

**MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL HELD ON
SEPTEMBER 3, 2009, 4:30 P.M. IN THE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

Mayor Jeremy Riddle called the meeting to order. Other Council members present were Paul Whitcomb, Lee Steinbrecher, Victoria Hallin, and Dick Dobson. Staff present was Mark Karnowski and Sgt. Joe Backlund. Other present included Dave Patten, Joe Cordie and Joel Stottrup.

PERSONNEL ISSUE

The Council reviewed a staff memo dealing with an issue brought to the attention of the Mayor by one of the city staff.

The employee apparently felt that, with the City Clerk being on maternity leave, others at city hall are having to do additional work that would have normally been done by the Clerk. The employee apparently pointed out that the city has provided additional compensation in the past when a position remained unfilled for a period of time and thought this was a similar situation.

The Administrator advised that, indeed, the City Council has previously authorized additional compensation when an employee was assigned specific additional duties because a city position was vacant for an extended period of time. He pointed out that when the previous two City Administrators resigned and the City Finance Director (Steve Jackson) was appointed by the Council to fill the role of Acting City Administrator, Jackson's pay was temporarily increased. The same scenario occurred when Sgt. Brian Payne assumed the duties of the Police Chief while the city went through the hiring process to replace Chief Warnke.

The Administrator pointed out that in 2003 when, because of a budget shortfall, the City Council opted to not replace a retired worker in the public works department. That decision resulted in other employees having to do additional work, but no wage adjustments were made.

The memo noted that, with the Clerk's FMLA leave, the balance of the City Hall Staff has had to do some additional work but that, in no case, was the work being done was not work of a higher paid class. In previous cases where employees were given a temporary bump in pay, the employee was assigned specific tasks and duties normally done by a higher paid employee. The memo contended that, in this case, that was not happening.

Karnowski did point out that the Council had earlier determined that the city's full-time Community Development Secretary/Receptionist position was to be reduced to part-time on July 1st as part of a budget cutting strategy adopted by the Council. Karnowski noted that, with the clerk's FMLA leave, staff found that the position could remain at full-time given the savings of the clerk's wages during FMLA. Karnowski acknowledged that decision should have been made by the Council and not solely by staff and apologized for that error.

Still, the Administrator suggested there is a difference between the situation where a specific employee is given additional specific duties and responsibilities versus when a group of employees may need to do additional work because a co-worker's position is temporarily vacant (as is the case with the City Clerk) not filled or a retiring co-worker's position is not filled and recommended that no salary adjustments be made because of the FMLA leave being taken by the City Clerk.

Councilor Steinbrecher agreed that, if someone is asked to take on supervisory duties they normally are not responsible for, a pay adjustment could be in order, but that this is not the case in this instance.

Councilors Whitcomb and Hallin agreed. Councilor Dobson commented that he felt the staff had done a good job of filling in with the Clerk's absence and it appeared to have worked well.

HALLIN MOVED TO CONCUR WITH THE STAFF RECOMMENDATION AND FIND THAT NO SALARY ADJUSTMENTS BE MADE BECAUSE OF THE CITY CLERK'S LEAVE OF ABSENCE. WHITCOMB SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5 AYES, 0 NAYS).

CRIME FREE HOUSING PRESENTATION – JOE CORDIE (St. Cloud Police)

Joe Cordie, an officer with the St. Cloud Police Department, gave a presentation on their city's "Crime Free Housing" project. Cordie is a 35 year veteran of the St. Cloud Police Department and has been working in the crime prevention field for 14 years.

He advised that the Crime Free Housing (CFH) Program began in Mesa Arizona in 1992 and that it came to Minnesota in 1995. There are now 140+ cities involved in the program.

In St. Cloud, the city license's all rental housing and has instituted a "3-strikes and you're out" rule that's coupled with the CFH Program. He contended that it's working well in St. Cloud.

The program trains the property owners involved in rental housing (including single family and multi-unit rental properties) on applicant screening, comprehensive rental agreements, identifying and reporting illegal activity, the eviction process and their role working with police, fire, housing code enforcement and other city staff.

Phase two of the program involves a security assessment of rental units which includes availability of dead bolt locks, secure strike plates, door viewers, secure windows, unit landscaping, lighting and addressing issues.

After Phase Three (a resident safety meeting) the rental units may be certified by the city.

Steinbrecher asked about the cost to implement the program. Cordie said that, apart from the cost of the materials, there was no cost other than personnel time. Still, he contended, the time spent on putting the program in place will save time because of reduced police calls.

St. Cloud does fund the effort via a housing rental fee and a "Crime Free Support Fee" (\$6 per unit).

Dobson asked about the training component. Cordie advised that Sergeant Backlund already had taken the training and was qualified to start of a program in Princeton, should the Council deem it appropriate.

Hallin asked if the city had to, first, adopt a rental housing fee. Cordie said that a fee wasn't necessary; only that an ordinance be adopted requiring all rental properties to be involved in the program. Cordie also handed out several pieces of literature regarding the program.

PRINCETON AREA VISIONARY COMMITTEE (PAVC) UPDATE – DAVE PATTEN

Dave Patten, a member of the PAVC gave the Council an update on what some of the PAVC focus issues were currently being pursued. He noted that one of the current projects was to work with the City's Park Board to get the "Disc Golf Course" set up in Riebe Park. They're

talking to the DNR regarding any restrictions or requirements they might have on the facility. The PAVC had a booth at the County Fair and the public response was very positive regarding the Disc Golf plan.

Patten advised that work was moving forward on the Riverside Park Amphitheater plans – which are part of the PAVC's master plan for Trails and Parks. The PAVC is offering limestone seating blocks for the venue for a \$75 donation or the stone with a plaque for \$125. They are currently working on the engineering for the facility as well as getting DNR and city approvals.

Steinbrecher asked about the timing for the facility. Patten said it was all hinging on DNR approvals and funding, but their target date was the fall of 2010. Patten pointed out that Rick Johnson (West Branch Construction) has agreed to do the necessary grading of the facility site. They're working to get other donated services as well.

Hallin noted that the Disc Golf idea was a good one and will benefit area residents by offering a healthy physical activity alternative.

Dobson said they hope to get three holes in this year and the rest in the spring of 2010. Hopefully all can go in yet this fall.

Patten advised that the PAVC is considering changing its two monthly meeting so one of the meetings is in the evening to attract more participants. The PAVC needs more local participation at their meetings.

Steinbrecher commented that he's getting more and more comments from citizens regarding the need for more biking and walking trails. He said it would be nice if the St. Cloud to Cambridge trail gets established and the Elk River to Milaca trail is built with Princeton as the "hub".

TIMBER TRAILS PUBIC TRANSET PRESENTATION

Timber Trails Public Transit Director Helen Pieper and Katy Burski (their Program Superintendent) approached the Council to update them the changes going on with the "senior bus" transportation system serving the city and surrounding area.

Burski provided documentation showing that, of the 10,000 hours of bus service to area, 27% of the trips involve Princeton destinations. She noted that the organization hopes to expand their services past their current 3 PM limit (they're now operating 8 AM to 3 PM). They also want to offer Sunday service.

Their annual budget is about \$500,000 of which 15% has to be raised locally. The cost for a round trip ticket is currently \$3.

Burski also said that the organization needs representation on their board from Princeton. For years Brenda Hoffman has been representing Princeton, but she is no longer able to serve. The board meets quarterly (the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 2:30 PM).

They're also looking for some financial support from the city and noted that Mora currently contributes \$5,000 annually. They also indicated that they are interested in working with the local Princeton "Blue Bus" and coordinating efforts.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business,

DOBSON MOVED TO ADJOURN. HALLIN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (4 AYES, 0 NAYS) AT 6:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Mark H. Karnowski,
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Jeremy Riddle, Mayor