

City Council
Date: 1-08-08
REGULAR
Item: 9b.
Motion

ITEM: Designate An Official Newspaper
SUBMITTED BY: Sharon Lumby, City Clerk
REVIEWED BY: Susan Hoyt, City Administrator

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED: The City Council is being asked to designate an official newspaper. The city used the Lake Elmo Leader which has a weekly publication for the past five years. The Leader, with a paid Lake Elmo Circulation of 834, used to be located in Lake Elmo. It is focused almost exclusively on Lake Elmo activities. This made it the best fit for an official newspaper given the criteria provided in the LMC Handbook. (see attached Section B 2). The Lake Elmo Leader is currently located at 1815 Northwestern, Stillwater. There are three other newspapers serving the Lake Elmo city. The largest circulation is the Pioneer Press with 1,301 daily papers and 1,807 Sunday papers in Lake Elmo. The Stillwater Gazette has a five day a week publication with a paid circulation of 350 addresses in Lake Elmo. The Oakdale-Lake Elmo Review has a circulation of 1,600 copies of which 239 are paid Lake Elmo subscribers.

The City Council may want to continue with the Lake Elmo Leader as its official newspaper because of its proximity to the city limits and its specific focus on the city of Lake Elmo and the Lake Elmo community rather than a broader area. The Lake Elmo Leader has been very responsive to the city's requests and most official city notices can be planned and needs have been met with the Lake Elmo Leader.

However, the staff recommends that the city council consider designating the paper with the largest circulation, the St. Paul Pioneer Press, as a back up paper to be used under unique circumstances when the city needs to get a quicker turn around for a publication to serve property owners and to meet the 60 day rule in particular. Or if there is an oversight in getting an official notice published by a certain date (unlikely). The Pioneer Press gives the city a two day turn around time for publications that may be unexpected and time sensitive. It is never good to publish inaccurate information and, from time to time, this occurs because the staff anticipates an application might be ready for a planning commission meeting and it is not. If this occurs, not only is money wasted, the planning commission has to delay the item, which means that the applicant often needs to attend even with an incomplete application because he or she needs to be sure that no action is taken since it is not legal to do so. It is difficult for the staff to anticipate that an application will be fully ready for the planning commission several days in advance of its submission. It is important not to publish notices without accurate information about the application and also not to give the applicant and the commission something on the agenda that can't be processed. The lead time required for the weekly paper on some occasions can be a challenge.

For example, a notice of the public hearing on a planning application must go to the Lake Elmo Leader on Friday, Feb 1 to be considered at a public meeting on Monday February 18. However, if the application is ready on Tuesday, February 5, the applicant will need to wait until the March 10 planning commission meeting to be considered to be published in the weekly. By having the Pioneer Press with a two day legal notice requirement, the applicant could have his/her application legally published on February 7, meet the 10 day requirement by February 18 – three weeks earlier than waiting until March 10. Again, it is not anticipated that the back up newspaper would need to be used very frequently.

Suggested motions for consideration (select one).

Motion 1:

Move to designate the Lake Elmo Leader as the official newspaper and designate the St. Paul Pioneer Press as a back up official newspaper on an as needed basis..

OR

Motion 2:

Move to designate the St. Paul Pioneer Press as the official newspaper.

OR

Motion 3:

Move to designate the Lake Elmo Leader as the official newspaper.

ATTACHMENTS:

- 1 Table summarizing circulation and fees
- 2 Criteria for Official Newspapers