

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
Tuesday, January 17, 2023

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Worksession 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 January 17, 2023.

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. in Worksession by Council President Matt Fong with the following members present: Shawn Hartmann, Marc Rowan, Joy Huffaker, Corey Stutte, Brad Consbruck, Steve Huntley. Absent: Butch Eley, Jeniffer Beahm.

The following City Officials were present: City Administrator, Shawn Metcalf; City Attorney, Jesse Oswald; Utility Manager, Kevin Johnson; City Clerk, Kimberly Jacobitz; Police Chief, Adam Story; Parks & Recreation Director, Jeff Hassenstab; Information Technology Director, Erik Nielsen; Director of Engineering, Lee Vrooman; Director of Human Resources, Lori Hartman; Museum Director, Teresa Kreutzer-Hodson; Library Director, Amy Dissmeyer; Environmental Engineer, Marty Stange; Development Services, Kevin Kubo; Finance Director, Roger Nash; Fire Chief, Brad Starling.

Council President Fong led the group in recital of the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States of America.

Moved by Shawn Hartmann seconded by Joy Huffaker to adopt the current agenda for the January 17, 2023 Worksession. Roll Call: Ayes: Matt Fong, Shawn Hartmann, Marc Rowan, Joy Huffaker, Brad Consbruck, Steve Huntley. Nays: None. Absent: Butch Eley, Jeniffer Beahm. The motion carried.

PUBLIC NOTICE - Official Notice of the Worksession was published in the Hastings Tribune on Friday, January 13, 2023. 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 ITEMS

1. Presentation of Museum Annual Report.

Teresa Kruetzer-Hodson, Museum Director, reported on the Hastings Museum. There was a substantial amount of grant funds received for COVID impacted theatres. This helped with the loss of admissions. The museum attendance is back to where we normally are. The membership last year was down about 14% because of COVID. Some of it was that membership was extended for three months, when they were unable to use memberships because of museum closures. We are back up to normal for memberships. We are up to around 950 memberships, which includes approximately 4,000 members. The patio and outdoor classroom are open. The one thing missing is the Kool-Aid Man statue. The estimated time of arrival is about six months out. They produced their first in-house planetarium show this year. They have been struggling with the theater industry. They had ten sold out shows. We had our education staff bring in virtual speakers. There are still going on with projects to improve collection storage. The end goal is once we move Kool-Aid, then we will have collection storage ready to go. Hollywood films are just not being produced, so we have fewer films to show as

second-run films. This is falling over into larger format films as well. Prior to COVID we were able to show 70 films, but we only expect 40 films this year. Next year we will work on the Kool-Aid Exhibit, hoping to go into production by the end of this fiscal year. Other items of interest: bring fire alarm system up to code, replace 30 year-old boilers on the theater side, and work to connect with the Spanish-speaking and Pawnee populations. A city-wide event was held at the museum in September for the city's 150th celebration, and they want to look at having another event similar to that, bringing the community to the museum. Teresa stated there are a lot of special traveling exhibits that are outside our price range. We lost money with the last traveling exhibit. In October they brought back old movies. Those sometimes charge more for the older movies considered as classics. In 2011, the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) paid for the teal signage and have no plans to take it down. Staff started working on getting different signage over a year ago.

2. Discussion of Council, Citizen, Staff, and City-Wide Communication.

Matt Fong had Jesse Oswald pull together information, a resolution, and a new request form for future agenda items.

Jesse Oswald stated that the process we envisioned with the "Request for Future Agenda Item" is that a citizen would complete the form and would forward it to the City Administrator. If a situation cannot be resolved by the City Administrator or appropriate department head, the issue could be placed on an agenda.

Jesse explained that the purpose of public records is to guarantee that public government records are public. The city needs to be open to inspection of records, except if it is explicitly stated by the State Statutes that the record is confidential. The State intended to include emails as public records. There are numerous exceptions, but some common records that are not public records are personnel, certain law enforcement records, medical records, or attorney work products. He also talked about why open meetings are required by the State Statutes and when there can be closed sessions. The formation of a public body is public business and may not be conducted in secret. All meetings of public bodies should be open to the public. Email communications directed to all council are not a violation, but a reply back to all members of the council might be. There are certain requirements and notices that must be made in order to comply with the Open Meetings Act. Common exceptions to the Open Meetings Act: no quorum at a meeting and social meetings not officially called by the body. Informational sessions hearing staff reports, can be considered as an open meeting. As far as email communication: one direction (e.g. attorney to council) communication is done by blind copy, instead of sending to a whole group. The response, in this situation, on a blind copy only goes to the attorney, not the entire council. Conversations within full council is not permitted with open meetings. That could be considered a violation of the open meetings law. Closed Sessions are to protect public interest (e.g. negotiating real estate, pending litigation, or settlements), or protection of needless injury to an individual, if that person has not requested a public meeting. Council must come back into open session to take formal action on said things.

Mayor Stutte made all aware of the role of City Council members. In Section 2-103 of City Code, it talks about roles of council. City Code Section 2-104 talks about going through the City Administrator, so the City Administrator is aware of questions being asked of staff. When it comes to any issues you are hearing or having with city employees, the public meeting or in the public are not the places to talk about it. Reach out to City Administrator or City Attorney to make sure we are following Human Resources rules and City Code. Make sure you are not deliberating in person or over email on issues.

Shawn Metcalf stated that council will find that if you come through him, he is able to come to a resolution on an issue. There is so much going on, there might be communication that has been shared with him, that he can share with council. Mayor Stutte stated that giving direction to City Administrator during worksessions, we can see if there is a consensus at the worksession to move an item to the council meeting. We can't vote, but we can see if there is a consensus on a topic. Council should talk to Mayor Stutte or Council President Fong to add an item to the worksession agenda. Copy both Matt Fong and Mayor Stutte on emails. Matt Fong stated that we want to make sure there is adequate information and take full advantage of the time at meetings.

Shawn will have ongoing communication with the public. He plans to continue to send updates to council weekly, until everything settles in. Shawn brought the thought of a monthly report to the community. We are planning to do something similar to what he did in his previous city, which would be an update from the department heads. This information will be helpful for talking to constituents. When the Public Information Manager is hired, he would like to get that information on the website and social media. His previous city had a newsletter and activity guide multiple times a year, which included council members' sections. Over the next year, he will try different pilot programs to see what works for the City of Hastings. We will put together the best, most productive information we can. After our monthly reports, he would like to get with the newspaper and visit about highlights going on in the community. Townhall meetings could be used for specific topics. It is a good way to engage with the public. Communication with the public is important. He asked the council if they would want to participate in some communication ideas with the community. Mayor Stutte said that quarterly chamber meetings or townhalls in the past, were attended by a few council members. The City Administrator would usually answer the technical questions. This is similar to coffee with the senator, or coffee with the mayor and council. The chamber is busy and going through change, but we could possibly visit with them about it. Council had a consensus on interest in these types of communication.

Matt stated that there was a previous administrative policy from about fifteen years ago on public comment. Jesse drafted a resolution that will come before council at an upcoming regular meeting, to replace the old policy. This works in concert with the Request for Future Agenda Item form. The previous document was an internal policy from 2006, not a resolution. He asked council to send feedback on the resolution provided in the packet, to the City Administrator and City Attorney.

Mayor Stutte explained the process for snow emergencies is triggered by three inches of snow. The latest forecast is for four to five inches of snow. Shawn Metcalf, Lee Vrooman, Mayor Stutte, and Steve Kostner will work together on determining snow emergencies. Sometimes they do not last the full amount of time that is set forth in advance. He reminded citizens to be cognizant of where you park on the streets. We share snow emergency information with media outlets, on the city's website, and social media. The Public Information Manager usually handles that information. Police Chief Story stated that they try to do their part with social media to inform the public. Officers try to locate vehicle owners before resorting to towing on the snow route. Downtown is more complicated for snow removal and snow emergencies for informing people prior to being towed.

Moved by Shawn Hartmann seconded by Steve Huntley there being no further business to come before the council to adjourn at 6:23 P.M. Roll Call: Ayes: Matt Fong, Shawn Hartmann, Joy Huffaker, Brad Consbruck, Steve Huntley. Nays: Marc Rowan. Absent: Butch Eley, Jeniffer Beahm. The motion carried.