

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA  
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION  
Monday, September 18, 2017

The Worksession was called to order by Council President John Harrington with the following members present: Paul Hamelink, Phil Odom, Scott Snell, Butch Eley, Sarah Hoops, Ginny Skutnik. Absent: Jeniffer Beahm.

Others: Mayor Corey Stutte, Joe Patterson, Dave Wacker, Jack Newlun, Pete Kortum, Lee Vrooman, Jeff Hassenstab, Matt Kuhr, Al Meyer, Don Threewitt, Roger Nash, Kent Gilbert.

**PUBLIC NOTICE** - Official Notice of the Worksession was published in the Hastings Tribune on Friday, September 15, 2017. 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 the utility tree program.***

Councilmember Harrington stated the reason this is coming before Council it that he had received concerns that trees were being taken down too quickly and clarification was asked for as to what the City and Utility policies are regarding tree replacement and removal.

Jeff Hassenstab, Parks and Recreation Director, indicated that in the spring of this year the Tree Board had discussed this issue at their meeting and decided they would like it brought before Council.

Lee Vrooman, Director of Utility Operations, began the presentation by reviewing Hastings City Code requirements for planting trees. He shared with Council that Utilities hires a contractor for tree trimming, spending approximately \$300,000 a year and that authorization forms are required from all property owners before trees are removed or trimmed. He told Council that the property owner always has the final decision.

Councilmember Eley questioned if in an emergency, property owner authorization would be needed.

Mr. Vrooman indicated that in an emergency they would take action right away. He stated that they offer the property owner a free tree after they remove a tree with the property owner being responsible for the planting and care of the tree. He reviewed with Council the number of trees removed and planted in the City over the past six years.

Councilmember Harrington questioned what happened if the property owner didn't want the replacement tree.

Mr. Vrooman stated that if they didn't want a tree planted, the Utilities would keep track of it and the Parks Department would be given the tree to be used in a park. He stated that their goal was to replace a tree with every tree taken down. He reviewed with Council what other communities requirements are for tree planting on the terrace. He discussed with Council the recommended guidelines for planting of trees on public right-of-way and stated that it comes down to the right tree being planted in the right place.

Mr. Hassenstab discussed with Council a tree planting program they would like to offer for a free tree to be given to any citizen that requests a tree. He explained that with the ash borer, they

will be losing a good number of trees. He stated that citizens will be able to fill out an application and choose from a variety of trees and if the type and placement of the tree is acceptable, the citizen will receive the tree free of charge. He explained that citizens would also be given general guidelines of what is required of them.

Councilmember Harrington asked if they were going to publicize this tree program.

Mr. Hassenstab stated they wanted Council's approval before pushing it out to public. He indicated that their goal was to replace every tree that they take out.

Discussion was had on whether they needed to place this on an agenda for Council approval. It was decided they could have a presentation at the next Council meeting and get the application and guideline documents on the website so citizens are able to take advantage of the program.

Councilmember Hamelink was concerned they may be overwhelmed with people wanting trees.

Mr. Hassenstab stated it would be on a first come first serve basis with them just starting out with 50 trees.

***Discussion of airport organizational structure. (Requested by Paul Hamelink)***

Councilmember Hamelink began discussion by stating they are looking at the future of the airport, feel it is a significant asset and would like to utilize it in the best way possible. He indicated he felt is had economic development possibilities and that it might be time to look at how the managing of the airport is structured within the city. He told Council he wasn't sure an airport authority was the way to go and felt that HEDC and the Chamber of Commerce may need to be involved due to the economic development possibilities. Councilmember Hamelink stated that it is under the Engineering Department now and he appreciates their efforts in managing the airport. He stated he felt he would like to see it exist more like the library or museum. He suggested possibly having a part time airport manager that has some aviation experience to handle airport issues and proposed moving the overseeing of the airport to the Development Services Department.

Councilmember Skutnik questioned if the needs aren't being met.

Councilmember Hamelink stated he felt is was more that opportunities aren't being realized.

Mayor Stutte questioned if maybe there needs to be a Fixed Base Operator (FBO).

Councilmember Hamelink agreed that is the first question. He stated that the Development Services Department makes sense from an economic development standpoint with perhaps a liaison from the Engineering Department.

Discussion was had on putting out a Request For Proposals (RFP) for a FBO and seeing what kind of interest they would get back. They talked about if the change in structure needed to take place first, about having more discussion with other communities and how they are doing things and that they needed to figure out what they wanted the airport to be and what the community needs for the airport were.

Councilmember Skutnik stated that the city had a FBO at the airport in prior years.

Councilmember Odom stated that he is supportive of the airport but did not agree with setting up another autonomous board like the library or museum. He stated he felt they needed to

continue on the path of completing the efficiency and personnel study. He stated that the Engineering Department may not be the correct department but we may not want to make changes too fast.

Some airport statistics were discussed as well as questions regarding FBOs and where they might be housed.

Mayor Stutte suggested a business plan needed to be put together and put out there to see if there was any interest. He indicated that he and the City Administrator would put a RFP together and stated he felt it was time to see if they could move forward with the economic development opportunity.

Councilmember Hoops stated she felt it was an under utilized facility and that opportunities could be great.

Mayor Stutte stated that HEDC sees it as an economic development opportunity and he felt they needed to look at what the industrial park out there would look like and actually have something out there that was marketable.

Councilmember Skutnik questioned if there would be limitations on what can be built out there.

Dave Wacker, City Engineer, stated there would be height restrictions.

Councilmember Harrington stated they would gather information and have more discussions and that he agreed with Mayor Stutte that they need to put something out there.

Councilmember Hamelink stated he wanted the airport to be the best that it can be and they are investing large dollars (\$800,000) in the airport over the next two years.

It was the consensus of the Council to start by putting out an RFP.

Councilmember Hamelink stated he felt they may not get a good response without the structure being in place first.

Mayor Stutte thanked Airport Advisory Board and the city staff working with them.

***Closed session for the discussion of personnel.***

Moved by Odom, seconded by Skutnik that the Mayor and City Council go into closed session for the discussion of personnel at 6:30 P.M. Roll Call: Ayes: Harrington, Hamelink, Odom, Snell, Eley, Hoops, Skutnik. None. Nays: None. Absent: Beahm. The motion carried.

Councilmember Odom left the meeting at 7:00 P.M.

Moved by Eley, seconded by Skutnik that the Mayor and City Council resume open session at 7:18 P.M. Roll Call: Ayes: Harrington, Hamelink, Snell, Eley, Hoops, Skutnik. Nays: None. Absent: Beahm, Odom. The motion carried.

Moved by Skutnik, seconded by Hoops there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting be adjourned at 7:18 P.M. Roll Call: Ayes: Harrington, Hamelink, Snell, Eley, Hoops, Skutnik. Nays: None. Absent: Beahm, Odom. The motion carried.