

The Cannon Falls City Council met in a work session on Tuesday, December 6, 2022, in the City Council Chambers. Present were Council Members Bill Duncan, Steve Gesme, Matt Montgomery, Laura Kronenberger, and Derek Lundell; Mayor John Althoff was absent. Also present were Neil Jensen, City Administrator; Dan Howard, Public Works Director; Dianne Howard, Zoning Administrator; Sara Peer, City Clerk; Jeffrey McCormick, Police Chief; and Shelley Ryan, City Attorney.

Call to Order

Mayor Pro Tem Steve Gesme called the City Council work session to order at 5:30 p.m.

Valley View Recovery Center

City Administrator Jensen provided background information. He referenced past discussion of concerns expressed by Council Members, with direction provided to staff to invite representatives of Valley View Recovery Center to address these concerns with the City Council. He stated that representatives of Valley View Recovery Center declined to attend the work session. He suggested that the Council move forward with further discussion of the issues.

City Attorney Ryan clarified that no action would be taken by the City Council during the work session. She reviewed correspondence from Dunlap & Seeger, the legal firm representing Valley View Recovery Center. She stated that the facility is governed by a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). She noted that the facility is adjacent to a residential area. She reviewed one of the conditions of approval of the CUP pertaining to screening of the side yard, noting that this has not been done. She also referenced neighborhood concerns about safety and security. She reviewed potential options to determine compliance with the CUP. She commented that the facility is also licensed by the State of Minnesota and is governed by State regulations.

Council Member Gesme referenced discussion at the time that the facility opened with regard to safety and security measures and the supervision of client activities. He suggested discussing the current concerns with facility staff, in order to help allay neighborhood fears. He also suggested ensuring cooperation with local law enforcement authorities. He commented that the facility provides needed services.

Council Member Lundell referenced the promises that were made by facility representatives when the CUP was approved, noting that these have not been kept. He suggested more open communication.

Council Member Duncan expressed agreement that the facility is needed and suggested enforcing the conditions as outlined in the CUP. He also agreed with the need for more cooperation.

Council Member Montgomery referenced a report that indicated 32 calls to local law enforcement between April of 2022 and late October of 2022. He asked Police Chief McCormick to comment regarding this information. Police Chief McCormick discussed the types of calls. Council Member Montgomery expressed agreement with the need for a stronger working relationship with facility representatives. He asked about the types of clients who receive services at the facility. Police Chief McCormick indicated that he is unable to divulge this type of information, per State law. He provided clarification regarding the classification of predatory registered offenders. Council Member Montgomery asked Police Chief McCormick whether there has been a collaborative working relationship between Valley View Recovery Center and local law enforcement. Police Chief McCormick stated that legal reasons have been offered by facility staff when assistance has been requested but not provided. Council Member Montgomery referenced assurances that were provided relating to robust interior and exterior security systems. Council Members recalled past discussions in this regard. Council Member Montgomery suggested greater collaboration in this regard.

Council Member Duncan asked whether the required screening would facilitate better security. It was clarified that the requirement was for a tree planted buffer zone and optimal fence. City Attorney Ryan expressed agreement with the recommendation for a discussion of the concerns with facility representatives. She discussed the process of invalidating the CUP and requiring the facility to apply for a new CUP, which could include more strict and specific conditions. Council Member Duncan referenced concerns that were raised at the time that the CUP was approved. City Attorney Ryan indicated that another work session could be scheduled or a committee formed to meet with facility representatives and report back to the Council.

Council Members suggested inviting facility representatives to meet with the City Council in a work session prior to the December 20 Council meeting for discussion of the concerns.

Adjournment

The work session adjourned at 5:55 p.m.

Adopted by the City Council of the City of Cannon Falls on the 20th day of December, 2022.

John O. Althoff, Mayor

ATTEST:

Neil L. Jensen, City Administrator