

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA
Special Work Session – March 2, 2006

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Thursday, March 2, 2006, at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Lehmann presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Lehmann, Markeson, Hellquist, Johnson, Erickson, Downs, Meuers.

Staff Present: Minke, Eischens and Murphy-Schuett

Mayor Lehmann stated that the purpose of the meeting was to give the Council an opportunity to discuss and prepare interview questions for interviewing two labor negotiation firms and then interview the firms. Consensus of the Council was that Mayor Lehmann would welcome the firms and Councilmember Hellquist would ask the questions. The Council would ask clarifying questions if needed.

At 6:00 p.m., the Council interviewed Louis Russo from Virginia, Minnesota. Mr. Russo has been a contract negotiator for over 40 years. He stated that he has provided consulting for cities, townships, hospitals, nursing homes, hotels, newspapers, etc. He has worked well negotiating for these entities and has dealt with many unions. Mainly, he has represented cities from the iron range region.

At 6:45 p.m., the Council interviewed Scott Lepak representing Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd., Minneapolis, Minnesota. Mr. Lepak stated he has 18 years experience in collective bargaining. Mr. Lepak is the general labor counsel to the several cities and counties in the metro area. He has been the lead attorney assigned to the City of Bemidji since 2000 and is familiar with the City's labor contracts. Mr. Lepak commented that the City has good contracts.

At 7:30 p.m., the Council reconvened in the Conference Room to discuss the two firms interviewed and select a firm to hire.

Meuers stated that she is still of the opinion that City staff has done well negotiating the labor contracts. She felt that staff should continue negotiating and call in Mr. Lepak as a consultant as has been done in the past.

Hellquist commented that both firms gave excellent presentations.

Discussion continued on Interest Based Bargaining. Minke commented that after the training this week, two unions have written responses favorably to Interest Based Bargaining. Lehmann stated that Interest Based Bargaining can be done favorably. Consensus of the Council was that they got the impression that both labor negotiators were not in favor of Interest Based Bargaining.

Johnson stated that he was disappointed that the Council did not get the opportunity to interview all four labor negotiation firms. Lehmann responded that the Council had appointed the task to review the applications to the Public Works Committee who had recommended that Russo and Barna, Guzy & Steffen be interviewed.

Minke stated that it has less to do with the firm that is hired but the parameters set by the Council. The Council should keep focused on strategy and the position of the City.

Motion by Johnson, second by Erickson, to interview the other two labor negotiation firms. Motion failed by the following vote: Ayes: Erickson, Downs, Johnson. Nays: Meuers, Markeson, Hellquist, Lehmann.

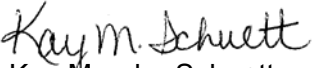
Discussions continued on the procedure after the firm is hired, i.e., schedule a strategy session, review contracts, current trends and chart a course.

Motion by Meuers, second by Hellquist, to hire the firm of Barna, Guzy & Steffen, Ltd., to be the labor negotiation consultant for the City. Motion carried with the following vote: Ayes: Johnson, Lehmann, Markeson, Meuers, Downs, Hellquist. Nays: Erickson.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Downs, second by Meuers, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kay Murphy-Schuett
City Clerk