

North Branch City Council

Work Session

Date of Meeting: April 16, 2015

Present: Councilmembers: Theresa Furman, Kathy Blomquist, Joyce Borchardt, Robert Canada, and Kirsten Hagen-Kennedy.

Also Present: Public Works Director Williams, Fire Chief Grote, City Administrator Konrad

I. Call To Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. 20 Year Growth Utility Alternatives

Public Works Director Williams reviewed alternatives for installation of utilities. He informed Council that in some instances directional boring can be used for installation which is more cost effective than traditional installation. Furman asked what the costs are to have sewer run by her home. Williams indicated it would be based on the cost of the project and usually charged on a front foot basis. Blomquist said she has not heard from any other Councilmembers whether they want to adjust the municipal service line. Konrad asked WSB to help determine a "magic" lot size that allows for subdivision later. Canada took the line at 377th and ran it east and west and made a square and it's maybe something to consider. Konrad reviewed that staff will come back with further information including optimal lot size for future development.

III. Fire Department 10 Year Review

Fire Chief Grote provided a presentation on the Fire Department's history. Chief Grote said that, right or wrong, the Fire Department members do not feel they have the support of the City Council and also feel that the equipment needs to be improved rather than continuing to push off the equipment purchases. Canada referred to a website with lists of available equipment that he would recommend that the Fire Department check out. Konrad asked Canada to forward the information to Finance Director Hill for his review. Grote indicated that he felt that in the next few years we need to budget for at least a half time Fire Chief to allow staff time hours during the day to take care of the day to day operational things that he, as a volunteer, with a full time job, cannot do during the day. Furman asked if the part time chief position would be calculated into the fees to the township for services. Fire Chief Grote indicated it would be. Fire Chief Grote indicated that the Chief's vehicle that was totaled needs to be replaced. Fire Chief Grote said that they do not necessarily need new trucks but they do need to have vehicles that can be maintained. Borchardt pointed out the upcoming smelt fry on May 2, 2015. Hagen-Kennedy thanked the Fire Chief and firefighters for the job they do for the City.

IV. Public Comment Procedure

Hagen-Kennedy would like to have a procedure to allow an email or phone call in return if they would like one. Furman said that some residents may want to talk to just one Councilmember and not make their request an official request of the City Administrator. Furman questioned when residents can talk if they can't talk about items that are on the Agenda. She noted that our agendas state that Public Comment is for things not on the agenda. Konrad will add to the sign-up sheet to allow for email and phone numbers and a box to check if they want follow up from staff.

V. Code of Conduct and Ethics Policies

Konrad reviewed the proposed Code of Conduct and Ethics Policies. Hagen-Kennedy asked a clarification question about open meeting laws. Konrad explained that anything provided

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to Council at a meeting must be made available (one copy) to the public for review. Hagen-Kennedy would like to censure for misdemeanor misconduct type crimes. Konrad will discuss this with the City Attorney and get his opinion. Borchardt provided a copy of the language from Mankato's policy regarding testifying before other groups. The Mayor stated that when testifying she will say that she is the Mayor of North Branch but will use singular language, which is I. Blomquist would like to get Attorney Squires opinion on limiting free speech with this policy. Konrad will ask the City Attorney for his opinion which language would be best. Konrad will provide a current copy of the League Memo on conduct and then there will be a requirement for training. Furman said she does not want Councilmembers trashing those appointed to Commissions. Council and staff continued to go through the policy line by line. Konrad will make the changes and forward to the City Attorney for review.

VI. League of Minnesota Cities Mediation Services

Konrad indicated that Council needs to find a way to work together and move this City forward. She has provided information on conducting meetings and has suggested in house training on team building and strategic planning, but Council elected not to move forward with that. Konrad suggested working with the Office of Dispute Resolution, who is partnered with the League of Minnesota Cities, and works with City Staff, Councils, Commissions throughout the state and they do this at little to no cost. Borchardt asked if this would be an open meeting. Konrad said that she does not know of any way under the open meeting law that it would be possible to close the meeting. Furman said that if everyone was open to working on this together she would be committed to this but does not want to waste time and resources if others are not committed. Council agreed to participate in this type of session. Konrad will contact them about working with the City.

Konrad reminded of the Board of Review meeting Wednesday, April 22, 2015 at 6:00 p.m.

Motion by Furman, seconded by Borchardt to adjourn.

Adjourned at 9:54.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Bridgitte Konrad, City Administrator
jrl/TOSS