

**MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL
AND SHERBURNE COUNTY BOARD OF APPEAL AND EQUALIZATION
HELD ON APRIL 7, 2016 4:30 P.M.**

Mayor Paul Whitcomb called the meeting to order. Council member present was Thom Walker. Staff present, Administrator Mark Karnowski, Finance Director Steve Jackson, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Fire Chief Jim Roxbury, Community Development Director Jolene Foss, Clerk Shawna Jenkins, and Engineers Jeff Row and Mike Nielson. Absent was Dick Dobson, Jules Zimmer, Victoria Hallin and Steve Jackson.

Sherburne County Board of Appeal and Equalization

Since the Council did not have a quorum, Greg Olson, Sherburne County Assessor opened the meeting:

Olson reported that there were 3 residential sales in Princeton in the October 1, 2014 through September 30, 2015 that were used for the 2016 Assessment. Based on these sales, the overall market value was increased by approximately 4.76%.

No one was in attendance to appeal their value with Sherburne County

Greg Olson adjourned the Board of Appeal and Equalization at 4:44pm

Joint City Council and PUC: 21st Ave Utility Extension Project Discussion

Karnowski stated that the reason they invited the PUC, is to discuss extending water and sewer out towards the Seoul Property with the Grant money we have received towards the project.

Foss said she received an email from Bob Seoul Jr. that stated his father was concerned with the amount that they would be assessed. Nielson added that the grant that has been received would pay for about 70% of the project.

Foss commented that while the property owners did not request the service be extended, she feels it would be good to take advantage of these grant funds. Deferring the assessments until the property was sold or developed had been discussed. Karnowski said when you look at the many other projects that have been done recently, his concern is that the City's levy may be impacted if the council continues to lower or defer assessments. These grant dollars will greatly reduce the cost of this project, and he doesn't think turning down the grant would be a good idea. However, he feels that the additional cost above the grant received should be assessed to the property owners.

He has seen and observed what can happen in growing cities our size. There are a lot of opportunities you want to take advantage of, but just cannot due to funding sources. One of the easiest examples is to look at Cambridge. In the late 80's, they almost defaulted on some of their bond payments. He suggested having Jackson look at and crunch some of the numbers to review at an upcoming meeting. He added that he believes the Council should look hard at this grant and project as it is a great opportunity to get 70% of the cost paid for.

Walker asked if the Seoul's didn't want to develop their land. Foss said they were looking for definite plans, not just the hope that the property would be developed. Foss said the grant requested that the round a bout and water/sewer was separated. Karnowski suggested contacting the Seoul's and explain that the City has almost \$750,000 to put towards the project,

and asking them if they want the city to return those funds. If those funds were returned and the project was not done, it may turn away future developers if they needed to

Nielson advised that there is 1.2 Million set aside for the round-a-bout, and \$735,000 in grant money for the water and sewer project. Right now, they are estimating a local cost of \$285,000 for the water and sewer extension portion. One could assume that with the water and sewer being made available to those properties, it would likely raise the value of those properties 3 times what the owners would pay for in assessments. It would also make the land more marketable to potential developers.

Whitcomb questioned where the water and sewer lines would end. Wangen said they would likely end at Old Highway 95.

Foss asked if the Pontius property is in the flight path of the Airport. Karnowski replied that some of that property is in the flight path.

He added that many years ago the City met with the Church to see if they would like water and sewer extended out to them. At that time, the portion south of the church could not be used as a church, so it was looked at for a possible Public Safety Building. The property does have some restrictions, but not extensive.

Wangen suggested talking to the Church to see if they would be interested in having water and sewer to their site. Nielson said the estimated assessment for the Church would be \$91,600, and if they were to pay those assessments up front, it would be helpful.

Foss suggested sitting down the Seoul's and discussing this project and explaining the grant that was received that would help pay for a large portion of the project.

Walker said he can see Seoul's point of view when they see all the vacant lots across the street. However, he would also would hate to send all that grant money back.

Foss will reach out to the Church after meeting with the Seoul's to discuss it with them as well.

Nielson asked the Council how much of the Round-a-bout that they would like to assess. They were looking at doing an area wide assessment. He would like to assess at least half of the local cost. Whitcomb added that Walmart knew about the needed improvements up front, so he cannot see assessing anything less than 100%. Nielson replied that they will run some numbers at various assessment percentages and report back.

Wangen stated that the PUC is recalculating sewer this month, and will be emailing Karnowski in regard to a few.

Sidewalk Cleaning Program

Karnowski stated that in response to a couple of Council comments, staff would like some Council direction on sidewalk maintenance.

Currently, city staff clears sidewalks adjacent to city and county property as well as the east side of Rum River Drive to Super America. We also do the north side of 1st Street west to 21st and the sidewalk on 21st to the liquor store.

But, with the fairly recent addition of several blocks of new "Safe Routes to School" sidewalk, the question has come up as to whether the city should be responsible for cleaning that new sidewalk to make sure that it's clear of snow and ice and attractive for students to use (rather than walk in the plowed street).

Gerold suggested that if we add a lot of sidewalk to the list of sidewalks the city already clears, it will probably mean that the city would have to hire another employee (probably part-time, seasonal).

Currently we use a skid steer to clear sidewalks but, if we added significantly more sidewalks, we would probably want to purchase a machine specifically designed to clear sidewalks. Such a piece of equipment would cost the city in the neighborhood of about \$180,000. Gerold has tentatively put such a machine in the proposed 2017 CIP, but it certainly can be taken out.

There is also a larger question about sidewalks in general. We have some sidewalks in the city that just end and do not connect with any other sidewalks. We also have sidewalks that are in bad shape and in need of repair or replacement.

Karnowski asked the Council if they wanted to add a CIP program to connect existing sidewalks or repair or replace sidewalks in need of attention.

Staff is looking for general direction from the Council. Once staff has an idea of what the Council feels the city's policy ought to be, something will be put together for the Council to review, discuss, modify and adopt.

Gerold gave the history of how the current list of sidewalks the City would plow came about. He said they do get a lot of questions as to why the City cleans some and not others.

Whitcomb suggested asking the school to contribute to sidewalk maintenance if they partnered on the Safe Routes to School project. Gerold feels that if the city plowed that sidewalk, residents would question why the city doesn't do all the sidewalks.

Walker asked if there is a map of sidewalks. Gerold responded that Carie Fuhrman had put together a map of all the sidewalks and their condition. He can provide that to the Council.

Police and Public Works Event Fees

Karnowski reported that in May of 2014, the city adopted a resolution requesting blanket approval for closing off Rum River Drive for several events including the Rum River Festival Parade, The Rum River Street Fair, The Princeton Block Party, The Chili Fest, Small Business Saturday and the Mini-Dazzle Parade.

Historically, city staff anticipates those events and there are funds pretty much built in budget for accommodations for police/reserve officers, public works employees, barricades and other equipment needed to make those events successful.

But, as the City Council has noted, there appears to be a growing number of events that are not on that list but still require city provided person power and/or equipment. For instance the various 5K runs, the outdoor movie events (which require clearing out a parking lot and keeping it clear for the event) and others that also require both staff time and materials.

City Staff supports all the events and feel that happenings like these keep our community active and vibrant. Still, there are overhead costs associated with each event and we're wondering if we're at a point where the city should put together and adopt an 'event fee' to help off-set at least a portion of the city's overhead for such events.

If the Council feels that approach is justified, then sharing some ideas on what sort of parameters should be put in place would be helpful. With that information, staff will put together a proposed policy and bring it back to the Council for review, discussion, modification and possibly adoption.

Karnowski asked how the Council wished to proceed.

Gerold said the Mini Dazzle for example is more difficult for staff, as it is the day after Thanksgiving and a lot of staff is out of town.

Karnowski stated he has sent an email over to Barry Law Office regarding the Block Party to get the information and has not yet heard back.

Frederick said his fear has always been that something bad could happen at an event. For example, 500 people attended the 10 mile race last fall. It is tough as you don't want to turn people away and discourage them from coming to the city, but it also costs the city a lot in staff and overtime.

Karnowski mentioned he can contact other cities to see if they have an event fee if the Council is receptive to that.

Walker suggested providing the event coordinators information as to the costs associated with events and hope they choose to donate.

DISCUSSION ENDED AT 5:30PM

Respectfully Submitted,

Shawna Jenkins
City Clerk
ATTEST:

Paul Whitcomb, Mayor