

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
Monday, March 20, 2017

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Worksession of the City Council of the City of Hastings, Nebraska was held at the City Auditorium, 400 North Hastings, on March 20, 2017.

The Worksession was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Council President, John Harrington, with the following members present: Paul Hamelink, Phil Odom, Butch Eley, Sarah Hoops, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm, and Mayor Stutte. Absent: Scott Snell. Those members present from the Board of Public Works were Jeanette Dewalt, Jeff Kully, and Willis Hunt.

PUBLIC NOTICE - Notice posted on Friday, March 17, 2017. 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. Also, a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is posted and accessible to members of the public.

Presentation of Financial Audit for period ending September 30, 2016

Ashley Englund of McDermott & Miller presented the Financial Audit for the City of Hastings, period ending September 30, 2016. The city had a substantial increase in Accounts Payable – up \$416,000 (almost entirely from payables related to Library renovation - \$386,000 payable at year-end); Decrease in Long-Term Debt of \$2.2 million (pay-off of 2010 and 2011 series bonds); At year-end \$24 million of net position was unrestricted and \$11.8 million unrestricted in the general fund. McDermott & Miller issued a clean, unmodified opinion. (Complete Financial Report is available for public inspection at the City Clerk's Office).

Discussion of organizational study dated October, 2015.

Mayor Stutte gave a PowerPoint presentation on "Hastings-Opportunities for Efficiency". He met with working groups comprised of the Mayor, Council Members, Board of Public Works Members, and the City Attorney and is here to give a recommendation on the organization and what the Board of Public Works' role should be moving forward. We need to set the foundation for Hastings to become the most effective and efficient city possible. The Mayor and City Council must set the strategic direction in order for staff to develop an implementation plan. It is important to combine functions where it makes sense. The Board of Public Works serves an important purpose in recommending decisions to Mayor and City Council. A joint selection committee should be charged with interviewing and recommending the next Utilities Director. Mayor Stutte recommended change to Department Head appointments, by making only those positions required by statute be up for reappointment at the beginning of the Mayor's term. Mayor Stutte made the point that it is time for the Mayor and Council to set a strategic direction for our community and hire a Utilities Director.

Discussion was held on whether the Utilities Director could stay under the direction of the Board of Public Works. Taxpayer versus ratepayer budgets are a concern for having the Utility Manager under the direction of the City Administrator. Concern over council not having knowledge to make decisions for the utility department was voiced, but the point was made that we have highly qualified staff and expect them to provide input, leadership and recommendations to the council.

State Statutes mandate after a mayor is elected, the positions of City Administrator, City Treasurer, City Clerk, and City Attorney must be re-appointed or replaced. The caliber of employee the city would be able to recruit if hired by contract, rather than appointment every four years, was discussed for all other Department Head positions.

Mr. Ptak brought up a concern with conformity with the State Statute's intent in Section 16-691, regarding Board of Public Works' duties. This section seems to say the City Treasurer is an integral part of the finances of the Utility Department.

Efficiencies and effectiveness of combining certain departments, employee concerns of changes in structure and possibilities the structure changes may improve new employee recruitment were brought up to the group.

Joe Patterson stated the issue is about long-term structure for the city.

Mayor Stutte asked Mr. Ptak to craft an ordinance for the next council meeting. Mr. Ptak stated that an ordinance sets policy, but staff implements policy. He can set the framework of an ordinance, but cannot direct how to implement it.

Moved by Ginny Skutnik seconded by Sarah Hoops there being no further discussion to adjourn worksession at 7:03p.m. Roll Call: Ayes: John Harrington, Paul Hamelink, Phil Odom, Butch Eley, Ginny Skutnik, Jeniffer Beahm, Sarah Hoops. Nays: None. Absent: Scott Snell. The motion carried.