

City Council Proceedings

Work Session

July 23, 2007

Mayor Lehmann called this work session to order at 5:15 p.m. with Councilors Downs, Erickson, Hellquist, Johnson, Markeson, and Meuers present. City Engineers Brian Freeberg and Craig Gray and City Manager John Chattin were also present.

Mayor Lehmann displayed a plaque and flag presented to the City at the troop homecoming on Sunday. They will be prominently displayed at City Hall.

Joint Planning Board Administration

Mayor Lehmann introduced the Greater Bemidji Area Joint Planning Board (JPB) discussion by noting that we need to be focused on what we believe the JPB should look like in the future. Councilor Johnson commented that, with the departure of Rita Albrecht, we may want to accelerate the possibility of a JPB employee. There was discussion on office location, employees, contracting, and associated JPB issues.

Councilor Erickson asked City Planner Curt Oakes his thoughts on the possible separation of the planning and zoning functions. Mr. Oakes felt they were intertwined and should be kept together. Mayor Lehmann noted that the total 72 square mile area is affected by JPB decisions. Councilor Erickson thought that perhaps specialized employees, by JPB area, may be needed. Councilor Markeson suggested the need for staff input before any decisions are made. City Manager Chattin recommended that the JPB could hire one or two employees and contract out for the balance of the work needed. That would help them assess their need for additional staff in the future.

Possible sources of funding for JPB operations were discussed. Many options exist.

Councilor Johnson suggested that it may be time for the City to hire a Community Development position.

Mayor Lehmann asked if the JPB should be offered office space at City Hall. Councilor Downs felt that would make sense as other support services are there. Councilor Erickson also supported leasing space to the JPB but was concerned that staff may not have the time necessary to support the JPB. She noted that the City receives no current reimbursement from the JPB for services provided. The Mayor commented that how to initially fund the JPB needs to be debated.

Mr. Oakes noted that he enjoyed being a City employee and had no desire to be a JPB employee.

Additional JPB budget issues were discussed at length.

Birchmont Drive Reconstruction Update

City Engineers Brian Freeberg and Craig Gray updated the Council on the Birchmont Drive reconstruction project. Right-of-way acquisitions have delayed the project with some acquisitions headed for condemnation. Their concerns were somewhat modified in that construction costs have held somewhat steady. However, the project would be delayed until 2008.

Mayor Lehmann commented on a meeting with Matt Ketelsen, Constituent Policy Liaison for Senator Norm Coleman, where extension of water and sewer around Lake Bemidji was discussed.

Fire Substation

Fire Chief Dick Sathers was present for a discussion on a new fire substation. Mayor Lehmann noted that the Northwest Technical College (NWTC) has offered to donate land to the City for a substation. The station could serve NWTC fire training needs and they could also assist with construction. The Council felt that the project should be pursued.

Airport Grant Share Funding

How to fund the City's share of the federal match for an Airport Improvement Program grant of \$8.1 million was discussed. The match required of \$440,000 plus an additional \$160,000 for construction of an additional taxiway and utility services to support new commercial

hangar and airport users needs to be funded equally by the City and county. Mayor Lehmann noted that we need to either write a check or borrow the money. There is approximately \$750,000 in the UDAG Fund and there is \$200,000 budgeted for a public works building bond payment that will not be needed. Councilor Erickson wanted to maintain the UDAG funds as a revolving loan fund. Mr. Chattin asked that the Council designated how it wanted the UDAG monies to be used. Several alternatives for funding were explored.

Motion by Councilor Hellquist and second by Councilor Johnson to cover the City's \$300,000 commitment with the \$200,000 budgeted for public works debt payment and \$100,000 from general fund surpluses. Motion carried unanimously.

ADJOURN

Motion by Councilor Johnson and second by Councilor Downs to adjourn at 6:30 p.m. Carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



John M. Chattin
City Manager