

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Special Meeting/Work Session – April 12, 2011

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special meeting/work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Tuesday, April 12, 2011, at 7:00 p.m. in the Conference Room of City Hall, Mayor Larson presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Larson, Waldhausen, Hellquist, Albrecht, Negard, Thompson Absent: Johnson

Staff Present: Fire Chief Dave Hoefer, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Other Present: Philip Kouwe & Kent Greene – Emergency Services Consulting Intl (ESCI)

Mayor Larson stated that the purpose of the special work session was to meet the consulting firm that is doing a shared fire department study and Council was invited to give input on what is important to the City.

Dave Hoefer, Fire Chief, introduced the consultants from the firm of Emergency Services Consulting International who are conducting the shared fire service study. Their purpose this is to gather information regarding concerns and/or input from the City Council regarding the study.

Philip Kouwe stated that ESCI only does public safety consulting and their mission is to provide the best analysis for elected officials to decide how to proceed. His firm is doing 5 to 6 grant funded studies in Minnesota to look at cooperative fire service delivery. He stated that they are examining closely how the City currently delivers service and if the service delivery is where it needs to be and how it will change in 15 years. Another consideration is ISO rating which impacts service delivery. He stated that a governance and financial model will allow long-range planning to look at additional sub-stations under the existing fire department, utilizing existing fire department staff. Their study is going to focus on the options available for governance and financial and they will provide an analysis that shows what it will look like from an operational, governance and financial standpoint. Then provide the pros and cons of those models. He stated reviewed the following possible options:

- Creation of joint powers agreement;
- Creation of a fire taxing district (similar to Cloquet);
- Modification to the current contract arrangement; or
- Do nothing.

Thompson asked if the consultant had noted any deficiencies in the current system.

Kouwe responded that they are still in the process of reviewing the current system. However, he did note that the fire department covers a large geographic area with one fire station and the instability of the annual contracting makes it difficult for long-range planning.

Negard stated that the City covers EMS calls within City limits and asked if ESCI would be recommending a policy.

Kouwe responded that ESCI in the process of reviewing EMS response. However, if the fire department goes to a fire district, the services provided have to be equal for all areas. He stated that ESCI's desire is to not to turn the study into an EMS study as that is not scope of their services.

Waldhausen noted that it may be difficult to get buy-in from the rural fire as it may not be equal. Discussion continued regarding taxes.

Albrecht stated that through this process the goals of the two groups can be identified and commonalities found. She commented that if a decision is made to move to a different model, that city staff may not have the capacity or expertise to facilitate the change.

Kouwe responded that in Cloquet they contracted ESCI on an hourly basis plus expenses to assist with the process of implementation and contacted ESCI as they needed. The final presentation will be in the middle of July. ESCI will be available for a day and can meet with

core rural association. Councilmembers agreed that one meeting with all elected officials invited would be desirable.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Hellquist, seconded by Negard, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Kay M. Murphy
City Clerk