

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA
Special Meeting/Work Session – November 4, 2013

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 Monday, November 4, 2013, at 5:30 p.m. in the Conference Room of City Hall, Mayor Albrecht presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Albrecht, Meehlhause, Johnson, Olson, Erickson, Thompson Absent: Hellquist

Staff Present: City Manager John Chattin, Fire Chief Dave Hoefer, City Attorney Alan Felix, Finance Director Ron Eischens, Public Works Director Craig Gray, City Clerk Kay Murphy

Fire Research Committee: Mel Milender, Bruce Hemstad, Brian Merschman

Others Present: Mike Kelly, Curt Blumhagen

Mayor Albrecht stated that the purpose of the special work session was to have additional discussion regarding the proposed Fire District Joint Powers Agreement.

Fire Chief Hoefer stated that the Research Committee met recently and the general feeling was that further discussions regarding the “draft” joint powers agreement should be had with the City Council.

Johnson stated that he was in favor of the initial idea whereby the governance was to be made up of two bodies, City and Rural Fire Association. He suggested that a state-wide resolution to allow fire districts may have better success with the legislature.

Erickson stated concerns about the governance as proposed in the joint powers agreement. She stated that the City has 42% of the population and 1/18 vote on the governing board and 20% voice on the executive board. Erickson stated that as proposed she could not support it as she has a fiduciary responsibility to her constituents.

Milender stated that the document is not the final agreement. He commented that the Fire Research Committee met several times this past summer and there was not much representation by the City Council. He stated that when the Research Committee met in September, the Council had two concerns: 1) governance and 2) exit strategies. Milender observed that the townships have had a contract with the City and provide 45% of the funding. He noted that it was the City who brought the concept to the Rural Association for the reason of pursuing additional funding sources as well as the ability to collect “fees” from non-profits.

Kelly, Chair of Northern Township, stated that the Committee was looking toward an end product. The concept does not favor either the city or township but lowers the cost to residents dramatically.

Merschman, Bemidji Township, stated that the proposed fee schedule will reduce the amount paid by a property owner from \$103 to \$47 annually, and will generate approximately \$313,000 from non-taxable properties.

Erickson noted that she did not like the “exit strategy” as it literally makes it impossible to leave. She felt that it was a risk for the City residents and she was not in favor of committing future Council’s to this agreement.

Kelly asked if anyone had suggestions on an exit strategy or something that would make it more palatable.

Felix stated that he has not reviewed the proposed joint powers agreement. He suggested that the group needs to focus on what the legislature requires. He further commented that the final agreement may look completely different than the draft.

Johnson noted that the airport did not have a document in hand when they went to the legislature for an airport authority.

Mayor Albrecht stated that with a fire district, the Council will no longer be budgeting. She stated that typically rural townships are more conservative.

Erickson stated that “we erode our taxing authority when we set fees.”

Mayor Albrecht commented that sometimes fees are more equitable.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Johnson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kay M. Murphy
City Clerk