

ROLLING MEADOWS CITY COUNCIL
COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
March 16, 2010

COUNCIL IN ATTENDANCE: Mayor Ken Nelson, Aldermen John Pitzferro, Barb Lusk, Larry Buske, Brad Judd, Glenn Adams, John D' Astice, Jim Larsen

STAFF IN ATTENDANCE: City Manager Sarah Phillips, Public Works Director Fred Vogt, Community Development Director Valerie Dehner, Police Chief Dave Scanlan, Fire Chief Ron Stewart, Senior Accountant Rob Fredrickson, City Attorney Jim Macholl, Assistant City Manager Barry Krumstok

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

1) Privatization of Fire and Ambulance Services

Alderman Judd: Thanked everyone that is here tonight. This discussion is looking to find facts. He neither supports nor not supports this privatization. He wants to gather the facts and determine whether we can provide the same services at a lower cost to the City. He thanked the unions for going out and putting flyers on everyone's door and getting the word out on this issue. This impacts everyone in the City. This has nothing to do with the service and dedication of the firefighters and paramedics of this City. This is only an issue of cost and strictly a fact finding mission. He is not advocating spending any money at this time. He clarified that privatizing and outsourcing is not the same thing. With privatizing they would still be housed in the stations on Meadow Drive and Plum Grove Road. He would like to explore some ideas. He is also concerned about the pension structure. He supplied some numbers to the audience. If it turns out that we would only save \$50,000 he would not support the privatization. If it could save us \$1 million then it would be something to explore further. The thing that bothers him the most is that he is being chastised for asking questions.

Mayor Nelson presented a petition to be entered into the record opposing the privatizing of the Fire Department.

Alderman Adams: Read a statement conveying his feelings about this issue. He backed Alderman Judd's request to discuss this issue. He asked that residents not put all the blame on Alderman Judd. He also felt that this issue needed discussion and more facts before any decision could be made. Based on the response from residents he will support not going any further with the pursuing of privatization of the fire department.

Alderman Lusk: Has received well over 100 communications from the residents overwhelmingly supportive of the fire department. Only 1 resident was willing to consider this idea if there would be massive savings. Unless something changes dramatically she sees no reason to continue with this idea and feels that the matter should be dropped.

Alderman Buske: Is also not for continuing this discussion any further. He received 60 phone calls and 80 emails. He was told by a resident who is a firefighter in another town and had worked with a private firm that he had four words to describe them – "They just don't care". We have established a fire department that is very professional and does not want to privatize our fire department. When it comes to making cuts in the budget he will not discuss anything that has to do with public safety.

Alderman Larsen: He rarely gets calls about issues, but he received many on this issue and they were all against privatization. Residents take personal pride in our fire and police departments. We do the best we can to manage this City. As much as he would like to move this forward and get the residents input he is not in favor of this privatization.

Alderman Pitzferro: Also received many phone calls and emails from residents. About 30-40% of them, after speaking with them, understood the idea of looking into the issue. He is against the privatization, but understands the need for the discussion.

Alderman D' Astice: Everything that needed to be said has been said. In his opinion there is nothing that we shouldn't ask questions about and investigate. Regardless of his personal opinion on this issue he will vote with the residents and the residents do not want privatization. He supports the idea of asking questions, but will represent the majority of the residents.

Mayor Nelson: Read every email that came to the City. For the most part, they were very reasonable and succinct. He is pleased with the turnout at tonight's meeting and encourages everyone to stay for the rest of the meeting. He also does not support the privatization, but supports any alderman's right to ask questions.

Mayor Nelson:

Does anyone have any desire to move forward: Judd

No desire to move forward: Pitzafarro, Lusk, Buske, Adams, D'Astice, Larsen

Alderman Buske: Received a call this morning and was told that there was a survey taken in 2002 between Mount Prospect and Rolling Meadows.

Mayor Nelson: Clarified that there was never a discussion on that. Back in the mid-90's there was talk about privatization of garbage.

2) Prescription Drug Card Program

Ms. Phillips: As a member of the National League of Cities we have the ability to offer a free prescription drug card to residents that offer a 20% discount at local pharmacies at no cost to the residents or the City. We are required to spread the word to residents. It is to go into effect immediately.

Alderman Lusk: Cannot think of a better benefit to our residents. It is a win-win situation.

Alderman Larsen: Does this need Council approval to move forward?

Mayor Nelson: Yes. It would only require a resolution.

Ms. Phillips: Noted that there are certain drugs that are not covered under certain drug cards and this card may cover them.

Alderman Pitzafarro: This seems like a no-brainer. How much Staff time would be involved in promoting this program?

Ms. Phillips: We could put something on the website, brochures placed at City Hall, something in the newsletter and possibly some brochures at the library and park district.

Alderman Pitzafarro: He does support this.

Mayor Nelson: Direction to Staff is to come forth with a resolution.

3) Public Works Citizens Academy

Mr. Vogt and Mr. Hartnett: Presented a program summary and overview of the Academy that will begin on March 25th.

Alderman Adams: What is the cost?

Mr. Hartnett: We budget about \$1500 for the program.

Alderman Buske: Supports the academy 100%. He will not support the cost of sending someone to the 2010 American Public Works Association International Congress and Exposition in Boston, MA for a presentation.

4) 4th of July Program/Memorial Day/Veterans Dinner

Mayor Nelson: This is being brought forward by Staff because of the expense to the City.

Ms. Phillips: We have received bids for the fireworks. She presented the numbers that were budgeted and approved and now Staff is looking for direction. With the 4th of July falling on Sunday, when do we want to have the parade and fireworks?

Alderman Larsen: What are the personnel costs for?

Ms. Phillips: For the parade and fireworks public safety.

Alderman Lusk: Likes having the 4th of July on the 4th of July. She would have no problem with moving the parade to 1:00 or 1:30. What are the pennants for?

Mr. Krumstok: For security around the fireworks canisters.

Alderman Lusk: Does not want to see the Veterans Dinner go. Possible cost savings would be asking the guests to pay for their meal. These events are really the only events we have in Rolling Meadows. She cannot see taking these away from the residents.

Alderman Buske: Agrees with Alderman Lusk. The 4th of July is one event that brings out all the people. He believes that we are the only community that has a Veterans' Dinner.

Alderman Adams: Agrees with Alderman Buske. He does not want to mess with the Veteran/Memorial programs and would like to see the 4th of July events stay. With regards to the date of the parade and fireworks, he is wondering if the Chamber of Commerce could give us some feedback on whether Saturday or Sunday would be better.

Mayor Nelson: Thinks that the fireworks should stay on the 4th and knows that Arlington Heights is doing theirs on the 3rd. Council is comfortable with keeping these events with the 4th of July parade starting at 1:00 or 1:30.

5) Family Assistance Program

Ms. Phillips: This now falls under the City Manager's office and after reviewing the policy is recommending some changes.

Alderman Adams: Wholeheartedly agrees with the changes, especially requiring that the applicant be a United States citizen.

Mayor Nelson: Direction to Staff is to proceed.

6) 2009 Preliminary Financials

Ms. Phillips: As indicated earlier, we are currently in the process of doing the audit. We are anticipating a surplus of \$1.678M for 2009.

Alderman Lusk: Thanked Staff and offered a pat on the back.

Alderman Larsen: Ditto. It was a tough year and we had to make some very difficult decisions. Appreciates the work the entire Staff has done.

Alderman Adams: It is great to see us moving in the right direction. Thanked Staff for their hard work and putting up with the Council.

Alderman D'Astice: Is proud to say Thank You.

7) Alarm Ordinance

Chief Scanlan: We took the previous discussions and came up with proposed changes to the ordinance. The changes are: 3 no-charge false alarms / 4 for seniors; 2 no-charge false alarms for businesses. The Fine will be moved back to \$100 for the first violation / \$150 for the second / \$200 thereafter (50% for seniors). Do we want to go with an annual renewal fee or a one-time fee? Another discussion was whether to privatize the billing. After getting some information believes that the cost of the service would not make it beneficial to the City and believes it would be best to keep the billing in-house.

Mayor Nelson: What is our renewal fee right now?

Chief Scanlan: \$20 (50% for seniors).

Alderman Buske: Thanked the Chief for doing this. What does the Chief think the Staff costs are for processing the permits? We are taking in about \$6200.

Ms. Phillips: It will take Staff time, but with our new database the process is easier now.

Alderman Buske: Suggests that we go along with Chief Scanlan's suggestion of continuing with the renewal fees.

Chief Stewart: Put together a summary. This is not to generate revenue, but rather for compliance.

Mayor Nelson: Direction to Staff would be to revise the ordinance and come back to Council with legislation.

8) Staffing Plan

Alderman D'Astice: Is proposing that we put an ordinance together that would automatically trigger a staffing plan review whenever a position in the City becomes vacant. His idea is that there may be an opportunity for Council to look at things, make suggestions, and think outside the box.

Mayor Nelson: Feels that it is better done by direction to the City Manager rather than creating an ordinance.

Alderman Lusk: Recalls that Ms. Phillips has given us her word that before hiring anyone she will come to City Council for direction. She does not see a need for an ordinance.

Alderman Larsen: Also does not agree with the concept of having this ordinance. The City Manager was hired for this purpose. He understands Alderman D'Astice's rationale, but feels that the things that Alderman D'Astice wants to accomplish is what Staff is doing. He is not in favor of the Council monitoring these things.

Alderman Judd: Will side with Alderman D'Astice on this. He feels that any position that is vacated gets automatically eliminated and then Staff comes back to Council to bring that position back.

Alderman Buske: The City Manager is in charge of staffing not the staffing plan. Would we need a referendum for this?

Mr. Macholl: Would like to get more information and come back to Council.

Mayor Nelson: Directed Mr. Macholl to research this further and come back to Council.

Alderman Adams: When exactly was this particular section drafted?

Mr. Macholl: Probably drafted when the City adopted the City Manager form of government.

Alderman Adams: Does not disagree with what Alderman D'Astice is trying to do.

Ms. Phillips: Pointed out Staff is aware that anytime a position becomes vacant it will be reviewed by Council.

Alderman Larsen: If we have the City Manager's word we need to trust her word. He does not feel the need to formalize this.

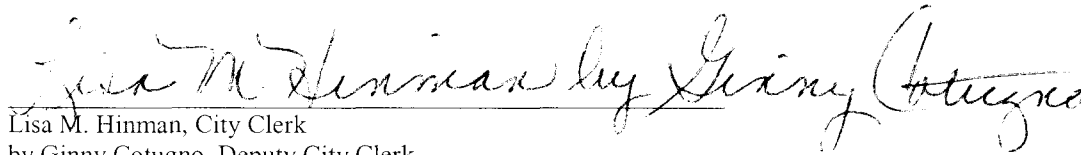
Mayor Nelson: Asked for a show of hands to have Mr. Macholl explore the issue: 7.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 9:29 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa M. Hinman, City Clerk

March 16, 2010 Committee of the Whole Minutes approved by Council March 23, 2010.



Lisa M. Hinman, City Clerk
by Ginny Cotugno, Deputy City Clerk