



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, February 26, 2013

Council Session

Item G2

**Approving Minutes of February 19, 2013 City Council Study
Session/Special Meeting**

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

February 19, 2013

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Study Session of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 100 East First Street, on February 19, 2013. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on February 13, 2013.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Vaughn Minton, Mike Paulick, John Gericke, Peg Gilbert, Mitch Nickerson, Julie Hehnke, Chuck Haase, Linna Dee Donaldson, and Bob Niemann. Councilmember Scott Dugan was absent. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Mary Lou Brown, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, City Attorney Robert Sivick, and Finance Director Jaye Monter.

INVOCATION was given by Community Youth Council member Marlena Ramirez followed by the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Mayor Vavricek introduced Community Youth Council member Marlena Ramirez and Board member Craig Garrett.

SPECIAL ITEMS:

Presentation to Restructure Fire Department Command Structure. Fire Chief Cory Schmidt reported that the City contracted with ICMA to conduct an analysis of fire operations for the Grand Island Fire Department (GIFD). Their recommendations were to: restructure administrative staff; develop a succession plan; improve fire prevention/public education programs; and utilize technology to become more efficient.

Mentioned were the following problems with the current structure: top heavy management; span of control; different work schedule; lack of communication; uniformity issues; on-call officer; and mentoring/succession planning not effective.

Chief Schmidt stated the call volume continued to rise for medical and fire. In 2000 there were 3,131 emergency requests for service and in 2012 there were 4,589 emergency requests for service which was a 47% increase in calls. He expected a continued upward trend in call volume.

The reasons the call volumes were increasing were: Baby Boomers (medical); growth of Grand Island's population (1% a year); new construction; aging commercial and residential properties; and influx of people (daytime population).

Future issues mentioned were: shift supervision will continue to be difficult; lack of uniformity; training issues; quality control may decrease; and succession planning/mentoring needs to be addressed.

Chief Schmidt stated Grand Island had reached a threshold and it was time to improve the fire department management by maintaining or improving the level of service which would require

better utilization of current resources and/or additional resources and the need for strategic management on each shift where it was most beneficial.

He listed the following three options:

- Solution #1 – Continue with current structure
- Solution #2 – Leave Division Chief position open
- Solution #3 – Reclassify three Captains to Shift Commanders

Solution #1 would continue with the current system where costs remain predictable and known track record, but current issues would persist and doesn't address future City growth.

Solution #2 would leave open the vacant Division Chief position which would save personnel costs, but remaining officers would be unable to perform all the duties and it doesn't address current or future issues.

Solution #3 would reclassify three Captains to Shift Commanders which would allow better management at shift level and improve mentoring/succession planning in line with the ICMA recommendation, but would require creating positions, testing, and additional work for Human Resources.

Explained was Shift Commanders were essentially shift supervisors. GIFD had 3 shifts, each were 24 hours long and would be a union position. Duties of a Shift Commander were: evaluate Captain's job performance; review reports for quality issues; supervises training operations for shift; coordinates activities among shifts and stations; investigates fires for origin and cause; respond to major emergencies and act as Incident Commander; act as representative for shift to upper management; act as mentor for new and aspiring Captains; facilitate succession planning; make daily staffing assignments (including coordination of time off, overtime, etc); and schedule shift activities.

The benefits of a Shift Commander were: shift supervision on a 24/7 basis; span of control – reduced; uniformity; safer work environment; mentoring and succession plan; Division Chiefs would be able to focus on their specific job duties; and they could utilize technology on emergency scenes.

The cost to change to Shift Commanders would increase by \$27,090, but by eliminating the Fire/Admin. Division Chief position, which was currently vacant due to retirement, there would be a cost savings of \$95,576.

To implement the changes the following would have to occur: create job description and test procedure to meet Civil Service rules to develop candidate list; obtain Council approval to amend the salary ordinance and FTE classifications; promote three Captains to Shift Commanders; and eliminate the Fire/Admin. Division Chief position.

In summary the shift commanders would provide better management and mentoring/succession planning would be possible. Grand Island was a growing city and needed to prepare for the future. This plan financially made good sense and implemented ICMA recommendations.

Discussion was held concerning the Fire Captains and Division Chiefs positions and how they would relate to the Shift Commanders. Chief Schmidt stated the Captains would be in charge of

a specific station where the Shift Commanders would be in charge of all four stations. Mentioned was that medical calls were the bulk of the Fire Departments work. Explained was the process of filling in for an absent Captain, compensation, and Shift Commanders being in the union. Mentioned were concerns of overtime due to three Shift Commanders instead of four and education requirements for each position level. Making any of these changes could take three to four months.

Human Resources Director Brenda Sutherland clarified the union positions.

Chief Schmidt proposed to hire a certified life safety inspector on the recommendation of ICMA study that said: "Grand Island has a very limited prevention program which has shrunk. Inspections of commercial establishments do not regularly take place."

The focus in the Fire Prevention Division was to decrease the number and severity of all fires within the City. This was typically accomplished by inspection, plan review, and public education. Most inspections were conducted by engine companies subject to emergency calls.

Currently there were 2,337 commercial properties in Grand Island and this number was growing. In 2012, 465 life safety inspections were completed. The current goal was to complete at least 1/3 yearly or 779.

Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute Section 81-502, Fire Marshal Fred Hotz had been delegated the responsibility to conduct State inspections in Grand Island city limits. State delegated inspections increased the workload tremendously in the Fire Prevention Division. Examples of State delegated inspections were: in home daycares, adult daycare centers, nursing homes, health care facilities, underground storage tanks, liquor licenses, plan reviews, etc. The City received \$44,693.72 for state inspections in Fiscal year 2011-12.

Fire Chief Schmidt stated improvements were needed because of the declining number of annual inspections completed. Engine company crews were not certified as inspectors and time was limited due to increasing call volume and training requirements. The City was growing and inspections would continue to fall further behind. In order to remain effective in fire prevention, they needed to hire one full time Life Safety Inspector in addition to the current Fire Marshal.

The benefits of an inspector would be to inspect at least 1/2 of all commercial properties annually (1,168 per year); inspections would be more uniform/efficient; the ability to schedule inspections and make the community safer; be able to improve code enforcement/prevention; and have another set of eyes in the community.

The cost of a Life Safety Inspector would be \$85,117 and would be offset by applying savings from the reorganization. This position would take over the underground tank inspections from the State (\$3,175) and enforce \$100 inspection fee schedule for all major events (concerts, exhibitions, etc.). By applying the savings from the earlier proposal, the cost of the inspector at current top pay with full benefits would be a total savings of \$10,859.

To implement the inspector position, the Fire Department would have to develop a job description and hiring procedure; request Council approval to amend the salary ordinance and FTE classifications; hire a certified Life Safety Inspector; and regularly evaluate the position for performance (goal of at least 5 inspections per work day).

In summary the FTEs would remain the same for the department; work towards the ICMA recommendation of better code enforcement/prevention; and no additional cost to the City.

Comments were made concerning engine companies continuing to do inspections in high target areas. The Life Safety Inspector position would report to the Fire Marshal but would have no support staff. No additional equipment would be needed for this position.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:41 p.m.

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

February 19, 2013

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Special Council meeting of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 100 East First Street, on February 19, 2013. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on February 16, 2013.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 8:41 p.m. The following Councilmembers were present: Vaughn Minton, Mike Paulick, Peg Gilbert, Mitch Nickerson, Julie Hehnke, Chuck Haase, Linna Dee Donaldson, and Bob Niemann. Councilmember Scott Dugan was absent and Councilmember Gericke recused himself due to a conflict of interest. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Mary Lou Brown, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, City Attorney Robert Sivick, and Finance Director Jaye Monter.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION: Motion by Gilbert, second by Niemann to adjourn to Executive Session at 8:42 p.m. for the purpose of a strategy session with respect to threatened litigation. Unanimously approved.

RETURN TO REGULAR SESSION: Motion by Gilbert, second by Niemann to return to Regular Session at 9:40 p.m. Unanimously approved.

REQUESTS AND REFERRALS:

Reconsidering the Postponement of Resolution #2013-46. City Attorney Robert Sivick explained the reasons for bringing this item forward with relation to the Police Pension Committee and Ordinance #8413 approved on October 12, 1998. Mr. Sivick stated the Police Pension Committee's authority was limited to ministerial duties set forth in Neb. Rev. Stat. §16-1017. Any additional authority must be delegated by the Council. The Committee was subordinate to the authority of the Council as the governing body of the City. Statements and actions made at recent meetings of the Committee necessitated the Council specifically setting forth the authority of the Police Pension Committee. It was recommended the Council approve Resolution #2013-46.

Mr. Sivick stated Council President Bob Niemann requested the Council reconsider its motion to postpone Resolution 2013-46 to the February 26, 2013 meeting. Human Resources Director Brenda Sutherland clarified that Resolution #2013-46 would allow the Police Pension Committee to hire outside legal counsel only with approval from the City Council.

Motion by Niemann, second by Minton to approve reconsidering the Postponement of Resolution #2013-46. Upon roll call vote, Councilmembers Minton, Gilbert, Nickerson, Hehnke, Haase, Donaldson, and Niemann voted aye. Councilmember Paulick voted no. Motion adopted.

RESOLUTIONS:

#2013-46 – Consideration of Authority of the Police Pension Committee. Motion by Haase, second by Gilbert to approve Resolution #2013-46. Upon roll call vote, Councilmembers Minton, Gilbert, Nickerson, Hehnke, Haase, Donaldson, and Niemann voted aye. Councilmember Paulick voted no. Motion adopted.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:58 p.m.

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk