

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – September 26, 2016

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, September 26, 2016, 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, Hellquist, Johnson, Olson, Erickson, Larson

Staff Present: City Manager Nate Mathews, City Attorney Alan Felix, Finance Director Ron Eischens, Director of Public Works/Engineer Craig Gray, Deputy City Clerk Teresa Hanson

Others Present: Sanford Center Executive Director Jeff Kossow, Sanford Center Associate Executive Director Kristi Anderson

Mayor Albrecht stated the purpose of the work session was to receive updates on the Sanford Center and welcome the new Executive Director, Jeff Kossow.

Kossow introduced himself to Council noting he has been in the industry for 30+ years. He acknowledges the importance of meeting budget expectations, gaining support of sponsors, learning from past experiences, listening to comments and concerns from staff and citizens, growing the conference market with a “bring it home” campaign, staff growth and building rapport with part-time staff, and making sure all experiences at the Sanford Center are a good one from start to finish. With recent staffing changes, VenuWorks took the opportunity to update the organizational chart and shift some duties of its staff members. Among other things, Kossow indicated he would like to see more interaction with Council, make sure goals are met, widen the convention market and establish a maintenance plan for the facility and equipment to prepare for future needs. Kossow asked for one year, determine the progress and then judge him on those results.

Anderson reviewed the changes in the organizational chart and reported a variety of upcoming events are scheduled in the arena and conference center.

When Kossow asked Council members what their priorities are and what they expect from their partnership with VenuWorks, the following were identified and discussed:

- A comparative analysis of facilities in similar markets to determine performance and accuracy of previous feasibility studies
- Regular updates and communication regarding Advisory Board activity including financial/flash reports, scheduled events, agendas and minutes
- Stay within budget, keep costs down, minimize the deficit
- Diversify events in the arena and conference center, increase attendance and use of the facility
- Create a capital improvement and facility/equipment maintenance plan to prepare for the future
- Establish stability and consistency through leadership and staffing
- Focus on customer service

Discussion was held on further research and the establishment of a task force or committee to work with staff to address concerns and report back to Council. Issues may include addressing and resolving issues of concern; looking at long-range operations, management options and alternatives; and conducting a formal review of past financial records to determine if city/public funds were put at risk to back shows and events, which is also known as “co-pros” or co-promotions.

Consensus of Council was to establish a working committee consisting of two Councilmembers and City staff to address and resolve concerns, identify challenges and expectations, establish policies and procedures as referred to in the contract with VenuWorks, conduct a formal review of financial reports for events from 2012-2016, and possibly assist with creating by-laws for the Advisory Board. Meehlhause and Larson agreed to serve on the committee with City staff.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Meehlhause, seconded by Larson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Teresa Hanson".

Teresa Hanson
Deputy City Clerk