

**MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL HELD ON  
JANUARY 2, 2013, 4:30 P.M. IN THE CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

\*\*\*\*\*

Mayor Paul Whitcomb called the meeting to order. Council members present were Thom Walker, Dick Dobson, and Victoria Hallin. Staff present was Administrator Mark Karnowski, Finance Director Steve Jackson, Community Development Director Carie Fuhrman, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Police Chief Brian Payne, Liquor Store Manager Nancy Campbell, Attorney Dick Schieffer and City Clerk Shawna Jenkins. Absent was Jules Zimmer

**Downtown PAC Committee Discussion**

Karnowski reported that the following are notes from a meeting held last September between a couple Council Members, City Staff and representatives from a newly formed Downtown Princeton Committee.

At that meeting they provided a list of issues for discussion. In no particular order, their concerns are outlined below:

Group's Goals:

- Clean up the downtown and keep it clean (short term goal)
- Turn the downtown into a destination (long term goal)

Ideas to discuss:

- Mid-block crosswalks along Rum River Drive
- Striping the public parking lots at the Malls (done)
- Identify Long term/day long parking spots along the fence line in the mall parking lots
- Establish clearly marked handicapped parking spaces in the mall lots
- Re-landscape the green areas near the rod iron fencing near both malls and Family Pathways
- Address weeds growing up between sidewalks and buildings along main street
- Improve timing on snow removal at crosswalks
- Re-paint all crosswalks
- Re-stripe all on-street parking spaces including handicapped spots and curbing (done)
- Increase the number of garbage cans along main street and make sure they're emptied on a regular (daily?) basis
- Add even more garbage cans (cardboard?) during events
- Sent out an annual notice to building owners and renters outlining the property owner's responsibilities regarding snow removal, weed control, sidewalk sweeping, etc. (proposed draft notice attached)
- Coordinate shopkeeper's sidewalk sweeping with times when city street sweeper will be cleaning the downtown streets

The Committee has put together a proposed notice to all downtown business owners which we propose would be hand delivered by city staff (Chief Payne?).

Fuhrman added that Kelly Guptil, Carol Ossell and Bob Michael are here from the downtown committee. Some of the downtown business owners were not even aware that they are responsible for clearing snow, etc.

At the last downtown meeting, a member of the beatification committee attended and the flowers and plantings were discussed as well.

Hallin asked about the weekly street sweeping that is mentioned in the proposed memo. Fuhrman replied that it is currently being done as needed, but it has been discussed with Gerold and it will be done weekly in the future.

Walker questioned if there was ever a resolution on mid block cross walks that were discussed in the past. Ossell said she remembers it being discussed a couple years ago. Fuhrman responded that she recalls hearing Engineer Nielson saying mid block cross walks are usually not wanted as traffic is not expected to stop in the middle of streets and can cause accidents. Whitcomb added that he remembers the city did add them at one time, and the County required them to be removed

Fuhrman stated she did check and there are some funds set aside for the yearly flower plantings. Ossell questioned if the city should remove the planters and spend the time and money to maintain the plants and bushes along the fence on the East side of Rum River Drive. Guptill added that those plants are pretty old and overgrown and could be replaced, as well as the old weed barrier fabric that is now all gone.

Whitcomb asked Gerold if Sentence to Serve programs can be used for these types of projects. Gerold replied that now that the State is no longer running the program, it doesn't seem to work very well but he will inquire about it.

Guptill stated that the planters were watered frequently last year and they looked great, but the plants along the fence need some work.

Whitcomb suggested contacting the civic betterment group to see if they would be interested in assisting in the planting and maintenance this year.

Walker asked if there is a list of master gardeners that may be interested in helping as well. Fuhrman replied that the County can provide a list and they are the ones that helped with the Tree Inventory that was done this summer.

Karnowski suggested replacing or splitting the daylilies that are along the fence on the East side of Rum River Drive.

Gerold said public works staff did go through and split the daylilies about 10 years ago, but they could be done again.

Walker suggested checking with the local Boys and Girls Scouts to see if they are interested as well, as they are always looking for fundraisers. Karnowski stated the city cannot donate to those groups, but could contract work to them.

Bob Michael asked how much time it took to split the plants 10 years ago. Gerold said if he recalls, he had 3 or 4 volunteers and a couple public works guys and it took about a week. Walker commented that we should keep the maintenance to a minimum, so daylilies are a good option. He thinks there should be a way to get this done with volunteer work.

Whitcomb said there is a nursery class at school and that could be a good contact. Dobson suggested contacting Janelle Ellis as well, as she has her own small greenhouse and volunteers quite a bit around town.

Dobson stated he likes the proposed "Clean and Green" Memo that would be a reminder for the old businesses and good information for new business owners.

Ossell asked if some additional garbage cans could be added on First Street. Fuhrman stated it was discussed at a meeting in September, but no decision was made. Ossell added that some of the garbage cans are also old and could use some paint.

Fuhrman asked Gerold if there are any funds in the budget to add a few garbage cans. Gerold responded that some can be found to cover the costs.

Ossell stated she talked to Dan Frank from the Initiative Foundation and he is willing to come to a meeting to discuss some ideas and options. She suggested all the council members subscribe to the Initiative Foundation magazine, as there is a lot of great information and ideas published in it.

Dobson asked if staff can send an email to the Council to remind him when these meetings are. He added that he appreciates that they are looking at options that can make the city more attractive.

### **Baldwin / Princeton Annexation Discussion**

Walker reported that at the October meeting, they hammered out a tentative understanding on what both sides are looking for. He said he noticed a few additional minor adjustments that are needed, and he will work on those with the other members via email. He said he also thinks we should add what the city expects out of this agreement

He stated that when land is needed for an improvement, annexation shall be given consideration. He also says the end date should be stated in the agreement.

Hallin questioned Island Annexations. Walker responded right now they would not be allowed, but perhaps PUC needed some land for a well or something, it may be an option. It still needs to be looked at. Karnowski added that the state does not allow island annexations, but this agreement does allow for it, if it was for a public purpose and the Township agrees.

Whitcomb asked if a small corner touched City land, would that be considered contiguous and allowed to be annexed. Walker and Karnowski confirmed it would be.

Walker said he will work with the other members via email to make those final small changes. Then it can come back for review again before the attorney's review. He said this agreement is more of a trust building thing that keeps the merger discussion on the table. He feels if this cannot be done, the relationship may deteriorate.

Karnowski added that proposed agreement does not seem to move far outside the current state law.

### **9030 Tractor Replacement discussion**

Karnowski reported that earlier this month, there was a fire in a wiring harness on the City's 1995 Ford 9030 bi-directional tractor that the city uses for various issues...including blowing/loading snow into trucks when we clear the business district. Apparently that particular make and model tractor is prone to harness fires of that type.

The verbal estimate the city has for repairing the tractor is \$6000.00. In checking, the trade-in value of the tractor as is (un-repaired) is about \$11,000.00. If we were to repair it, the trade-in value would go to around \$17-18,000.00.

Truman Welters will allow us to rent the tractor in the second quote for the duration of snow this year into the spring for \$25.00 per hour of actual use. If we purchase that unit (rather than a new unit) they would apply the rent we pay toward the purchase price.

This piece of equipment is on the city's CIP to be replaced in 2015 at a budgeted amount of \$140,000 (includes the cost of the flail mower)

Staff is asking Council direction on how to proceed:

**Option #1:** Get the current tractor repaired (for about \$6,000) and then trade it in when we buy the replacement tractor in about 15 months (2015). At that time, assuming nothing else happens to it, it should be worth about \$11,000 in trade (we may get more if we sell it outright at someplace like Pike's Auction).

**Option #2a:** Move the purchase of the tractor up from the 2015 CIP to this year and order a 'new' tractor and trade-in our current tractor (as-is for \$11,000) for a net cost of \$106,740.

**Option #2b:** Move the purchase of the tractor up from the 2015 CIP to this year and buy the 'loaner' tractor via Truman Welters' Lease-purchase program and trade-in our current tractor (as-is for \$11,000) for a net cost of \$96,128.

Obviously there are other option variations including getting the current tractor fixed and selling it outright to (hopefully) reduce the net cost when we get the replacement tractor.

Dobson asked for clarification that this tractor has caught on fire twice. Gerold confirmed that, and stated it was 2 years between the fires. Walker asked if there are any other large purchases in the CIP that can be pushed back a bit. Hallin asked if there are funds in the budget to cover this purchase. Dobson asked Jackson if there are any funds available in the CIP. Steve said the CIP has sufficient funds. One year is not a major point.

Walker asked how the lease program worked. Gerold stated that the rental is \$25 per hour, but if the tractor is purchased the rental costs would be put towards the purchase price.

Whitcomb suggested option 2b, as the unit is a good tractor with only 1 hour on it. Gerold added that an additional option would be to get the current tractor back in the shop and get it running and get it on an auction. Because of the attachments, it would make it an attractive purchase.

DOBSON MOVED TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF THE TRACTOR UP FROM THE 2015 CIP TO THIS YEAR AND BUY THE 'LOANER' TRACTOR VIA TRUMAN WELTERS' LEASE-PURCHASE PROGRAM AND TRADE-IN OUR CURRENT TRACTOR (AS-IS FOR \$11,000) FOR A NET COST OF \$96,128 AND TO HAVE STAFF WORK ON THE CURRENT TRACTOR AT THIS TIME. HALLIN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

## **2014 Wages**

Karnowski reported that Staff has completed the negotiations with both the AFSCME and LELS unions. The city's original offer was to drop the mandatory furloughs (which is worth approximately a 2% pay differential) and a 2% cost of living increase.

Surprisingly, both unions opted to keep the unpaid furloughs in place and take a 4% cost of living increase. The net impact on the city's budget is virtually the same. So staff tentatively agreed to allow the furlough to stay in place for 2014 with the following provision:

1. The employee's annual pay will be adjusted from the beginning to account for the week off without pay.
2. The City accounting staff will not be responsible for making sure the employees take their mandatory furlough. So if they do not take the furlough before the end of the year, they lose the time off.
3. Furloughs are treated the same as vacation in that it requires prior approval of the supervisor.

Regarding health insurance, as previously advised, the city's health insurance premiums were increased for 2014 by about 2.4%. The city and the unions agreed that both the city share and the employees' share will increase by that 2.4% which amounts to a split in the cost increase equal to the current cost split.

The AFSCME contract is in year 2 of a 3 year deal, so wages and insurance were the only negotiable items.

The police officer union (LELS) is a one-year contract which proposes the wage and insurance changes outlined above plus the following:

1. An increase in the officer's annual uniform allowance of \$15, and
2. Language allowing the use of sick leave for an adult child, grandparent and/or step grandparent, and
3. Addition of a Memorandum of Understanding adding back in the Canine Officer language that was deleted from the contract when that program was discontinued several years ago, and
4. Addition of a Memorandum of Understanding allowing for the bidding of shifts according to seniority with a provision that the Police Chief can move personnel around as necessary to improve the performance of a specific officer or for disciplinary reasons.

Regarding the supervisory and non-union employees, staff is recommending that those full-time employees be given the same 4% increase, split the health insurance cost increase and not require the unpaid furlough that both unions wanted to retain.

If the Council agrees with the proposals as outlined above, a motion to ratify the union contracts as proposed plus authorize a 4% salary increase without requiring a mandatory one-week furlough for supervisor and non-union employees would be in order.

Dobson asked if the non union employees would be able to utilize the furloughs if they choose. Karnowski responded that they likely would not, as most of those employees already have more vacation than they use, but adjustments can be made if something were to come up and they needed that additional time.

WALKER MOVED TO APPROVE AND SIGN THE CONTRACTS, CONTINGENT ON THE UNION REPS SIGNING THEM. HALLIN SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

DOBSON MOVED TO APPROVE A 4% INCREASE FOR SUPERVISORY AND NON UNION EMPLOYEES, WITHOUT REQUIRING A MANDATORY ONE WEEK FURLOUGH. WALKER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Safe Routes to School Agreement**

Fuhrman reported that back in July, the City Council and Mille Lacs County entered into an agreement in regards to the Safe Routes to School grant project. An agreement between the City and WSB Engineering is also needed in order to address the pre-construction/design engineering work that is required.

In order to continue proceeding with the project, staff is requesting the City Council approve the attached agreement for WSB's design engineering work, not to exceed \$29,900, and authorize the mayor to sign the agreement. This amount is covered by the Safe Routes To School Grant

HALLIN MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGREEMENT FOR WSB'S DESIGN ENGINEERING WORK, NOT TO EXCEED \$29,900 AND AUTHORIZE THE MAYOR TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT. WALKER SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

**Miscellaneous**

Walker asked if there has been any discussion with Neighbors On The Rum. Fuhrman stated they had a meeting set up, but the owner was busy and could not make it. She added that they are still interested in vacating a portion of 5<sup>th</sup>.

Karnowski reported that they are working on a punch list for the Public Safety Building. There have been a few hitches, but we are looking at target date of January 24<sup>th</sup> for the city to take it over and looking at having an open house at some point. Dobson said he thinks having a ribbon cutting would be a good idea, and Campbell suggesting having a Chamber meeting there one day.

**ADJOURN**

HALLIN MOTIONED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 5:35 PM. DOBSON SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully Submitted,

Shawna Jenkins

ATTEST:

---

Paul Whitcomb, Mayor