

MINUTES FOR THE SPECIAL SESSION OF COUNCIL
Monday, January 27, 2014 at 1:00 p.m.
Mayor's Office

Council President Stephen Stuart called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council-at-Large & President:	Stephen L. Stuart	Present
Ward 1:	Duane R. Fishpaw	Present
Ward 2:	Robert M. Valentine	Present
Ward 3:	Ruth Detrow	Present
Ward 4:	Sandra Tunnell	Present

1:00 p.m. – PUBLIC HEARING on member priorities for calendar year 2014

Mayor Stewart presented to the Council his concerns about various emergency service members' potential retirements, and the City's succession plan for their positions. Mayor Stewart stated that it is vital for the City to be prepared for these workforce changes and encouraged members to be cognizant of the potential changes in manpower and funding needs for the emergency service positions.

Council members agreed that the fire and police departments are already shorthanded and personnel are asked to work overtime, which puts further strain on the city's budget.

Expansion of the city along U.S. 250 East by annexation of property was brought forward to City Council by Mayor Stewart. The Mayor stated the city is currently working with a consultant to determine the best way to extend water and sewer lines under Interstate 71, and mentioned that the City has contacted property owners within the last six months.

Mayor Stewart also mentioned the City's interest in looping the Rt. 250 water line with the Ford Road service providing a loop or service from two sources to the Business Park. The Mayor commented about the importance and benefits of adding an additional water service to the businesses; especially if there were any water issues with the initial line.

Mayor Stewart shared the idea of establishing an elevated storage tank for water as a long term project, which will benefit the Northern region of the City, including the business park. He stated that looking into an elevated storage tank for water would have a significant impact on the City.

Dr. Stuart questioned the feasibility of disassembling and reassembling of a storage tank that already exists and using it for City purposes. Mayor Stewart responded to Dr. Stuart's question and stated that there would be significant savings on materials; however, he was not certain if the man hours it would require to reassemble the previously existing tank would be practical.

Mark Burgess, Director of Human Resources, commented that the City may need to consider the size of the tank that they are interested in utilizing. Reassembling the tank that already exists may present potential issues since it may not be large enough for future growth in the area. Mr. Burgess also stated that not only is basic water service for a growing population important to consider, but so is the Fire Department and its ability to use the same lines in case of an emergency.

Mayor Stewart agreed with Mr. Burgess and intends to discuss with the City Engineer about the tanks and their ability to support residents, businesses, and emergency needs.

Mr. Valentine asked whether or not the use of the water towers would have any impact on the water pressure for residents and businesses in the area, and advised that the Council consult with the Engineer about this concern as well.

Mayor Stewart presented another list, created by Dr. Stuart, which included additional issues for the City to consider this year. The first item on the list was possibly hiring a consultant to evaluate the efficiencies of Brookside Golf Course. The Mayor explained to the members that Brookside has been in financial dismay for quite some time, and in order to ensure its success changes must be made. Mayor Stewart also mentioned that the possible sale of excess acreage may be something to look into as well.

Mayor Stewart shared that evaluation of property owned by the City is another issue the Council should look into.

Dr. Stuart mentioned that the City owns a lot of property, but was not sure if the City really needed all of it. Dr. Stuart and the Mayor agreed that this is something the Council should look into.

Council also considered implementing stricter residential and commercial maintenance codes throughout the city. The Mayor stated that the City does not currently have a full- or part-time commercial building inspector, and it was suggested that restoring the position of civilian fire inspector could account for monitoring the safety issues of most commercial buildings.

Dr. Stuart stated that these inspections are necessary for the growth and vitality of the business community.

Mrs. Tunnell agreed with Mayor Stewart and Dr. Stuart's reasoning and recognized the importance of establishing a standard. She added that it is important for the value of the property and safety.

Mayor Stewart also mentioned that enforcement of the Sign Ordinance is sorely lacking. The Mayor stated that prior to 2008, the City did a much better job enforcing the Ordinance and that it is important for the City to work to getting back to that level of enforcement.

Another issue Mayor Stewart brought to the Council's attention was a sidewalk Ordinance. Dr. Stuart commented that maintenance of existing sidewalks should be top priority when looking into this issue.

Mrs. Tunnell commented that some residents within the community may believe they are responsible for the maintenance of the sidewalk in front of their homes. She commented about the possible need for better communication between the City and resident regarding the maintenance of the sidewalks.

Dr. Stuart consulted the Council about obligating property owners to be responsible for the maintenance of the sidewalks.

Mrs. Detrow and Mr. Valentine added that in this economy, it may be exceedingly difficult for residents to assume such a financial burden.

Mrs. Detrow and Mrs. Tunnell discussed possible payment options to help alleviate the financial pressure on property owners; however, Mayor Stewart, warned about the level of compliance that would be required along with other risks.

The discussion transitioned into concerns about the condition of city roads when winter gives way to spring.

Mayor Stewart informed council during Monday's meeting that he had spoken with Director of City Services Jerry Mack earlier that morning and learned the city currently has about 800 tons of rock salt on hand, which Stewart said is low.

Mrs. Detrow brought forward the possible need for Ashland to merge various data with the Geographic Information System (GIS).

The Mayor acknowledged the need for and importance of the City joining the majority of the other cities in the State.

Dr. Stuart stated that bringing in the City Engineer, who has an understanding of the system, would be a good idea to educate the Council about the cost and benefits of GIS.

Dr. Stuart proposed the question about what to do about our streets and safety forces when the City is facing such a shortage of funding.

Numerous members commented about the fee structures and how the City has been doing more with less funding for years.

Mrs. Tunnell stated that the City has come to a point where possibly looking into what neighboring cities are doing, such as proposing an increase in fees, to generate more revenue for the City.

Mayor Stewart and Dr. Stuart added that it is also time to look into the rates and the formulas used to calculate the cost of all of services the City provides.

Dr. Stuart added that the formulation of these service rates should be one of the top priorities for the Council to determine and have established.

Mayor Stewart presented an idea to the Council, which everyone in attendance found distasteful, involving a possible increase of the City's income tax rate. Mayor Stewart commented that he is not interested in increasing the tax from 1.50% to 1.75%, but may be required for the well-being of the City. The Mayor stated that the possible 0.25% increase will help prevent the City's diminishing infrastructure and ensure that the City's needs can be met.

City Engineer, Shane Kremser, joined the meeting and shared information regarding the Geographic Information System to the Mayor and City Council.

Mayor Stewart asked about if the system is capable of serving the Fire Department, specifically in locating water lines and fire hydrants throughout the city.

Dr. Stuart asked the Mr. Kremser when he expects the system would be up and running and whether the system is worth the cost and time.

Mayor Stewart inquired whether the Water Department would benefit from the system.

Mr. Kremser replied that the system would be able to locate water valves similar to the way it locates fire hydrants for the Fire Department. Furthermore, Mr. Kremser stated that the system can be tailored to

benefit almost every department within the City.

Dr. Stuart questioned Mr. Kremser about the training requirements for the system.

Mr. Kremser answered that there is a bit of training required, which is part of the contract.

Dr. Stuart questioned Mr. Kremser if he believed GIS is important for the City and worth utilizing.

Mr. Kremser answered saying the City's transition to using GIS is in the best interest of the City.

The revision of general fund reimbursements and fee structures for city services was another issue the Council discussed, which was set to be their top priority. Mayor Stewart said the reimbursements from each municipal department back into the city's general fund have not been updated since 2005, while enterprise fees, such as projects for fixing or renovating sewer, water, sanitation, street or public park issues, have increased.

Enterprise fees were another issue Council members discussed, which residents pay for various services including water, sewer and sanitation.

Mayor Stewart brought the need for a school resource officer to the attention of the Council, and stated that he anticipated the ability to hire an officer after the New Year; however, he was unable to do so due to an unexpected officer's quit and added sick leave by officers.

ADJOURNMENT FROM SPECIAL SESSION: 4:33 p.m.

Moved by Dr. Stuart and seconded by Mr. Valentine to adjourn.

Ayes: Mr. Fishpaw, Mr. Valentine, Mrs. Detrow, Mrs. Tunnell, Dr. Stuart,

Respectfully Submitted by
Lindsey M. Queen, Interim Clerk of Council