

JOINT CITY COUNCIL/BELTRAMI COUNTY
Special Meeting/Work Session
Bemidji, Minnesota
April 12, 2005

Present: Erickson, Hellquist, Markeson, Meuers, Lehmann, Downs, Johnson
County Commissioners: Frost, Heltzer, Vene, and Fairbanks.

Staff Present: David Minke, Tony Murphy, Tim Faver and Kay Murphy-Schuett

Others Present: Lenore Potter, Greg Negard, Jeff Molnar, Ted Will, Kent Ehrenstrom

Mayor Lehmann opened the meeting at 4:35 p.m. noting that all members of the County Board with the exception of Otterstad and City Council were in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss concerns.

Kitchigami Regional Library:

Frost stated that members of the Beltrami County Board plan to oppose the Joint Powers Agreement proposed by the Kitchigami Regional Library. The KRL board will vote on the agreement on April 28.

Murphy observed that the County is concerned about the proposed funding formula which would be based on population not on adjusted tax capacity the current method used. Beltrami County residents would pay more and receive less service. Kitchigami feels that the governments in this area have not been paying their fair share.

Murphy stated that no formal overtures have been made in looking at other library systems. A list of steps from the State must be taken in order to change systems.

Quentin made the observation that a more economical service could be provided. He commented that the book mobile sits in Red Lake and has few if any users.

Frost is not in favor of withdrawing from the Kitchigami system but has concerns with the proposed joint powers agreement. If the agreement does not get approved, KRL will assume that those jurisdictions opposed have withdrawn.

Hellquist commented that the proposed new board would have five county commissioners and ten citizen members, with the board able to set financial burden on counties. He felt that elected officials should be on the board, those that have the fiscal responsibility for the money from their jurisdictions.

Erickson expressed interest in knowing how the systems abutting the county borders determine their funding.

Murphy stated that the County had not checked into other systems at this time.

Paul Bunyan Transit:

Jeff Molnar, Paul Bunyan Board member and ODC employee, expressed his disappointment in some of the things he has read in the Pioneer regarding Paul Bunyan Transit (PBT). The ODC does not have a contract with PBT. Clients buy bus passes just like anyone else and they are faithful users. Molnar stressed that ODC employees are "general public" and work throughout our community.

Heltzer asked who appoints the Paul Bunyan Transit Board, what are their powers and duties and how they relate to the Joint Powers Board.

Kent Ehrenstrom, Mn/DOT, responded that prior to the Joint Powers Board, the city and county had separate contracts. Paul Bunyan Transit is a 501C non-profit corporation and the board has an advisory role. However, the contract with Mn/DOT is held by PBT. PBT Board is advisory and is fiscally responsible to the State of Mn. The City and County contract with Paul Bunyan Transit to provide the transportation needs. The City and County contribute for capital purchases. Mn/Dot contributes 85% and 15% is contributed through fares.

Greg Negard, Director of PBT, stated that financial and policy decisions are made by the Paul Bunyan Transit board. Paul Bunyan Transit is audited yearly by Mn/DOT and an independent review.

Hellquist asked if PBT has sufficient capacity to meet the needs in our community.

Negard replied that PBT could use an extra bus or two on the streets but financially unable to do that.

Markeson asked how long those not on a regular schedule have to wait for a ride?

Negard replied that most callers wait about an hour. He further commented that PBT is currently doing a promotion to educate the public to call 24 hours ahead for a ride.

Murphy expressed concern with the County's requirement of paying administrative fees to the City for staff time. The County is paying those fees but doesn't feel good about it and felt that the Joint Powers Board should address this issue.

Lehmann observed that it is appropriate that elected officials be on the PBT Board because it makes financial decisions.

Ditches:

Fairbanks recommended that the City do an inventory of their ditches to ensure they are cleaned and in good working order.

Veterans Outpatient Clinic:

Lehmann reported that Vene and he recently had a conversation with a VA Administrator regarding an outpatient clinic in Bemidji.

Vene commented that there is no funding available to locate a Veterans outpatient clinic in Bemidji at this time. Vene observed that the Veterans Administration will make the decision on placement based upon a business decision.

The City Council has already passed a resolution of support for an outpatient clinic in Bemidji. A similar resolution will be brought to the County Board.

Boys & Girls Club Capital Campaign:

Lenore Potter, Executive Director of Boys & Girls, requested an additional \$50,000 donation from the City and Beltrami County, which will be used to match a USDA Rural Development Grant. This money would help finish the community room which will be used to serve the club as well as the community.

Fairbanks commented that his constituents were unhappy about the dollars given by the County.

Murphy stated that since the County gave \$40,000 last time and the City \$10,000, the City should give more this time.

Heltzer observed that the county has not been slow to build more space to jail, etc., and should spend money to prevent crime.

Potter stated that it is important for the City to support other recreational opportunities which is for the common good of our community.

The general consensus of both the City and County was to support the Boys & Girls Club and both would consider the request at their next regularly scheduled meetings.

Trail around Lake Bemidji:

Downs stated that he believed the City has received funding from the State for \$900,000, which is the down payment of an easement through GP property. This will help toward making a trail around the lake.

Lehmann stated that the City will be extending services along Birchmont and suggested that the County should widen the street and add a bike path.

Both the City and County have provided money to the HRDC to work on developing a plan for a trail around Lake Bemidji. The County and City will work to coordinate the improvements to Birchmont Drive.

Topics for a future meeting: event center and airport.

ADJOURN

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Kay Murphy-Schuett
Deputy City Clerk