

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
Monday, February 3, 2020

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Worksession of the City Council of the City of Hastings, Nebraska was conducted in the Hastings Museum, 1330 North Burlington Avenue, on February 3, 2020.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. in Worksession by Council President Paul Hamelink with the following members present: Matt Fong, Chuck Rosenberg, Scott Snell, Butch Eley, Ted Schroeder, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm, and Mayor Corey Stutte. Absent: None.

Moved by Butch Eley seconded by Ginny Skutnik to adopt current agenda for February 3, 2020 Worksession. Roll Call: Ayes: Matt Fong, Paul Hamelink, Chuck Rosenberg, Scott Snell, Butch Eley, Ted Schroeder, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm. Nays: None. Absent: None. The motion carried.

Paul Hamelink read the Public Notice - Pursuant to the 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 at the City Clerk's desk. Also, a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is posted on the wall of the Museum Conference Room which is accessible to members of the public.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. Discussion on tree trimming bid.

Dave Ptak, City Administrator, reminded the group of the windstorms that came through Hastings in 2019, bringing down trees and tree limbs around the city. We wanted to look at these events to avoid having the same issues in the future. As a result, Lee Vrooman (Utility Department), Jeff Hassenstab (Parks & Recreation Department), and Steve Kostner (Street Department) got together and drafted a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a tree trimming program. Tonight you will hear the results of the RFP and recommendations for moving forward on a program.

Lee Vrooman, Operations Director, stated the Utility Department's need for tree trimming comes from safety, liability, and service. The type of concerns along the street come from high profile vehicles such as trucks, buses, and emergency vehicles. The Utility Department has been hiring contractors to trim trees for the past 20 years, because we cannot keep up with the demand. We have hit the hot spots, not necessarily taken a systematic approach to go around the whole city, like is being proposed.

Jeff Hassenstab, Parks and Recreation Director, stated the Parks Department handles terrace tree removals. As far as tree trimming, we handle those on a complaint basis. We get the bus routes from the school and work those every few years. We do not have time or resources to get across the city for tree trimming, so it is a limited program.

Lee Vrooman reported they requested to send out an RFP for services. The utility trimming was broken into thirteen areas, prioritized within the city (drawing attached to minutes). The scope of services for the utility portion is to trim twelve feet around primary power lines. We do not trim around secondary services to houses or streetlights. The scope for the street trimming portion is broken into seven areas, prioritized within the city (drawing attached to minutes). No tree removals will be done from the street portion of the RFP. Those removals will be done by the Parks Department. When we remove trees, we receive permission from property owners, stating if they want a replacement tree.

No bids were received on November 26, 2019, in response to the first RFP sent to contractors. The first RFP was sent to larger companies in Kansas and Nebraska. The city reached out to discuss why companies did not bid. They came up with a number of reasons, but nothing to do with the scope of work. Lee received a list of companies interested in a Nebraska Public Power District bid for tree trimming, in order to reach out for interest.

The second RFP was sent to companies in Kansas, Nebraska, and Iowa. We received one bid from The Green Tree Company, located in Iowa. A second contractor was interested in bidding the street portion only, but their bid arrived too late for the bid letting. The Green Tree Company's bid came in on time and priced the Utility work at \$1,079,000 and the Street work at \$543,820. We want to do the work over two years. The contractor is agreeable to break the contract up over two years. A map was provided on a five-year plan for utilities. No storm damage is covered in this contract.

Mayor Stutte reminded the group the problems started with multiple storms happening one after the other last year. This contract would be a surge to get tree trimming under control. It is important to sustainability of electric lines.

There was discussion on whether the city needs a Forestry Department in the future. Jeff explained the high-level analysis was based on a 4-man tree trimming crew. In comparison, Green Tree has twenty-one employees. Dave Ptak stated if we have a 4-man crew, we would only go as fast as the way we are now. We got behind the way we are now, so we would probably not stay current if we only had four employees working on trimming trees. The cost of equipment, employee benefits, and liability would have to weigh-in on the decision for a city crew.

Jeff Hassenstab stated the contractor has done work for multiple power companies and has necessary credentials for our work. This is a big project, so bid bonds were an issue for some potential bidders. The contractor has a May 1st start date and a deadline of September 15, 2020.

Dave Ptak stated this contract would get the city caught up on tree trimming. This is a two-year plan being recommended for utility and street work. The contract amount is not budgeted at this time, so a discussion will be held with the City Treasurer on available funds.

Jeff told the group the contractor plans to offer mulch from the project to the public free of charge.

The council requested the tree trimming item be reviewed at the next Utility Advisory Board meeting. Staff was asked to draft a resolution for award. Public education ideas were door hangars, media, and utility bills.

Dave Ptak commented the benefit of receiving only one bid is that the city can negotiate the contract price.

2. Tour of Hastings Museum.

The group adjourned, prior to taking the Museum tour.

Moved by Ginny Skutnik seconded by Butch Eley there being no further business to adjourn at 5:55 P.M.
Roll Call: Ayes: Matt Fong, Paul Hamelink, Chuck Rosenberg, Scott Snell, Butch Eley, Ted Schroeder, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm. Nays: None. Absent: None. The motion carried.