, a little bit of background. During the summer of 2008, the Operating Agreement for the Mandan Community Center between the City of Mandan, Mandan Park District and the Mandan School District came up for renewal. The City of Mandan currently owns the facility and it is utilized mostly by the Mandan Park District and the Mandan School District and it might be time for the City to not own the facility. Mayor Helbling brought to the table the suggestion that either the Park District or School District should own the facility because they have done a good job of management and maintenance. Granted the facility is over 30 years old but in general it is in pretty good

shape. An agreement was renewed for another year through the year 2009 with the understanding that the Community Center Advisory Board would discuss the options for the long term ownership of the facility. The Advisory Board has met and discussion has occurred regarding the long range plans for the facility and what would be in the best interest of the community as a whole and which entity would benefit most from the ownership of the facility. The discussion focused on some long range thinking on behalf of all three entities. The reason for this meeting tonight is to hear what some of those ideas are. I would like the discussion to be a 30,000 foot view of the community focusing on what is on the best interest of the community with the realization that funds are limited as to any involvement. There are many details to be worked out. Again, focus will be on the big picture for the community. You might hear some real wild ideas here tonight. Some that might come to reality and some might never come to reality but we would like to get everything on the table and see where everybody's at.

The meeting is to go as follows: We will start off with the Park Board President, Tracy Porter who will discuss the options relative to the Mandan Park District. Then we will move on to the School Board President, Kristen Baesler with the school district opportunities. Then we will have a question and comment period between the Board members. Then we will open it up for some questions from the public. Then again questions and comments between the Boards and then hopefully in the end we can arrive at some consensus where we can give our directors some direction on where we should take it from here. With that, we will turn it over to Tracy with the Park Board.

Mayor Helbling: The Community Center Advisory Board is made up of two members of the City Commission, Mayor Helbling and Sandra Tibke; two members of the School Board, Tom Arenz and Tim Rector; two members of the Park Board, Bruce Brucker and Wanda Knoll.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: First of all, thank you Mayor Helbling. This has been discussed non-stop since last summer and I like that because it gives people the opportunity to discuss things and talk about things. We never put things up on the wall that are a little bit outside of our reach. It never really pushes us to get outside our comfort zone and these discussions certainly have, for the Park Board anyway, pushed us outside our comfort zone. We've always just looked at it as that's the building that's we'll managed. That's the building that we'll have our offices in and we will use it to its best ability and have never really thought what if the Community Center was the Park Board's facility entirely. We've spent a lot of time thinking about it as a true recreation center. When you think about a facility like the YMCA in Bismarck or the Dickinson Rec Center that they just built a few years ago and how much use those facilities get and the wide range of people in the community and not just those in the local community but those who come in from surrounding areas and use those facilities. So it was a bright spot for us to talk about what our opportunities would be. We looked at some renovations costs if we would look at the gymnasium and redoing the floor or maybe add some additional facilities like racquetball or tennis or maybe adding rooms for specific activities such as yoga or an aerobic type classes - so a lot of different things that we could offer if that facility was 100% recreation. Now we know that there would be a phase out period in the main hall because of all the rentals that go on there on the

weekend can be anything from weddings to gun shows to flea markets and those are scheduled through 2010 and there will be some transition for those types of events that will need to find some other location if we take that over as a true recreation center. The Community Center has served Mandan well. It has been here since the early 1970's. It was not built to be a rec center. It was put together as a community center, an armory, the National Guard had some input into it but it was not built with the idea of a rec center as you see it today. There will definitely be some renovation costs. We have also looked at some costs on the side of just the age of the facility. It is a well built facility but when things get to be 35 to 40 years old, it takes some up keep and we know there will be some investments on our part if we have to. I'm not going to dive too deep into the finances because I think one of the parties will be talking about the current debt of the facility. I think our focus on behalf of the Park Board is what is in the best interests for the city of Mandan and the residents of Mandan and those that come into Mandan as guests to this town and how they could use a facility like that. I am going to stop there for now and give the School Board an opportunity to speak. Thank you.

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: Thank you Mr. Porter. Before I begin with the advantages to the Mandan School District, I would like to thank Park & Recreation Director Cole Higlin, Superintendent Volesky and City Administrator Jim Neubauer for supplying us with the information and the data and answering the questions we were asking of them so we could educate ourselves on this issue. I appreciate their leadership in this whole scheme of things. The second thing I would like to say is, regardless of the outcome of tonight's meeting I think this is really a moment to be celebrated in Mandan that three public entities are sitting down together in the same room in a public forum discussing these issues. Six years ago, one of the biggest complaints that I heard and common comments around this community was "Why don't you guys ever talk to each other? Why aren't you communicating with each other so we can be fiscally responsible?" So, regardless if anything happens tonight or if plans are made I think it is something very important that we remember that all of us are sitting down here tonight discussing and talking to each other about the future of Mandan like the community has asked us to do. With that in mind, I would like to outline some positive of what the transfer of ownership from the City to the School District would be if we would take that direction. A positive for the Mandan School District would be the location of the Community Center to the high school and other district facilities. It would enable our district to move all its administrative offices to the Community Center from our current central administration building located on Collins Avenue. We would be able to move several vocational programs from the high school to the Community Center which would create space for programs currently conducted outside of the high school building at the present time. This would enable the district to sell the cab and the GPA building; removing the maintenance and operational costs of two physical plants. The funds available to renovate the Community Center would be much better spent at the Community Center rather than the GPA because the basic structures of the buildings to meet current needs. For example, the GPA has 12 foot hallways as required for a school building but not necessary for an office building. This creates a lot of extra space. Mr. Fitterer is here and should be able to answer more specifics of that question if needed. GPA is our new Great Plains Academy for our sixth graders. It's the former junior high building. Since we are already paying a portion of the maintenance fees for the

Community Center it makes sense to utilize as much space as possible for the school district. Our Central Administration offices would be very close and easily accessible to both of our largest school facilities the high school and the middle school. And most importantly since we would continue to share the swimming pool areas two public entities would still be able to maintain that cooperative effort. And of course with every situation, it would be irresponsible of us to not recognize that there might be some negatives to us acquiring the community center and renovating that instead of the former junior high building. We would not have additional classroom space at the Community Center like we would have at Great Plains Academy for any large classes that we may have in the future. The other side of that though, with every negative is that there may be a future need for that but we do know for certain that we have immediate space issues at the high school that could be alleviated with the acquisition of the Community Center. We would need to sell two additional facilities at a time when the market for that is depressed. And the timeline for the Park District to move out and the School District to move in the Community Center could be quite different. That's the pluses and minuses as we begin to evaluate the situation from the School District standpoint. With that, I will turn it back over to you Mayor Helbling.

Mayor Helbling: Some background on this – some of these discussions first took place within the Community Center Advisory Board. I know that the City Commission has never met as a full Board on any of these items. The Park Board may have but I don't know if the School Board has either. These all took place at the Community Center Advisory Board level. It was through the Advisory Board that it was determined that the Park District had several options. Those options were to either build another facility, a 100% true recreation building at another location or try to turn the Community Center into a recreational facility. When the new one came up one of the options was what would the City do with the building? Some discussion came about that the School District which might be a natural fit tied right with the high school. We all know that the City contributes roughly \$130,000 to the facility and if the Park District wanted to turn it over to 100% recreational facility should the City of Mandan actually have as big of a role in that facility as we do now being we really have a limited role. The Park District is basically running the facility now in conjunction with school and their programs and the City is pretty much on the outside looking in. We were looking at if the Park District would decide to build their own facility where does that leave the City? I think that is where some of these discussions and from the City's standpoint it's only been through the Community Center's Advisory Board level. This is the most the City Commission has heard about it tonight.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: That is some of the discussion we had at our level. First of all – what can we do to make the best use of the Community Center? Secondly, if there was someone else like the School Board that would be interested in taking over the Community Center that would give us, the Park District, an opportunity to start over with a rec center; to do something from the ground up and build something that is designed to be a rec center and not make something that is 40 years old into a rec center. There have been good discussions such as buying land and location, and all those things being at a premium but again an opportunity for the City. I don't know if any of you have been to the Dickinson Activity Center – it is a wonderful facility that included people in

Dickinson and I don't know how far outside of Dickinson but there are thousands of people that use that facility each day.

Mayor Helbling: Are there any members of the City Commission that would like to speak at this time?

Commissioner Jackson: Actually, I have a question for the Park District. I am guessing there may be a few people here who are wondering about the recent purchase of the Water Park and how that will affect building a new recreation facility including adding on, changing the existing facility.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: The Water Park is going to fund itself so it will have no effect on these discussions. The discussions here are a rec center, a brand new rec center for Mandan. That's going to take some more research because I believe the first bluish at it is that it will not support the memberships, to use the facility would not support 100% of the cost and so we had to look at a reduced size or some type of tax question for the community center as far as management.

City Commissioner Jackson: I guess my question is, and I have not been involved in the Water Park discussion at all so I apologize on speculating but it appears there must be some thought that the Water Park may incorporate some additional expansion of possibly and I don't know if there are plans, and I may rephrase my question, are there plans to add in tennis courts or racquetball courts or anything like that? Would you guys be looking at two different facilities? One that may be more like the Dickinson facility that has tennis courts and has racquetball courts and a running track and everything else. Dickinson's does include a water park and so I'm thinking that a separate outdoor water park is kind of unusual.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: What we are looking at now is taking the Community Center swimming pool as it is now and so that would be an indoor swimming facility. The school uses it for their classes. If there would be a new rec center a swimming pool would not be part of it. As far as the real estate for a new rec center – if we include the contract on the Water Park there is the land out there as part of that purchase. I don't know if that would be the best location for a rec center because we have to consider how kids can get to it. That could be a long haul unless you live in the Lakewood or Marina Bay area. I guess the answer to your question – do we as the Park District think that is the potential combination site for both the Water Park and Recreational Center? My personal thought would be no, because it is too far away from where the rec center needs to be.

City Commissioner Serhienko: Let me see if I understand this correctly. The Park Board is looking to build its own rec center and take itself out of the current community center formula and the idea is to pass the current community center to the school system so they can utilize it for their offices and swimming pool and all that good stuff. Is that right?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: I think that's one option. I think as the Park District, we're prepared to have serious discussions about continuing to manage and operate the

Community Center but we would look at it more as a rec center. However, if the school district sees merit in owning the Community Center and have it part of the school district then we look at doing some type of separate project.

City Commissioner Serhienko: Then if you guys are out of the equation what happens to the events that occur in the interim? I heard someone say they would be phased out. Can you tell me there is some place here in Mandan today or this year or the next 3 or 4 years that is large enough and suitable enough to accommodate events such as the art show that we have there? That would require an entire gymnasium and side rooms. Where in Mandan would something like that be able to go and set up if you guys are not part of that? I can see the school district taking over this and they could use all of the room for school purposes and that would pretty much put all the other events in some other basket. My question is where is that basket?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: I don't know that anyone has that answer today. It certainly is a question that needs to be answered. What are the main hall rentals?

Park & Recreation Director Cole Higlin: About \$40,000 to \$45,000 per year.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: The revenue is about \$40,000 to \$45,000 per year but more importantly there are events that are held wherein people come into the community and where are those events going to be, is a good question. I don't know that anyone here tonight can answer that question.

City Commissioner Serhienko: I think that that probably has to be a major part of this discussion. Until you can find a suitable place for these events to take place, I don't see how this can happen. I understand what's happening here. The City wants to pass it on and everybody is looking at this thing and probably the School Board would make the most sense but the reality of it is that it is the Community Center. A lot of friends of mine in Bismarck come to the Community Center to swim. And if that becomes a school property those events will probably cease as well. In Mandan, there is not an outdoor swimming pool since about 15 years ago. If the school takes over, where are you going to swim? There are all these public use questions right here and now that the Park Board deals with and could handle easily but if you guys move out I can't see this happening. I'm going to tell you right now that I'm opposed to it and I think there are a lot of other people that are opposed to it just because there is no option. You are not giving any other options. If you build a center somewhere that could accommodate some of this then you would have a chance. There would be people that would be in favor of this but the way I'm hearing you right now you need to talk this through. There are some things that need to be worked out.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: We agree with you Jerry on the question on the main hall rentals in the gymnasium. The swimming pool would continue to be operated as public swim. The school would resume their classes just as they do today. There would be no changes at all to the swimming pool operations. People from Bismarck can still come over swim during the day and on weekends and people can continue to use the pool

for swimming parties or whatever. The Park District will continue to staff it and continue the operations of the swimming pool.

Mayor Helbling: Commissioner Serhienko I would remind you to keep an open mind about this because no decisions have been made whatsoever. That is why we are here to tonight is to throw out everything on the table, the pros and cons, and try to come up with some solutions. I guess I will go back to during the Community Center Advisory Board meetings, one of the reasons we are here is because the Park District has a desire to have more of a recreational facility whether it is in the current Community Center or in a different facility. I guess that's why we are here so how can we turn around to make what they want a reality and in turn benefit the whole community without losing anything. And what they do, how does that affect the other Boards. How does it affect the City? How does it affect the School Board? I think that's why it's a good thing that we are all here tonight to talk about these things so please keep an open mind and if you have any comments, suggestions, ideas, throw them out there tonight because that's what we're here for.

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: I agree with you Mayor Helbling. The Park District and the School District have a very very good working relationship with the current pool facility. We don't see that relationship changing whatsoever. We would like to retain that relationship and there is no reason that can't continue. We're just here this evening to discuss and brainstorm ideas together how we can make it even better to go to that next level of cooperation and service to the community citizens. I don't see anything being taken away. The purpose of tonight's discussion from the School District standpoint is not to talk about going backward but to talk about going forward and improving.

City Commissioner Jackson: First I should apologize for the informality earlier when I questioned the Board but I have another question. It is my understanding previously that the Park District was looking at purchasing the facility and this is what I am missing; now it sounds like the School Board is interested in purchasing the facility. Is the Park Board not interested in purchasing the facility and making the necessary changes to it at this point that it is totally out of the question or is that still something that is an option? I was involved in one meeting of the Committee before I was kicked off it (laughter). At that time, there was talk the Park District would purchase it and maybe make the necessary changes to do something similar like the facility in Dickinson. Is that not something that the Park District is thinking about doing at this time anymore?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: That is still an option. Before going down that road too far we wanted to make sure there were good discussions of what the City's expectations were and also that of the School District. Ideas have been bounced around. I don't want to speak for the school, but I think the school saw some merit in the proximity to the high school and that would make more sense for them. We are able to say that yes, the Park District is interested in renovation or conversion of the current Community Center. We are also interested in seeing what the School District has to say.

City Commissioner Jackson: Has either the School District or the Park Board started to look at any numbers as far as what it would cost to change it to meet the School Districts needs or the Park Districts needs?

School Superintendent Wilfred Volesky: Let me answer your question but before I do that let me address the audience. I think you people would be very disappointed in all of us if we at least did not take a look at how it meets the needs of not only of that as the Park District but also the School District. I can tell you that if we move forward and it just so happens that the School District it appears School District has the greatest benefit in ownership of that facility, there is still a need for a cooperative effort with the swimming pool with the Park District and with the City in the long term debt, etc. The School District, right now, is not in a position to assume any long term debt. So there is still a lot of conversation that still needs to take place. In answer to your question we just walked through the building with an architect to see basically what is there and what we could use and make of the facility for the school. We don't have any dollars and cents that we penciled out to do that. But the thing is, so that you are aware of it too, in the bond issue that was passed for the middle school a number of years ago, there was \$700,000 in that bond issue to renovate the GPA, the old junior high for an office building. Now the question that we still have to answer and that we are taking to our attorney is that are we able to transfer that over to a different facility if it made more sense to the School District to do that. We have taken a look at the dollars we have for renovation purposes and we believe it would go further at the Community Center than it would at the GPA. But as far as any hard data, no at this point, we do not have that.

City Commissioner Serhienko: I think tying this facility to the School District is the best fit. I can really see this working and that's why I expressed my concern about the hall not so much that it would be better for the School District or the Park Board, it's that Mandan does not have a facility that the events that are being held in that gym or whatever you want to call it. The real question is how do you resolve that? If there were a solution to that I could see that for the School Board it would really make sense. But I just can't see sending everyone else out that uses that to where? Bismarck? That has to be a part of the equation.

Park Board Commissioner Jason Arenz: I just want to comment on one thing to make sure that we are all on the same page and so that everyone out here knows too. The Park Board has been very pleased and happy to host gun shows, weddings and other events. We are happy to do that but when you look at the overall mission of the Park Board to create recreational activities for all ages from newborns to senior citizens in recreational activities and the reason we are here today is because we've been asked on behalf of the City who is interested in passing the facility on to the Park Board to purchase it or look at other options. I'm not getting the sense what you are heading towards here and so I want to make it clear why we are all here – which is because the City approached the Park Board to talk about the option of the Community Center because by no means do we want to walk away from the Community Center. The Community Center has been a staple in the community for 30 plus years and we do not want to change that. We have a fiscal responsibility to the taxpayers of Mandan, if we have to purchase it, if we are going to have to put \$2.5 million dollars into it just for improvements and not have any real

substantial change because it's all been internal wiring or whatever. And if we spend \$2.5 million dollars we want to make sure that is the best use of our money. That's why we wanted to explore other opportunities. If you are going to put \$4 or \$5 million dollars into retro fitting the rec center into having basketball, volleyball, tennis courts, a walking track, maybe a room for senior citizens, maybe it is best to build new. We don't know and that's why we are here today. We still have to address the City and Community events and we are more than happy to do that as long as we can but I think as a group here with the three Boards, we need to figure out the best use of those certain events.

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: I think Commissioner Arenz make a very good point. Each of us are elected to our boards to keep utmost in their priority list what they were elected to do for their specific entity. When the City brought up the idea of removing themselves from the equation, it was a 3-way partnership. When that subject was brought to that Community Center Board, each entity needed to take a look at what their core mission was and the Community Center probably does not fit the core mission of what the Park District does. And so when they look at investing \$2.5 million dollars to retrofit or to maintain a structure that does not meet their core mission they are not being very responsible to the constituents that elected them. When the School Board takes a look at what their core mission is and evaluates the investments of maintenance for its facility it begins to make a little more sense for them to invest those dollars and maintain that building because of the things that we mention, the proximity to the high school, the needs of vocational that we are currently having space needs at the high school. That makes a little bit more sense. We can discuss those things. Commissioner Serhienko, to address your concern: I think you are right. We do need to begin to take a look at the other events that are hosted other than what is directly aligned to a Park District mission. There are certain events that could still be held within the city among public entities. You mentioned the Art Show. We're sitting in a facility right this very moment that has some possibilities. We have some possibilities for those types of events like that and of course, obviously a gun show would not be appropriate for a school building. The weddings and other activities that we host at the Community Center would not be but I also believe that there are other facilities available. There are some private entities that are capable of hosting events such as weddings like Seven Seas, the Mysteria Theatre. They are some very appropriate venues in Mandan that could pick up those activities and events. I think that in discussions and dialogues we always need to keep in mind what the core missions are for each of our Boards, for each of our public entities - are very important.

Mayor Helbling: To add to that, I don't think the City ever wanted to get 100% out of the Community Center. I don't think it ever could. The City's intention was never to harm or hurt either of the entities. I think we were looking at it more as if the Park District was to go to another facility, we're terrible managers, and we're terrible landlords. The City has been there before with the Community Center and I don't think it should ever go back there. The Park District has done a wonderful job managing the facility and I don't ever want to see the City back into managing the Community Center. So wherever that takes us, wherever it takes the School Board and the Park District, I think the three of us are all intertwined no matter what we do. We all need each other to survive and to go anywhere so we need to keep that in mind.

Are there any other comments between the commissions at all? I think with that, we will now open this up for public comment. If you would like to get up to speak, please state your name for the record. Remember that this is a 30,000 foot view from the sky. There is nothing that has been decided. The floor is wide open now.

Susan Beehler: My name is Susan Beehler, a Mandan City resident. I am really glad that we are meeting in a forum like this having all three entities here. The only thing I am disappointed in is that there are not more people here to share in this discussion and also that it is not being televised. I guess that is something that I would have liked to have seen happen. My question is who is the city? You all talk about respective Boards but you all are representatives of the community and when you talk about the City wanting to get out of this, it's not how the city wants to get out of it, its how are you going to all share in that piece of pie. And so I guess I don't understand who is really driving this. When we pay our taxes they are divided amongst you so I think when we talk about the city we need to remember that we are not departmentalized and that there is a different mission that we as a city can utilize some of our facilities better by coming together. One of the things that bothered me for a long time and I think I said it at a Commission meeting is that our City Hall was built originally as a rec center, as a Memorial Building, like Bismarck has, and one of the things I think would be better on that upper level is if that would be made handicap accessible and that there would be a better venue for smaller weddings or smaller type of events I think it would better utilized as that is what it was made for. The gymnastics would be better in the park and rec area or even in the old junior high building and incorporate that into the school district. When I went to school in Dickinson grade school, the gymnastics was held right in the school program. When I went to school in Bismarck, our gymnastics program was in the school district. And now it might be different but at that time it was incorporated into the school. That might be an idea there. The other thing that I have seen done in smaller communities and I think it is logistically a nightmare for the government entity working with it but I think it is a need, when I went to the smaller places like in Minnesota where they actually had a listing of all the different facilities throughout their community and the people could pick and choose an entity like a menu where they might want to hold an event. There were schools listed on there, facilities that were owned by the city and so people coming into the community that were going to hold an event maybe not finding a suitable event center but by combining the different buildings in the city they could actually host a larger group and hold a larger convention by utilizing all the buildings in the area. And by viewing the menu, you can go on down the list and click on what each building has for space and amenities which I thought was very creative. Maybe that's something we can incorporate in our brainstorming. One of the things is that we do have an older population so for the Park and Rec I would like to see at the center a smaller body of water that is warmer so we can offer aquatics that are more comfortable for the elderly population. One of the things that I have seen and I don't know exactly what is going on but I have seen the craft fair go away from the Community Center and I have seen the flea markets go away. Now recently there has been boxing. There have been Mandan boxers over at the Doublewood Inn in Bismarck. Also, concerts, we used to have concerts here in the past. Again, those are being held at the Doublewood and the Am Vets and I don't understand why we can't hold those events in our community. And I guess as our core mission as citizens we don't look at departmentalizing and I think that is one of the things

that we need to keep in mind that our tax dollars are used for in our community. I think this is a good step in the right direction.

Mayor Helbling: Thank you Mrs. Beehler, that's exactly what we need. You brought up areas that some of us have not thought of such as using the City Hall for weddings and those type of functions. Everybody knows we need to do something with City Hall to make it more accessible. It needs some remodeling. It has its problems too. We've had some informal discussions about the junior high building and maybe the City can move the offices into there. I think that is why we are all here. There are so many ideas out there and there are so many needs within the community that somehow we have to focus on those needs and get some direction.

Jay Feil: I want to make just a few comments. We have never had a recreational center that was to be rented out for other events so whatever happens out of this hopefully will be an opportunity to build a rec center. I remember when my sons were younger you could never count on using the gym there because you never knew if it was available. It was call and check around and maybe the junior high gym would be available on the weekend. This is a good discussion. When it comes to rentals, first off, I don't think the City should be in the business of weddings. That's why they have the Eagles, the Moose and clubs such as those. When it comes to shows and so forth, that is a whole different discussion because those are community events and there are a lot of studies out there. I truly think that some of the facilities like the Eagles and the Moose will take some of the overflow. My family goes back to the Mandan Art Association and I do think that comes outside the discussion of the Parks and Rec. We need a rec center. This is a town of 20,000 people and there should be a rec center. You do need to talk about an event center but I think that will have to be separate from a recreational center. I think the transition we can easily handle with the School District and the Park District working together. We have to remember we don't have a recreational center in this town right now. The armory has turned into an exercise center and the gym was always a hard floor that people don't play on any more, people just don't play on cement floors anymore so we can't say we are taking away a rec center when there really isn't one there. There is probably a third of a rec center out there right now. I just wanted to put it in perspective.

Mayor Helbling: Is there anyone else from the audience that would like to make comments?

Bryan Giese: I am also a Mandan citizen. I am here soaking this all in and after reading about this in the newspaper, I came to this meeting. I want to congratulate whoever put this together and assembled this. I don't know that I have ever been to a meeting where there have been three public entities represented to talk about issues. And you probably have 100% attendance. I want to compliment you on this forum. I wouldn't have known about this except I had a real brief meeting with Jay Feil this afternoon. I look forward to seeing this worked out and wanted to thank you for putting this all together.

Mayor Helbling: Thank you.

Reid Katzung: Is the hockey rink being considered in any of this discussion?

Mayor Helbling: I think at this point the hockey rink has not come into the equation that I have heard of. Tracy?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: The hockey rink is a Park District facility today. In our minds it will continue to be that even though it is right in the back door of the School District but for now it will be maintained as a Park District facility.

Mayor Helbling: Any other comments?

Male Voice: What is the future financially as far as maintenance for that facility? Short term, long term?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: That facility was built in the late 1980's. Right now I would say it is probably at 100% rented out for ice time. That is an issue in Bismarck/Mandan when you look at the two communities is that there is not enough ice time. There are kids practicing at 5 or 6 in the morning and at 10:00 at night. The community will probably support more ice time if there was some available but from our standpoint we did just put some money into the hockey arena about 3 years ago to do some improvements to put some new flooring in. I don't know of anything that is on the immediate need list right now.

Reid Katzung: Is that ice there year around?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: It's taken out. It's probably in for about six months of the year.

Male voice: Is it concrete? Are there other events held in there?

Park & Recreation Director Cole Higlin: We have activities in there for some of our own programming needs. We've had events in there such as garage sales at times but not many.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: At non ice times it could be used as a main hall for events.

City Commissioner Jackson: President Porter I have one more question for you. If the Park District had a wish list would you want a facility similar to what there is now?

Park Board President Tracy Porter: Absolutely. The things that are in rec centers today are incredible and they are very family friendly. The community center would still be nice.

City Commissioner Serhienko: I have just a couple more concerns. I agree that we need to address what kind of center we need. I want to make a point that there are certain events that happen in Mandan where there really is not another place large enough to accommodate events. You mentioned that there is a hall or gymnasium but the problem is that some of these events are actually 2 or 3 day events. So if you would need a school to

release a gymnasium, and that's not going to happen, or a dining room or some facility like that, my concern is that the few events that are of that size and where they have a more than one day nature to them, they would just be out in the cold. And I think that's a major consideration. I agree with everything that has been said here regarding the fact that it's part of the school. You can hardly come up with any other solution than that. The Park Board, you are right; to turn it into what you should have in a rec center is probably the way to spend your money but my concern is the public access some of that may go away and until there is some other possibility that could accommodate it, that's the real issue that I see with the whole thing.

City Commissioner Tibke: Jerry I would like to say what I heard from the School Board is that they are concerned about that too and if they were to acquire the building they would try to keep that as a priority. Because with all the entities we have here, the more people we bring into the community will stop and get gas, or go to a café, the better off we all are with our tax dollars. So I think would be a concern for all three entities and it is good to bring up what was said that it is their concern too.

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: Commissioner Tibke, just so we are all on the same page – absolutely that is a concern and consideration for the school district but I don't want to lead anyone to believe that we would be able retain space at the current community center. What we would need to do in that facility as our part of the planning is that we would need to fit that for vocational needs and office spaces. We would do what we could to accommodate events throughout all of the district facility, all of our physical plants.

Mayor Helbling: We will take more comments from the floor.

Laurie Leingang: My question is for the School Board and what are the needs of the vocational education program

School Superintendent Wilfred Volesky: About two years ago, the State Vocational Department came through the Mandan School District and did an audit of our facilities. One of things they told us, they told us you have to find another facility for your carpentry program. The facility that we currently use is the building west of the high school and it is not a good facility for that. So we need to build a facility for that or we lose the program. We also have needs for the Walter House just east of the high school gym. The people that we have working there should be in the high school. We have the portable that is south of the high school library. That facility is in need of repair. We are looking at moving welding, industrial groups to the community center to make room at the high school for these classes. We are going to have to look at which vocational programs that we can move that make it financially feasible. It comes to a point where you start moving facilities and it is not financially feasible. Also, the other programs that we have outside the high school can be brought in so it meets our needs very well. Our ADP is another facility that would need to move up to the community center. There are number of programs that we have outside of the high school that need to come somewhere near the high school.

Business Development Director Huber: Does the Park District have some preliminary analysis on costs for the plans for renovation at the community center for a full fledged rec center versus building a new rec center?

Park & Recreation Director Cole Higlin: Yes, we have some numbers. The difficult part is that the community center we have today and what our threshold of debt for both new and existing and what is that magical number. We have been using about \$5 million for new which gets you about a 40,000 square foot recreational facility. The facility we have today is about 70,000 square feet. There is a pending agreement with the Water Park and we would be taking on an additional debt load along with a potentially new rec center – we’re just going with a figure of \$5 million dollars for a number just so we can see what kind of debt, if we can service that debt and to see what kind of impact, if any in a raise in mills. As to renovation, we did have a meeting this morning with an architect who would potentially put together a plan for a rec center similar to the Wellness Center at Minot State. In our area would be a walking track, the addition of locker rooms and make it family friendly so that a mother or father that would come with their children and get them changed to go into the water or into the gymnasium or day care needs for people that would like to come during the weekend. These are cookie-cutter rooms that don’t flow very well. When you talk about renovation costs it is difficult when you talk about \$180,000 in utilities. That’s the annual utility bill for the Community Center so we are trying to find ways to bring that cost down. Some of the equipment is 35 years old. We are looking at the heating system and air conditioning units. We looked at the option of geothermal finding that the cost of geothermal is quite high, cost for geothermal is about a million dollars. For other renovation we are looking at about \$2.5 million dollars. We’re looking at about \$5 million dollars for new. These are the ball park numbers being looked at and considered for renovation or for new.

Mayor Helbling: With that, we will close the public portion of this meeting. Is there any further discussion at this time amongst the Boards?

Park Board Member Terry Kraft: I am really encouraged by this whole meeting. It’s kind of neat to hear everybody’s thoughts. From my perspective, I have a couple ideas. Would it be fair to say that the Market Street study will address some of these issues possibly?

City Administrator Neubauer: Part of the Market Street’s task is to find out what Mandan’s vision is. Is part of that vision a better rec facility, better school facilities, or are there other directions the community would like to see us go. But, part of the Market Street plan help determine which direction the community wants us to go.

Park Board Member Terry Kraft: I think a lot of people have already mentioned it that we are all using the same exact dollar. Maybe we are three different entities but it is the same exact dollar so we need to spend it wisely. The way I view it, all three of us have some problems. You’ve got a rec center that really is not a rec center. Wilfred, you mentioned some definite issues and that this is a great fit for you. And from our perspective, we’ve always looked at the event center as somewhat the City’s responsibility so I agree with you Jerry but I will throw it right back at you that I agree we have a problem and I’m not sure whose responsibility it falls on. It is certainly an

issue and I am hoping that maybe Market Street will help with that and prioritize going down the list. We can't have everything we want but maybe try to figure out what the public wants. What is their list of priorities and tackle them one at a time that way. But it's going to have to a cooperative effort amongst all three entities. None of us can do any of these things without the help of the other two on board.

Mayor Helbling: Those are all very good comments. For those of you who don't know, there is a public poll that you can take on the internet through the Market Street Group that the Chamber is working on. It's www.mandanvisionplan.com. So if you have not already taken that survey please go on there and provide your comments. If there is something you don't agree on, write it in the comments box. You could have some off the wall idea. Throw it in the comment box. We can't come up with anything if we don't know what the idea is and what everybody wants in the community. So please, get on there and fill out the survey and tell everyone what you want your community to be.

School Board Member Lee Fleischer: I would just add a couple more comments. I haven't heard anybody use the word economic development. I thought when Ellen stepped up to the podium I thought she would say that. I think all of this is great conversation and gives us an opportunity, regardless of the direction or path this goes down I think drawing people to our community certainly benefits all of us. It benefits the tax dollars that comes in; it benefits the restaurants and hotels. I think all of us here will agree that a new rec center will certainly do that. I haven't heard anybody talk about raising taxes and I think all of us are very aware of how we are always hearing from the community about how we wisely we should spend the tax dollars. That's encouraging also.

Mayor Helbling: Are there any other comments from other Board Members? Seeing none, I will comment from the City's standpoint no matter what we do we need to take care of the events. The events are part of the community and if something were to transpire at the Community Center we need to make sure those events are taken care of. So that will be a big priority on behalf of the city.

From here, and since there are so many board members here it is hard to get a consensus of what's going on but I think from what I am hearing I would like to see some direction from the City Commission, the Park District and the School District each advise their directors to get together and try to work on some of the comments that were heard tonight and the concerns they heard tonight and to come back with another plan to the Board. I am really encouraged that all the Board members made it to the meeting tonight. I think one of the reasons we did decide to have it at this facility is that we were hoping to have a large crowd and we wanted to show off this beautiful facility. I noticed the new community sign down on the east side of main street had the meeting date and the time on it and that all three of us were meeting tonight so I think that is a step in the right direction. And I hope the Park District and the School District and the City utilize that sign to the best of its ability so we can inform the public what's going on.

Commissioner Gangl motioned to direct Administrator Neubauer to work with Mr. Volesky and Mr. Higlin to iron out some more details and give us some direction on

where we should take this next. Commissioner Tibke seconded the motion. The motion received unanimous approval of the City Commission members present.

Mayor Helbling: With that I will turn it over to the School Board.

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: I will entertain a motion to direct Superintendent Volesky and Business Manager Joe Lukach to work with the City and Park District to continue to explore the possibility that this might have with the School District. School Board Member Dan Leingang moved, Leland Fleischer seconded the motion. Roll call: Arenz: yes; Fleischer: yes; Goetz: yes; Leingang: yes; Nider: yes; Rector: yes; Tausend: yes; Baesler: yes; Fishbeck: yes. The motion carried.

Park Board President Tracy Porter: I will also entertain a motion to work with the School Board and the City Commission Administrator to move forward with this project. The motion was made, seconded. The motion received unanimous approval of the Park District Board members present.

Mayor Helbling: I think we have direction from all three Boards. Again, I am really encouraged that all three Boards were able to get together tonight and actually have some discussion. I was hoping for a few more members of our community to give some input but that didn't happen so hopefully at the next meeting if we do have a another joint meeting that we will be able to get an audience and give us some feedback. Thank you to all who attended tonight. With that, the City will close its portion of the meeting and turn it over to Mr. Volesky.

School Superintendent Wilfred Volesky: I guess the only question – are we under some kind of a timeline? Do we have any future meeting planned? When do you want a response from us Boards?

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: From our point – we need to set some sort of timeline. We are currently investigating - our CAB, Central Administration Building is currently up for sale. People are looking at it. We are currently investigating the options of renovating the GPA, Great Plains Academy, the former junior high building. So we do need to decide at some point what we are going to do.

Mayor Helbling: I would turn to the three administrators. What do you think is a logical timeline where you could bring some facts and figures, some brainstorming or, have another joint meeting?

School Superintendent Wilfred Volesky: There is an anticipation that there probably will be a future meeting, so we will get on with it and do as much as we possibly can and when we seem to have things in order you will be notified by your representative to your board and when we are ready to present a plan, you will be notified.

Mayor Helbling: I think if we push for the first part of June at the latest, would be good. You guys have a better handle on things on day to day activities. I think we should not let it go past June.

Park & Recreation Director Cole Higlin: June 1st is a goal and we can work on that.

School Board President Kirsten Baesler: Our Board feels we need to move a little more quickly than the June 1st because the questions we are needing answers for, that may be too late. Can we shoot for the end of April, first of May at the latest? The legislative session will be over and putting it the end of May is getting late.

Park & Recreation Director Cole Higlin: We will pick a date and allow Mr. Volesky to get in touch with Jim and I.

Mayor Helbling: I want to thank everybody for coming tonight and expressing opinion, the members of the School Board and the Park Board. I would like to see more meetings like this.

ADJOURNMENT:

Commissioner Gangl moved to adjourn the City's portion of the meeting. Commissioner Tibke seconded the motion. The motion received unanimous approval of the City Commission members present.

The meeting of the School Board adjourned. (No motion required.)

There was a motion and a second to adjourn the Park District's portion of the meeting. The motion received unanimous approval of the Park District's members present.

/s/ James Neubauer

James Neubauer,
City Administrator

/s/ Timothy A. Helbling

Timothy A. Helbling,
President, Board of City
Commissioners