



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, October 28, 2003

Council Session

Item G4

Approving Minutes of October 21, 2003 City Council Study Session

The Minutes of October 21, 2003 City Council Study Session are submitted for approval. See attached MINUTES.

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

October 21, 2003

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 October 21, 2003. Notice of the meeting was given in the Grand Island Independent on October 15, 2003.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 8:25 p.m. The following members were present: Councilmembers Meyer, Pielstick, Gilbert, Nickerson, Cornelius, Pauly, Hornady, Walker, and Haase. Councilmember Whitesides was absent. The following City Officials were present: Interim City Administrator David Springer, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, and Public Works Director Steve Riehle.

Presentation of Victim Assistance Unit by the Police Department. Police Chief Kyle Hetrick reported that the recent dissolution of the Family Violence Coalition left a void in services to victims of crime in Grand Island – Hall County. The Grand Island Police Department, the Hall County Sheriff's Office and the Hall County Attorney's office collaborated with the Nebraska Crime Commission to seek funding to develop a victim assistance program.

Nebraska state statute 81-1848 outlines the following rights of victims and witnesses of crimes:

- (1) To be informed by local law enforcement agencies and the county attorney of the final disposition of the cases. If the crime charged is a felony, the victim shall be notified whenever the defendant or perpetrator is released from custody.
- (2) To be notified that a court proceeding to which they have been subpoenaed will not go on as scheduled, in order to save the person an unnecessary trip to court.
- (3) To receive protection from harm and threats of harm arising out of their cooperation with law enforcement and prosecution efforts, and to be provided with information as to the level of protection available.
- (4) To be informed of financial assistance and other social services available as a result of being a witness or a victim of a crime, including information on how to apply for the assistance and services.
- (5) To be informed of the procedure to be followed in order to apply for and receive any witness fee to which they are entitled.
- (6) To be provided, whenever possible, a secure waiting area during court proceedings that does not require them to be in close proximity to defendants and families and friends of defendants.
- (7) To have any stolen or other personal property expeditiously returned by law enforcement agencies when no longer needed as evidence. If feasible, all such property, except weapons, currency, contraband, property subject to evidentiary analysis, and property the ownership of which is disputed, shall be returned to the person within ten days of being taken.
- (8) To be provided with appropriate employer intercession services to insure that employers of victims and witnesses will cooperate with criminal justice process in order to minimize an employee's loss of pay and other benefits resulting from court appearances.

- (9) To be entitled to a speedy disposition of the case in which they are involved as a victim or witness in order to minimize the length of time they must endure the stress of their responsibilities in connection with the matter; and
- (10) To have the family members of all homicide victims afforded all of the rights under subsections (1) to (4) and (6) to (9) and services analogous to those provided under section 81-18-47.

The Grand Island Police Department, the Hall County Sheriff's Office and the Hall County Attorney's Office have collaborated with the Nebraska Crime Commission to fund a victim assistance unit. A grant for \$37,500 had been approved to develop this needed resource in our community. This grant required a 20% match, which could be in-kind services, equipment and dollars. The grant proposal would require the City of Grand Island to hire a Victim Assistance director.

Councilmember Cornelius questioned the matching funds, whether it would be a one time match or an annual request. Chief Hetrick stated it would probably be annually. Councilmember Pielstick questioned whether the \$37,500 would cover salaries, supplies, rental space, travel, overhead, etc. Chief Hetrick stated that it would. Discussion was held with regards to what would happen to the program if it were not funded by grants. Also discussed was the counties participation.

Lewis Kent, 624 East Meves and Shellie Pointer, Executive Director of the Crisis Center spoke in support of this program.

Presentation of K-9 Unit for the Police Department. Police Chief Kyle Hetrick discussed a proposal to implement a Police Canine unit in our community. Discussions were held with regards to a canine team, utilization, K-9 policy, and costs. Chief Hetrick stated that funding sources had been made available to the department and there would be no request for additional dollars for this unit within the existing 2003-2004 budget.

Canine Costs presented were as follows:

- Animal(s) - \$4,000 to \$5,000
- Training – Tuition – No Cost
 - Nebraska State Patrol K-9 School
 - 11 Week certification
- Kennel(s) – Shelter, Slab, Fence \$2,000
- Vehicle(s) – Use existing cruiser converted to canine carrier - \$600.00 x 2
- Miscellaneous – Muzzles, Leashes, Vet, Food - \$1,200

Start-up Costs: Approximately \$15,000

Councilmember Nickerson questioned if this was a “want” or a “need”. Chief Hetrick stated it was a need. Discussed was the payback to the community, by showing the criminals that we are serious in fighting crime. Drug money confiscated within the community was returned to the community. Councilmember Walker stated he would support the K-9 Unit and that it was very important to fight the drug problem within our community. Discussion was held with regards to officer hours worked and over-time. Councilmember Meyer mentioned concerns about liability. Councilmember Haase commented on the benefits of having a K-9 Unit and questioned whether these dogs could be used in the schools. It was stated that they could.

State Patrol Trooper Buck Duis who was a canine handler was present to explain training, evaluating, and being a K-9 handler. Presented were the differences of training dogs as passive and/or aggressive

and the liability associated with it. Longevity of the animal was about 7 years. Dogs would be trained for narcotics, patrol, building searches, handler protection, conduct area searches, tracking, and evidence recovery. Trooper Duis stated he was a trainer and there would be no cost to the Police Department for the 11 weeks training of the dogs and their handlers.

Discussion was held with regards to the number of dogs, vehicles, and extra equipment that would be needed in the future. Chief Hetrick commented on fund raising for a K-9 Unit.

Discussion Concerning ½ Cent Sales Tax. Mayor Vavricek stated that this was part of the on-going discussions that would be conducted at upcoming study sessions to seek input and direction from council and the public on the proposed sales tax initiative planned for the May 11, 2004 ballot.

David Springer, Finance Director discussed the dependency of future capital spending upon increased revenues, the limitations on expanding traditional revenue sources, and the pressures, current and future, on the city's budgets.

A budget overview was presented. Mr. Springer stated capital improvement projects were not fully self funded and required support from the general fund cash reserves. Revenue growth had been flat over the last three years; a trend expected to continue. Cost of operations were up \$3.5 million over the last three years. Additional sales tax monies could be devoted to future capital projects.

Councilmember Meyer questioned how much a ½ cent sales tax would bring in. Mr. Springer stated approximately \$3.5 million a year. Several councilmember's agreed that we limit the number of projects that the sales tax could be used for. Also presented were comments from the phone survey that was conducted by councilmember's.

Mayor Vavricek commented on a utility stuffer to solicit public input regarding ideas on how to spend a ½ cent sales tax.

Lewis Kent, 624 East Meves commented on an outstanding job being done by the council in doing the right thing and being open to the public in their decisions.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk