

April 2, 2014

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 Dan Lee, Chris Ness, Jim Schneider and Sally Swanson. Staff present: City Administrator Kristina Handt, Director of Public Works Tim Kieffer, Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund, Fire Chief Mike Hinz and Assistant Fire Chiefs Bill Havener and Ernie Yoch.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Simonson added a discussion of property tax issues as Agenda Item #7. Council member Ness added a discussion of tree trimming as Agenda Item #8. Administrator Handt recommended that the supplemental items on the personnel policy received from Attorney McCain (employment lawyer with Eckberg Lammers) be added to the discussion of Agenda Item #3. **Ness, seconded by Lee, moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried 5-0.**

DRAFT PERSONNEL POLICY ADDITION: USE OF CITY VEHICLES, EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, TOOLS, UNIFORMS AND FACILITIES

Administrator Handt presented a draft policy that would add a subsection to the personnel policy that covers appropriate use of City equipment, vehicles, supplies, tools and facilities. The policy was modeled after other cities and reviewed by the City Attorney. Handt explained that there had been some questions on this issue recently and she recommended adopting a formal written policy that would prohibit employees from using City equipment, facilities, etc. for personal and private use.

Fire Chief Hinz stated his disagreement with parts of the document. Hinz explained that the volunteer firefighters have traditionally been allowed to use the facility to do minor auto repairs and washing of their vehicles. Hinz noted that this it's beneficial to have the firefighters spending time at the site and it's understood that the firefighters will do various other duties for the department while there. Hinz recommended that department heads should determine what a reasonable use of equipment and facilities should be rather than a written policy. Assistant Chief Havener stated that he believes every fire department in the state allows their volunteers access to their facility for washing and maintenance of personal vehicles.

Council members discussed the issue and thought there could be exceptions but that it should be fair for all employees. Council member Swanson stated that she would prefer to see what other fire departments do. Council member Ness said that there may be some middle ground on this issue. Council member Lee agreed that it's worth looking at what others do and going with the status quo.

Simonson, seconded by Lee, moved to table the personnel policy on use of city equipment to the next work session in order to obtain more information and facts. The motion carried 5-0.

Handt presented Attorney McCain's recommendation to add at-will provisions to the policy, along with replacement of the grievance procedure with an open door policy for complaint resolution. Swanson stated that this language simplifies the process. Simonson added that it is an improvement. It was agreed to table its adoption until the personnel policy is further discussed at a future meeting. Handt recommended that the computer use policy adopted last year be incorporated into the overall policy also.

UPDATE FIRE DEPARTMENT OPERATIONS MANUAL: VALID DRIVER'S LICENSE

Administrator Handt explained a revision to the Fire Department's operational policy as recommended by the City Attorney. He had noted some inconsistencies with the City's Personnel Policy and offered updated language regarding a valid driver's license.

The revisions would require a firefighter to report any legal activity that may impact their driver's license to the Fire Chief. The Chief would have the option of placing the member on an unpaid leave of absence or assigning administrative tasks; but if the license is temporarily revoked or restricted, the member may not respond to any emergency calls.

Chief Hinz stated that he would like firefighters to continue to attend training and it would be helpful to have them on emergency response scenes also, as long as they can get a ride to the firehall. They would not be allowed to operate any fire department vehicles. Council member Schneider agreed that the Chief should decide if he wants the firefighter to respond to calls if the member has a ride to the firehall.

The Council was in agreement to remove the clause prohibiting a firefighter from responding to emergency calls during a temporary driver's license restriction.

Simonson, seconded by Lee, moved to amend the section by removing the prohibition to emergency calls, and directed staff to prepare the update for adoption at the April 15 Council meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

SNOW AND ICE CONTROL POLICY: SIDEWALKS

Public Works Director Kieffer requested direction on clearing sidewalks in the Village Area. A business owner had requested that the City add the east side of Olinda Trail north of Oakhill Road and the north side of Oakhill Road west of Olinda Trail – the sidewalks along the Auto Repair Shop and the Scandia Store/Café.

Kieffer recommended that the City maintain the existing sidewalks as described in the policy, but clarify the language to be more precise as to direction and length. Council members agreed that the businesses should continue to do their own snow removal, and the City will continue to open up one side of each roadway as it has been doing. It was agreed to add the amendment of the Snow and Ice Control Policy with the clarified language on sidewalks to the April 15 Consent Agenda.

COUNCIL MEMBER LEE ATTENDANCE AT THE LMC ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Council member Lee requested approval of his attendance at the LMC Annual Conference in St. Cloud on June 18-20. The cost of the conference is \$325 with an additional \$180 for hotel accommodations. Council member Schneider stated that Lee should cover his own costs of attendance. Council member Swanson stated that Lee should not charge for mileage, while Council member Ness recommended that Lee drive back and forth each day.

Schneider moved to not pay for Lee's attendance. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Ness, seconded by Swanson, moved to approve payment of the conference and either the hotel cost or mileage, but not both. The motion carried 3-1, with Schneider opposed. Lee abstained from voting.

PROPERTY TAX ISSUE

Mayor Simonson reported that he has received many calls about assessment values and that a large turnout is anticipated at the Board of Appeals on April 7th. Council member Schneider stated that he has also gotten many calls from residents concerned about the large increases in tax values. Schneider recommended that the Council write a collective letter to the County Board addressing the concerns about the 20-30% increase on Scandia properties.

Administrator Handt offered the Assessor's explanation on the cause for the valuation swings and reminded Council members about the process of determining tax rates.

TREE TRIMMING

Council member Ness asked if more tree waste could be left behind when tree trimming and therefore reducing the amount of rental time for the wood chipper. Ness stated that residents may appreciate taking the logs which remain. Public Works Director Kieffer explained that it's more efficient for them to chip the logs up to 12" in diameter, but the larger logs are left for residents. The logs from the tree trimming along Norell Avenue were gone within a day or two.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk