

February 14, 2012

A work session meeting of the City Council was held on the above date. Mayor Simonson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The following were present: Mayor Randall Simonson, Council members Connie Amos, Chris Ness, Jim Schneider and Sally Swanson. Staff present: City Administrator Anne Hurlburt, Attorney Vince Stevens of Miller & Stevens, P.A., Treasurer Colleen Firkus and Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund. Fire Chief Jim Finnegan and Assistant Fire Chiefs Bill Havener and Mike Hinz were also in attendance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Schneider, seconded by Amos, moved to approve the agenda as presented. The motion carried 5-0.

FIRE DEPARTMENT HIRING PROCESS

Fire Chief Finnegan explained the need for the fire department to recruit new members due to several retirements since new members were last added in 2010. Finnegan would like to add six new members this year and conduct another recruitment of six members in 2013. The hiring process would be similar to what was used in 2010 with some changes. The current position description for all firefighting jobs requires that they reside or are employed within a fifteen minute response time to the Scandia fire station. The Department would like to reduce this response time to eight minutes. Finnegan explained that this is a more realistic time for responders to arrive at the station in time for the truck departure, and is a more common time requirement for area fire departments. Response time for department members is also a factor in the ISO rating.

Currently the Operational Policy requires a 24-month probationary period for new firefighters. The Department would like to reduce this to 12 months. Finnegan reasoned that new members could progress to Firefighter I class and be a more active member of the department within the first year.

The proposed changes to the firefighting job descriptions and Operational Policy require council action. Mayor Simonson stated his support for the changes. The rest of the Council was in agreement with this. City Administrator Hurlburt presented a timeline for the hiring based on council approval and an authorization to advertise at the February 21 council meeting. Interviews and physical testing would be conducted in April, appointments made at the May 15 Council meeting, and new members could start by June 2.

Council discussed their participation in the selection and interview process, and concluded that it would not be necessary to be involved in this process until final approval to hire the new personnel.

Fire Chief Finnegan brought up the issue of purchasing sets of turnout gear on a rotating basis over the next few years. City Administrator Hurlburt suggested this issue be included in the budget planning meetings beginning in June.

GOALS FOR 2012

At the January 17 meeting, the Council requested that a discussion of goals and priorities for 2012 be part of their next work session. City Administrator Hurlburt presented a chart of significant projects and activities that the City is already committed to for 2012 and beyond.

Mayor Simonson started off by stating his concern about the cable franchise agreement which is scheduled for renewal by the end of the year. City Administrator Hurlburt explained that the Cable Commission is in the beginning of the process of preparing the franchise agreement and is anticipating bringing it to those cities that are part of the joint powers agreement by the end of the year. The City Attorney will be reviewing the agreement and offering a legal opinion at a future time. Mayor Simonson and City Attorney Hurlburt are the city representatives to the commission and will keep the council updated on the progress.

The next issue of discussion was the retirement announcement by City Administrator Hurlburt, to occur in early October. Hurlburt estimated that the hiring process for her replacement could take 5 to 6 months and suggested the council work with a recruitment firm to assist with the process. The Council could meet with several firms having placement experience in small cities to gather options and proposals. Council member Swanson stated that the expense of hiring a recruitment firm is cost prohibitive and not necessary. Council member Schneider agreed but suggested an inquiry into the actual cost of a search be done before deciding on the how to proceed. Mayor Simonson stated that it would be important to explore these costs and options as a first step. City Administrator Hurlburt will arrange for recruitment firms to present proposals to the Council that would tailor a search to the city's needs.

The Recycling Agreement with SRC, which has been in effect since 2001, is in the process of being updated to bring it into line with the County's grant requirements. It is anticipated that this will come before the Council soon.

The Zavoral Mining and Reclamation EIS Project is moving into the formal public review process. The Council will meet on February 28 to determine the release of the draft and open the 60-day comment period which would begin on March 19.

Discussion continued on a number of projects and goals for each department. Council member Swanson recommended a review of the sign ordinance. Council member Schneider added that he would like to see a change to accessory structure requirements. City Administrator Hurlburt explained that a review of any changes in zoning requirements should be directed to the Planning Commission.

City Administrator Hurlburt recommended that the building inspection services agreement with Forest Lake continue. Council agreed that other changes in personnel need to be established before deciding whether to contract or hire a part-time building employee. The agreement with Forest Lake is working fine at this point.

Council member Swanson recommended an update to the police service contract with Washington County which has been in effect since 2000. Attorney Stevens advised that if the

language of the contract is not a problem and the costs are not necessarily negotiable, an update may not have a practical effect. Hurlburt stated that the agreement has been flexible to accommodate changing needs, and that there are always costs to proceed with reviews and updates.

The Public Works Department has a number of projects, including the development of a street maintenance policy, a drainage infrastructure maintenance plan, and equipment/ building maintenance schedules. It was agreed that these will be goals of the new Maintenance Superintendent position. The summer road maintenance project recommendations will be coming from staff and engineers in the next month or two, so that plans are ready by May.

A professional services agreement with Bolton & Menk for improvements to the Uptown Sewer system will be brought to the council at the February 21 meeting, with installation of run-time meters to begin as soon as possible. The rate structure and user fee ordinance is nearing completion.

2012 CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Council discussed changes to committees and appointments for 2012. Council members Schneider and Amos had been appointed to the Human Resources Committee in 2011, but the council chose to discuss almost all personnel-related issues as a full council. Mayor Simonson questioned if this committee is necessary. Attorney Stevens and City Administrator Hurlburt advised that this committee could be disbanded and council members could be involved as needed for each personnel issue.

Council member Swanson agreed to continue to serve as the Parks Committee liaison, while Council member Ness will continue as Planning Commission liaison.

Mayor Simonson stated his concern about the lack of interest by appointed citizens serving on the Capital Improvements Committee and would rather disband the Committee. All were in agreement that the full council should discuss capital improvements during budget talks and work sessions and that public input can be gathered at these meetings.

Mayor Simonson and City Administrator Hurlburt will continue to serve on the Forest Lake Cable Commission.

Council member Ness recommended that a committee be formed to oversee both the 201 and Uptown Sewer systems. It was agreed to establish an advisory committee made up of three council members, staff, 2-3 citizen members with septic system expertise, and a customer of the systems. Hurlburt will prepare a report on the mission and structure of the Wastewater Advisory Committee for review at the February 21 council meeting.

Simonson, seconded by Ness, moved to make the following Committee appointments for 2012:

Human Resources:

Disbanded

Parks Committee Liaison:

Swanson

Planning Commission Liaison:	Ness
Capital Improvements Committee:	Disbanded
Forest Lake Cable Commission:	Simonson (<i>already reappointed to new 2-yr term by Resolution No. 12-20-11-03</i>)
Wastewater Advisory Committee:	Newly created

The motion to approve the appointments carried 5-0.

MAINTENANCE SUPERINTENDENT POSITION

On February 7, Bradley LeTourneau notified the City that he has decided to stay with his current employer, the City of Blaine, where he was offered a promotion. Mr. LeTourneau was the second person to turn down the Maintenance Superintendent position. City Attorney Hurlburt recommended that the position be re-advertised for approximately three weeks, as there may be qualified candidates now available who were not available when the position was initially advertised last September. The applications that remain on file will also be considered along with the new applications.

Council member Schneider opposed re-advertising, and wanted a candidate chosen from the pool of applicants who had initially applied. Schneider stated that there is an immediate need to fill this position and didn't want to waste any more time. Council member Amos agreed that there were plenty of applicants in the pool to choose from.

Attorney Stevens advised that the City must consider past hiring practices to avoid any potential liability issues that could be viewed as unfair practices such as discrimination or favoritism.

City Administrator Hurlburt explained that most of the remaining candidates in the pool did not have the municipal and supervisory experience as the top candidates who were interviewed. Hurlburt stated that these are important skills for this position. Re-advertising and going out to the market briefly may not cost too much additional time to find a well-qualified person. Hurlburt pointed out that it is important to hire the right person for the job rather than hire the wrong person fast.

Council member Swanson was unsure if it would be necessary to re-advertise, as there were people in the pool worth considering. Swanson agreed that the city needs to approach this cautiously.

Council member Ness stated that he strongly favored to re-advertise as those initial applicants may not be around or interested and it's important to hire a well-qualified person who may be available now. Ness felt it would be foolish not to open up the position for only a short window of three weeks. City Administrator Hurlburt agreed that after six months, the pool of applicants would very likely be decreased. Hurlburt stated that the remaining applicants would be contacted to see if they wish to be reconsidered for the position and if so, they would not need to re-apply.

Simonson, seconded by Ness, moved to re-advertise the Maintenance Superintendent position for a period of three weeks and evaluate the candidates along with those which remain on file from the first application round.

Council member Swanson stated that she had an issue with the ad as written and that a 20 minute response time needs to be added. Attorney Stevens asked if there is a rational basis for this requirement. Swanson replied that emergency situations such as a decision to send out plow trucks or a sewer emergency require a quick response. Hurlburt advised that it is not part of the current job description and it would need to be changed if the council wishes to make this a requirement. Hurlburt stated that it could exclude good candidates who live outside this response time and who would consider relocating.

Simonson recommended that a 30 minute response time would be more realistic. Hurlburt verified that the Maintenance Worker job description has a minimum qualification of a 30 minute response time. The council agreed to add this requirement to the Maintenance Superintendent job description.

Simonson, seconded by Ness, moved to amend his motion to add a 30 minute response time as a minimum qualification to the Maintenance Superintendent job description and that this be added to the job posting.

Mayor Simonson called for a roll call vote to re-advertise the position with a 30 minute response time as a minimum qualification. Schneider – no; Swanson – yes; Ness – yes; Amos – no; Simonson – yes. The motion carried 3-2.

City Administrator Hurlburt stated that the position will be advertised from February 15 to March 9. Applications will be reviewed during the week of March 12.

AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE WORK SESSIONS

City Administrator Hurlburt recognized the Uptown Sewer System and spring road projects as topics for the March 13 Council work session.

ADJOURNMENT

Ness, seconded by Schneider, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk