

SPECIAL MEETING DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL

MINUTES

October 28, 2008

The special meeting to the Des Moines City Council was called to order at 7:33 p.m. by Mayor Sheckler in the Council Chambers, 21630 11th Avenue South #B.

ATTENDANCE - Present: Mayor Bob Sheckler, Mayor Pro Tem Dan Sherman, Councilmembers Dave Kaplan, Ed Pina, Carmen Scott, Scott Thomasson and Susan White. Also in attendance were City Manager Tony Piasecki, Parks and Recreation Services Director Patrice Thorell, Public Works Director Grant Fredricks, Police Chief Roger Baker, Finance Director Paula Henderson, Assistant City Manager Lorri Ericson and City Attorney Pat Bosman.

PROPOSED BUDGET REDUCTIONS

Ms. Henderson gave the Council an updated version of the budget based on decisions that were made at the previous budget meeting and Council discussed the reflected changes.

Mr. Fredricks stated that he recommends most of the Planning Development reductions be left on the cut list. The exception is \$11,153 for the intern as this is a good use of funds. Council agreed to remove it from the cut list at this time. The rest of the cuts in the Public Works and Planning Division remained on the list.

Ms. Thorell recommended keeping the cuts on special events administration and extras. There will be some reassignment of personnel to cover special events when needed. Professional services like bands and bouncy toys would not be paid for by city funds. These extras could be paid for if sponsors are found. The Farmers Market is on its own and is not included in the special events budget.

Ms. Thorell stated that the Senior Services 5% cuts have revenue attached to them. The Council agreed to remove the Senior Services program reduction of \$19,922 and to also retain the Recreation Specialist position. This position is important to retain as the need for services is increasing. There has been a 23% expansion in Parks and Recreation mostly due to before and after school programs, educational and sports programs.

Councilmember White cautioned that if the Council cuts too deep in the Recreation Department, citizens that rely on these programs will be unhappy.

Councilmember Thomasson proposed that a new enterprise fund be created for the Parks and Recreation Division where the revenues pay for the program. It is hard to determine the revenue based on the position.

Ms. Henderson stated that they already separate the expenses from the general funds to account for what programs generate what funds.

Mr. Piasecki explained that there would be extra costs to help keep track of those expenses although most of these are already tracked.

Ms. Thorell noted that the subsidy to the Recreation program for 2008 was \$144,000 from the General fund. The programs nearly pay for themselves and the revenues are increasing.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman noted that the full expenses of the recreation programs may not be reflected in the figures given. If the accounting is accurate then he is in favor of keeping the positions and the revenues that come with them.

The consensus of the Council was to retain the Recreation Specialist position, thus removing it from the cut list..

If the Park Maintenance Worker position remains on the cut list the duties that will not be performed will be less park maintenance. Ms. Thorell gave Council a list of parks ranked by highest use. High use parks would get more maintenance than lesser used parks. Parks can be brought back if the maintenance falls behind, however it is very costly to do so. Other duties that would not be performed would be unloading the Food Bank trucks, hanging banners, call outs for emergencies, etc. The Department of Corrections crews are being used two days a week now due to state cut backs.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman felt that this should be left on the list. The City should not be helping to promote events that are not City events. Perhaps the neighborhoods that have parks could volunteer to work and help the park stay maintained.

Councilmember Thomasson stated that crews should be doing maintenance instead of doing set up for promotions. He would rather keep the position, but eliminate some of the duties that are not necessary and reprogram the position. The City should be charging for things like hanging banners, setting up promotions, etc. He felt the position should stay on the list to be cut until a revised list of responsibilities is provided.

Councilmember Pina suggested that the City could ask for volunteers for park maintenance.

Mr. Piasecki said that there is an Adopt a Spot program already in place to help with park maintenance. A number of groups have adopted various parks; however volunteers do not seem sustainable.

Councilmember Kaplan stated that maintaining what the City has is important; however there are three other positions that are doing the same thing. He feels that facilities maintenance is a bigger issue. A study to find out what buildings city has and what condition they are in would be something he would be willing to fund.

The Councils consensus is to leave the Parks Maintenance Worker position on the cut list.

The Council discussed the cut for the Police Recruitment/Incentive program and the consensus was to leave that reduction on the list. Half will be cut from the Levy Lid Lift fund and half from the General Fund

TRAVEL

Councilmember Thomasson asked to have travel clarified. Driving for a meeting should not be defined as travel.

Mr. Piasecki stated that there could be analysis on what is necessary travel versus non-essential. The reduction listed could be cut in half and have a statement that all discretionary travel is not allowed.

Councilmember Thomasson felt the easiest way to handle this would be for the City Manager to be responsible for approving travel. There needs to be definition on what is allowable travel.

Councilmember White noted that some travel has to been done such as attending conferences and lobbying.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman, felt that a \$25,000 cut is too severe a cut for travel. He would rather wait until the analysis Ms. Henderson is preparing is complete to decide this issue.

Councilmember Kaplan is in favor of letting Mr. Piasecki manage the dollar figure and if there are more funds needed, then he can come back to Council and ask for additional funds. He would support cutting \$20,000 out of the budget for travel.

Mayor Sheckler felt that Councilmembers should determine their own budget for travel.

Mr. Piasecki stated that the Council has \$9,100 in the Council budget for travel, the rest of the funds are what staff uses for travel. He would be happy to reduce the staff budget to \$20,000 and let Council decide what they will do with their own budget.

Mayor Sheckler recessed the meeting at 9:00 p.m. and reconvened at 9:15 p.m.

Chief Baker explained that under dues, schools and conferences, travel for the police is \$22,000 and \$24,000 in dues and training, just for the Police Department. The department recommends freezing the 3 positions that are to be paid out of General Funds.

The Council discussed the FTE in the police department, freezing and the total number of 60 positions. At the last meeting the Council talked about freezing or eliminating 3.5 positions and the Chief now states that the Department is recommending freezing of those positions. Mr. Piasecki will have a meeting with other staff and the Chief to figure out how that will be coordinated.

Councilmember Sherman would like to remove the dues from the list of cuts; he does not feel that is a waste of money.

Mr. Fredricks commented on the Janitorial Services. He has spoken with the vendor and they are willing to extend the service for a year at a nominal cost increase. He recommends the Council accept that and just reduce the cut to \$18,880 to keep the service.

Ms. Henderson spoke on the Arterial Street Fund transfer which is 25% of the fuel tax the City gets from the State.

There was a discussion of what actual street maintenance is and what is landscaping maintenance on the medians and in the right-of-ways. Which fund pays for these services and which workers perform these operations?

Ms. Thorell explained that street scapes are maintained by Parks, but if this position is cut, the work still has to be done so the street maintenance fund would have to pick up the cost.

Councilmembers agree to keep the transfer on the list of budget reductions

The elimination of transfer to Automation fees was discussed. This would reduce the reserves that are being set aside for enhancements of permitting systems. The Automation fee is broken down on the permit issued by the City. Therefore the funds need to go towards that use. Council agreed to remove this item from the list.

Mr. Fredricks urged the Council not to cut the Street Maintenance worker position because it would be a safety issue. If there is only a crew of three and potholes are being filled on two lane roads, there needs to be two people flagging and that leaves only one person to drive the truck and fill the hole which is not possible. The Council agreed to remove this from the cut list.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman felt that street maintenance is very important. But if the City has less money to spend for maintenance than there will be less work that can be done, so maybe fewer positions is a viable option.

Mr. Fredericks pointed out that the position being cut does not work on projects, but does everything else.

Council agreed to remove this reduction because the gas tax fund should pay for this position.

Councilmember Kaplan is in favor of the street lighting reduction if it maintains safe walkways.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman has a problem with this reduction because lighting is critical for safety and is not in favor of this cut.

Mayor Sheckler inquired as to how staff would know which lights to turn off and which would stay on, what would be the deciding factor and who would be responsible for making the determination.

Mr. Fredricks stated that Council could suggest a number and staff would come up with a proposal to meet that figure. Then take it to the Public Safety and Transportation committee to see if that is the correct number and adjust as necessary.

Mayor Sheckler stated that while this is a large ticket item in the budget, he is concerned with public safety. How would the determination be made as to what lights stay on?

Mr. Fredricks replied that arterial streets, intersections and routes to schools would be studied. Once staff felt that public safety was not in jeopardy, then they present recommendations to the Council.

Councilmembers discussed the effects of turning off lighting in the City and how the lights would be turned off. The consensus of the Council was to remove this from the list of cuts for now until further information is obtained.

The Art Commission adjustment cut would mean the city would not be giving any monies to the Arts Commission and they would rely solely on their own fund raising efforts. The history has been that the Council would give a set amount and the Commission would find matching funds in the community. If there are no city funds in the budget, some of the matching funds would not be available to the Arts.

Councilmembers discussed several figures and being able to get matching fund from King County's 4 Culture fund to do so, the Council would need to support the arts at \$7,500 which in effect reduces the proposed cut to \$13,000 instead of \$20,500. The Council agreed to reduce the reduction to \$13,000.

Civil Service overtime and police administration cuts have been discussed and agreed upon previously during the budget reduction process.

NEW EXPENDITURES

Under new expenditure requests is the Farmers Market. Ms. Thorell stated that the Farmer's Market would not impact the budget as it breaks even. The current management contract expires soon and the hope is the City would assume the Market and revenue would equal expense, so it offsets. The proposed budget is \$34,529. The Legacy Foundation has offered to help subsidize the program if a shortfall occurs, up to \$5,000.

Councilmember Thomasson felt that this should not be a budget item; it should be a policy discussion before Council. If the Council is going to look at taking over the Market, there needs to be business plans and budgets.

Councilmember Scott noted that is more than just a place to buy things, it's a social network and is vital to the city. It would be criminally irresponsible for the city to not help out.

Councilmember Kaplan agrees that is important to the city, but agrees with Councilmember Thomasson and Mayor Pro Tem Sherman that the city is not able to get in the business of running the market. He suggests looking for another umbrella management organization, but not the City.

MOTION: Councilmember White moved to extend the meeting for 15 minutes. Seconded by Councilmember Scott. Passed unanimously.

Councilmember White agrees the market is valuable; however the City is not in a position to take it on.

The Council decided that the city is not able to take on more projects and there are no cost neutral businesses, there are always some expenses. The city is contributing in kind services currently.

Ms. Bosman is asking for .2 FTE to make the Prosecuting Attorney position full time. She felt if this position is not made full time there are some cases that just could not be prosecuted. The money is in the budget for this position; the request is just for the extra FTE to make it a full time position.

Councilmember Thomasson inquired if there are some cases not being prosecuted at this time?

Ms. Bosman responded that all cases are being prosecuted at this point; however the case load is expected to become fuller in the next year with King County cutting back.

Mayor Pro Tem Sherman felt the Council should be provided a list of the cases that may not be prosecuted so the Council can make the decision on which cases are acceptable to not prosecute.

The Council agreed to the .2 FTE resulting in a full time prosecuting Attorney position.

Ms. Thorell explained the Nutrition Site Coordinator for senior meals. There is a Federal government grant for this position to provide lunch. This includes the food and the Coordinator for this program so this will be revenue neutral. The South King County Seniors Services as a group are looking for ways to keep this project from having to have each site support their own site coordinator.

MOTION: Councilmember Kaplan moved to extend the meeting until 10:50. Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Sherman. Motion failed 3 to 4.

Mayor Sheckler adjourned the meeting at 10:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lady of Letters