

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
Tuesday, September 3, 2019

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hastings, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 220 N. Hastings Avenue, on September 3, 2019.

The Worksession was called to order at 5:30 P.M. by Council Vice President Skutnik with the following members present: Chuck Rosenberg, Scott Snell, Ted Schroeder, Matt Fong, Jeniffer Beahm. Absent: Paul Hamelink, Butch Eley.

City Officials Present: Mayor Corey Stutte, Dave Ptak, Dave Wacker, Clint Schukei, Rebecca Matticks, Brad Starling, Roger Nash, Jeff Hassenstab, Don Threewitt, Kevin Johnson, Jack Newlun, Amy Hafer

Others Present: Museum Board members Bret Erickson, Ann Koozer.

Moved by Ted Schroeder seconded by Chuck Rosenberg to adopt the current agenda for the September 3, 2019 Worksession. Roll Call: Ayes: Matt Fong, Chuck Rosenberg, Scott Snell, Ted Schroeder, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm. Nays: None. Absent: Paul Hamelink, Butch Eley. The motion carried.

Official Notice of the Worksession was published in the Hastings Tribune on Friday, August 30, 2019. Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute Section 84-1412, the public is advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible written material which will be discussed at today's meeting is available. Also, a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is posted and accessible to members of the public.

Discussion of Museum Strategic Plan.

Becky Matticks, Museum Director, stated that the Museum's current strategic plan ends in September. She indicated they are working on a two year strategic plan regarding exhibits, education, collections and much more. She stated she would like to have a worksession at the Museum so Council can get a behind the scenes tour of the facility to see what she is talking about. Ms. Matticks indicated they have decided to take the next two years to develop a master plan. She told Council local history was of interest to the community. She also stated they were looking at redesigning the lobby and adding a restroom on the main level. Mayor Stutte stated that we have a gem in the Hastings Museum, it's an impressive facility and cool to hear how impressed people from outside the community are with the Museum. He stated the Museum is doing a great job and has a lot to offer. Ms. Matticks stated that the Museum Foundation funded consultants from Colorado to facilitate a community conversation and a Latino conversation. She said they then brought all the information back and met with the Museum Board and the Museum Foundation Board and shared what was learned. She said the consultants then wrote up a plan and Museum staff, the City Administrator, and Museum Board tweaked the plan and that is the document the Council will be asked to approve. Councilmember Schroeder asked about the Super Screen attendance. Ms. Matticks indicated it was stable and that they try to involve exhibits and programming with it but she felt it would never be what it was when it first started. Councilmember Snell stated that a Museum membership is a great value.

Discussion of quiet crossings.

Vice President Skutnik stated that staff and Council met with the Federal Railroad Administration and the Nebraska Department of Transportation and were given a great amount of information and indicated they would be back in October and at that time each crossing will be reviewed. Mayor Stutte stated that his overall take away was to be aggressive about the way we look at quiet crossings. He stated he felt they had great support from the community with 82% voting for the 1/2 cent sales tax. He indicated they needed to address quiet crossings in a way that makes sense for the community and said it is not just for downtown. Mayor Stutte stated he felt they have a good plan moving forward with \$350,000 allocated in the next budget for quiet crossings. Councilmember Beahm stated she felt better after the meeting and hearing the timeline presented than she had after past meetings. Dave Ptak, City Administrator, talked about the Federal Railroad Administration's risk index system for each crossing and getting the crossing ratings. He stated the next step is to do a diagnostic review and that the Federal Railroad Administration and the Nebraska Department of Transportation were willing to come back and once that is done a notice of intent would be issued with a 60 day comment period where public would be able to comment and after that a public authority designation can be issued and we can move forward. Councilmember Rosenberg asked if we are looking at five years. Mr. Ptak stated he didn't think it would take that long. Councilmember Fong asked about a timeline circulated for the Council's review. Mr. Ptak stated that after the diagnostic review, and the comment period, and depending on what the committee recommends, we could see some type of construction in the next fiscal year.

Discussion of raising ordinance violation amounts from \$100 to \$500.

Mr. Ptak indicated that the fees for ordinance violations have been on the books since 1973 and never been raised. He indicated that most communities they surveyed have a \$500 fine as far as ordinance violations. He stated what they have found in dealing with property maintenance issues is that they need to have a hammer to entice people to come into compliance. He stated there is some incentive if you can give credit against a fine and it works as a financial incentive to clean up property to reduce the fine. He stated he felt this would benefit their enforcement capabilities by increasing the fine. Clint Schukei, City Attorney, stated he felt this would be beneficial and another tool in the bag to have. Don Threewitt, Development Services Director, stated the current fine doesn't carry a lot of weight and they feel they need something that people will pay attention to. Councilmember Fong questioned how many violations they issue a year. Mr. Threewitt indicated 60 to 100 a year on the zoning side and 30-40 properties on the NEAT Committee list with about 15 coming off the list and into compliance each year. Mr. Ptak indicated Council would need to approve an ordinance changing Section 1-109 from \$100 to \$500. Mr. Schukei talked about the financial resources as far as what violators are willing to do and what violators can afford to do.

Discussion of tree plan going forward in light of summer storms.

Mr. Ptak reviewed with Council storm damage information from Street, Landfill and Parks Departments. He indicated it was pushing \$200,000 spent on three storm events. He told Council in the next few months they hoped to develop a plan going forward to address citizens' needs and not putting a burden on city staff and budget and that they will be bringing that plan to Council for review. Mayor Stutte asked staff to be aggressive on this issue and stated it is not a black and white discussion. He told Council it is the Mayor's call on storm time decisions and not staff's fault and people need to be respectful to staff. Mayor Stutte said he felt the staff has a great plan moving forward regarding bring people in to help with the tree trimming issues. He indicated how important the issue of people not being without power was when a storm comes through. Vice President Skutnik asked about reinstating the Forestry Department. Mayor Stutte

stated \$300,000 is budgeted every year through the Utility Department to trim trees around power lines but we have not done a great job making sure that happens each year. Mayor Stutte stated that trees being trimmed might not look like a citizen would like them to look but this is being done so they can have power to their home. It is a necessity that we do this. Mr. Ptak mentioned that snowplows and garbage trucks can't get down some streets because of the canopy that is there and he felt if they do a good job in trimming the trees, the trees will be healthier and be able to withstand some of the storms we have. Mr. Ptak stated we need to be proactive about tree management and the Utility Department has a great plan and budgets money and the City will be doing that too moving forward. Kevin Johnson, Utility Manager, stated they are talking about a comprehensive approach to tree trimming by including not only trees in electric lines but trees along streets as well. He also indicated that when trees are trimmed they may not be pretty but it is needed to keep them out of lines. Mr. Johnson stated he felt they could get a bigger group in to do trimming if they were looking at more than just electric line tree trimming but for trees along streets and in parks as well. He stated they would use both large trimmers as well as local trimmers. Councilmember Rosenberg asked about a Forestry Department and stated it looked like a full time job. Mayor Stutte stated he felt initially they need to have contracted help come in and that he didn't know if they needed a full time staff person now. Councilmember Fong stated we are behind and it is reasonable to do an initial phase and look at a full time staff person in the future. Mayor Stutte suggested they address staffing at the Council Retreat. Councilmember Fong asked about a timeline on the initial phase. Mr. Johnson stated that an initial inventory would be needed. Dave Wacker, City Engineer, stated there is also a concern from the public schools about bus routes. Jeff Hassenstab, Parks and Recreation Director, stated he receives a list of addresses every year from the public schools regarding streets where tree trimming is needed for bus routes and that his staff does trimming when they have time. Councilmember Fong encouraged educating the citizens and encouraged tree management for the future. Mayor Stutte indicated he hoped by the next meeting to have some solutions and be able to make some decisions. Mayor Stutte indicated in conversations he had with citizens that they wanted to be able to take refuse to the landfill and people weren't asking for pickup but for a place to put it.

Moved by Matt Fong seconded by Chuck Rosenberg there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting be adjourned at 6:54 P.M. Roll Call: Ayes: Matt Fong, Chuck Rosenberg, Scott Snell, Ted Schroeder, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm, Nays: None. Absent: Paul Hamelink, Butch Eley. The motion carried.