

Nowthen City Council
September 27, 2023
Work Session Minutes

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pilon called the meeting to order at 5:10 pm.

Present: Mayor Pilon, Council Members Rainville, Fladebo, and Breyen.

Excused Absent: Council Member Alders

Also Present: Administrator Lehner, Deputy Clerk Johnson, City Attorney Bob Ruppe

2. CLOSED SESSION

City Attorney Ruppe announced that the city council would be going into a closed session to discuss preliminary consideration of allegations against individuals subject to its authority as legally required by Minn. Stat. 13D.05 Subd (b).

The city council went into closed session to discuss consideration of allegations against individuals subject to its authority.

At 5:55 p.m. the city council resumed open session.

3. MOVE ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE TO FIRST ITEM TO DISCUSS

Resident Complaint – Mr. Sam Corns – He has now spoken with Council Member Breyen and Council Member Fladebo after multiple calls with the Mayor, Administrator Lehner, and Planner Stockman. He is insisting on a meeting with the full council.

Much discussion regarding this request. There is a \$500 fee to request a meeting with council and sub-contractors as Planner Stockman receives \$250 for attending meetings and other sub-contractors will have costs, including overtime to city staff. Council Member Fladebo pointed out that she felt there is a perceived disconnect between council and some residents; it would be good to have this meeting to show good faith to the residents.

It has been suggested to have all the parties that he has accusations against to be present including neighbors, MNSPECT, Prosecuting Attorney Glazer, DNR Representative, the Septic System professional, Administrator Lehner, Planner Stockman, and city council so that this issue can be resolved. The soonest date available is October 16, 2023 – as early as possible in the afternoon/early afternoon. Council Member Fladebo to inform Mr. Corns of the date and requests he submit documentation as to his complaints to Deputy Clerk Johnson to prepare a meeting agenda & packet for the meeting.

Fire Department Contract – Administrator Lehner has a meeting with the City Administrator of St. Francis next week to finalize the contract.

Administrator Lehner to work with Council Member Breyen to get started on the updating of the Personnel Policy to include new legislation.

Discussion regarding work sessions the Thursday before City Council Meetings. The mayor prefers work sessions are necessary with the RCA forms with background information being supplied to council. The council has never had so much detailed information with requests in the past and what staff is doing has been a huge improvement.

It would be nice to explain what the Public Forum (Floor items) is for residents to see on the agenda and to explain the consent agenda items on the agenda each month.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER FLADEBO, SECONDED BY RAINVILLE TO ADD APPROPRIATE EXPLANATIONS ON AGENDAS BEGINNING WITH THE OCTOBER 10TH MEETING AGENDA. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

The mayor explained how meetings can be called. The mayor or two (2) council members can call a special meeting or a work session. If a special meeting is called, only the items on the agenda can be discussed. In a work session, multiple topics can be discussed. Regular council meetings are the city's "business meetings", more formal meetings to conduct the city's business. An emergency meeting can be called for natural disasters, pandemics such as Covid, etc. His opinion is to video work sessions and meetings.

Fire Department: The Fire Department has received an application from an Oak Grove fire fighter who lives in Nowthen. He is currently processing through the system. He has 23 years of experience.

Administrative Assistant temporary position – On Friday, it was thought Connie could work 40 hours a week, she cannot due to a limitation on the amount of money she can make in a month, so she and Karen will be splitting up hours and giving the city what they can until a full-time person is found. There may be some hours/days that the office will be closed due to lack of staff to work the front counter. Madeline is looking to go part-time at the city and part-time in another job to get full-time hours. Staff is looking for approval to post the position of Administrative Assistant and start interviewing, knowing that an offer of employment will not be given until the personnel policy is updated (give a deadline to get a work session scheduled).

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER FLADEBO, SECONDED BY RAINVILLE TO DIRECT STAFF TO POST THE ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT POSITION ON THE LEAGUE OF MN CITIES, CITY WEBSITE, AND CITY BULLETIN BOARD, BUT NO OFFICIAL OFFERS TO RECOMMENDED CANDIDATE UNTIL THE MAIN POINTS IN THE PERSONNEL

4. PROJECT MANAGER UPDATE

Genevieve Hirschboeck accepted the temporary project manager position and will be starting October 3, 2023 at 10:00 am.

5. SEASONAL HELP

It is possible that Rose will learn how to be a backup snowplow driver for cul-de-sac snow removal. Administrator Lehner will also talk with Don about snow plowing possibilities and other duties in addition to Recycling Attendant. Staff would like to move forward with getting information together to offer the open full-time position to our seasonal employee and on-call firefighter, Isaac Schulz.

MOTION BY COUNCIL MEMBER RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY FLADEBO TO DIRECT STAFF TO SOLICIT INFORMATION TO PUT TOGETHER AN OFFER OF FULL-TIME EMPLOYMENT TO ISAAC SCHULZ. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

6. RECYCLING CENTER

Discussion regarding the Recycling Center improvements, hours – summer hours & winter hours, pricing.

It has been discussed multiple times to remove the oil container from inside the building and make it accessible outdoors.

MOTION BY RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY FLADEBO TO DIRECT STAFF TO REMOVE THE OIL TANK FROM THE INSIDE OF THE RECYCLING BUILDING AND RELOCATE IT OUTSIDE BETWEEN THE OLD MAINTENANCE GARAGE AND HISTORIC TOWN HALL. STAFF DIRECTED TO INSTALL FENCING (to match MBI fencing) AS DIRECTED BY ADMINISTRATOR LEHNER. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

Much discussion as to the customer logs, times the Recycling Center is used and manned by staff. Winter is coming and it gets dark much sooner. Suggested to reduce the Recycling Center hours to 5:00 instead of 7:00 closing on Tuesday and Thursday, and to table the other hours until the October 10th meeting. Administrator Lehner to explore additional ways to utilize recycling staff.

MOTION BY MAYOR PILON, SECONDED BY RAINVILLE TO CHANGE THE CLOSING HOURS ON TUESDAY AND THURSDAY TO 5:00 P.M. AND HOURS ON SATURDAY 9:00-12:00 BEGINNING OCTOBER 1ST, 2023 UNTIL MORE CONCRETE WINTER HOURS CAN BE SET. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

FEES – Fees have been discussed multiple times during the budget work sessions as the city cannot continue to subsidize the Recycling Center. While we cannot review the entire fee schedule at this time, a few of the key items can be increased to cover the expenses to recycle or dispose of some of the items collected. Also discussed are to increase the fee for a liquor license in the City of Nowthen, as the city fee is substantially less than surrounding cities.

MOTION BY MAYOR PILON, SECONDED BY RAINVILLE TO INCREASE THE LIQUOR LICENSE FEE FROM \$1,500.00 TO \$2,500 FOR THE NEXT LICENSE RENEWAL PERIOD. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

MOTION BY RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY FLADEBO TO INCREASE FEES TO RECYCLE REGULAR CAR TIRES TO \$5.00, SEMI TIRES TO \$15, LARGE APPLIANCES (DEFINED AS REFRIGERATORS, STOVES, DISHWASHERS, WASHERS, DRYERS, AND WATER HEATERS) TO \$20 – COUNTER APPLIANCES TO REMAIN \$10.00. 3 AYES. MOTION CARRIED.

Discussion regarding mattress prices. The city of Nowthen is by far the least expensive in surrounding areas. Council Member Rainville will contact several disposal companies to find pricing to dispose / recycle mattresses and bring back a recommendation to increase that fee as well.

MOTION BY RAINVILLE, SECONDED BY FLADEBO TO ADJOURN.

The meeting adjourned at 8:37 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Scott Lehner, City Administrator



Jeffrey M. Pilon, Mayor