



City of Grand Island

Tuesday, March 09, 2004

Council Session

Item G1

Approving Minutes of February 21, 2004 City Council Special Study Session (Council Retreat)

The Minutes of February 21, 2004 City Council Special Study Session (Council Retreat) are submitted for approval. See attached MINUTES.

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION (RETREAT)

February 21, 2004

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Study Session (Retreat) of the City Council of the City of Grand Island, Nebraska was conducted at Crane Meadows Nature Center, 9325 South Alda Road, on February 21, 2004. Notice of the meeting was given in the Grand Island Independent on February 14, 2004.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. The following members were present: Councilmembers Meyer, Whitesides, Pielstick, Gilbert, Nickerson, Cornelius, Pauly, Hornady, Walker, and Haase. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Gary Greer, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Public Works Director Steve Riehle, City Attorney Doug Walker, Finance Director David Springer, Police Chief Kyle Hetrick, Utilities Director Gary Mader, Human Resources Director Brenda Sutherland, Emergency Management Director Howard Maxon, .Building Department Director Craig Lewis, Fire Chief Jim Rowell, Library Director Steve Fosselman, Parks & Recreation Director Steve Paustian, and Regional Planning Director Chad Nabity.

OVERVIEW OF RETREAT:

City Administrator Gary Greer commented on the definition of “Retreat” – a quiet place to contemplate. Mentioned were policies that were to be set by council and that it was the job of Department Director’s and Administration to handle the administrative duties. Mr. Greer stated that we would not leave until we came up with goals and ½ cent ballot language.

VISION:

Mayor Vavricek commented that the challenge for a community was to continually to improve. Also mentioned were family values, strong devotion, and pride of our community. Comparisons were made from what was to what is. Key things to build on were Grand Island’s geography, agricultural, abundance of water, transportation (railroads) and four major highways. The Mayor’s vision was to seek continual community improvement for the best interest of everyone in our community.

City Administrator Gary Greer asked each councilmember to comment on why they ran for city council. Each councilmember gave a brief statement of why they ran for office.

INDIVIDUAL FUTURE GOALS FROM COUNCIL MEMBERS/MAYOR: Mr. Greer asked each councilmember what one goal they would like to achieve in their service to Grand Island. The following were their responses:

Councilmember Meyer – improve the values of City government

Councilmember Haase – completion of Heartland Events Center and National Guard Apache Helicopter Site

Councilmember Pielstick – help the people to trust City Officials and growth of the community

Councilmember Hornady – developing a spirit of community unity

Councilmember Whitesides – make sure people feel comfortable with him representing them, caring and helping the citizens in his district

Councilmember Cornelius – sense of unity and trust

Councilmember Gilbert – unity, trust, ownership of the community

Councilmember Walker – empower people to get involved in city business

Councilmember Pauly – public safety and train issues

Councilmember Nickerson – laying foundation for future planned growth in the City

Mayor Vavricek – looking back on his service and be proud of what has been accomplished, the process

Each councilmember was then asked what one thing they would like to avoid. The following were their responses:

Councilmember Whitesides – complacency

Councilmember Hornady – chaos

Councilmember Pielstick – apathy

Councilmember Haase – make sure City doesn't go broke

Councilmember Meyer – lose focus of why he is here, complacency

Councilmember Nickerson – regression into issues of no continuity

Councilmember Pauly – closed mind and becoming a rubber stamp

Councilmember Walker – un-respectfulness

Councilmember Gilbert – negativity and represent not just a small area

Councilmember Cornelius – relationship fall-outs with other entities and comments by constituents about not doing her job

Mayor Vavricek – lack of unity and respect

GOALS:

City Administrator Gary Greer reviewed the 2003-2004 Council Goals:

Quality of Life:

1. Solve Grand Island's Odor Issue (Completion in 2004)
2. Set Zoo Reuse Plan in Motion (Currently working on)
3. Develop New Softball Fields (Continue working on)
4. Develop a Recreational Vehicle Park (Continue when money is available)
5. Expand Hike & Bike Trails (Currently working on)
6. Implement Greenspace Regulations (Currently working on)

Economic Development:

1. Continue to Support Fundraising for Heartland Events Center (Currently working on)
2. Establish Long-Term Plans for Community Infrastructure, Growth and Development (Currently working on)

Community Development:

1. Consider the Benefit of Expanded City Sales Tax Revenue (Currently working on)
2. Address Affordable Housing Issues (Currently working on – Grant writing)

Communication:

1. Enhance Communication Between City Government, Elected Officials and Public (Continuous)
2. Improve City Information Technology (Currently working on a plan)

Public Health and Safety:

1. Address Health Department's Building Needs (Completed in 2003)
2. Consider Community-Oriented Policing Strategy (Implemented in 2003 and working on new ideas)
3. Police Substation in Northwest Grand Island (Currently one at St. Francis Medical Center – presence of Police Officer's more important)

OTHER MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE "PROUD LADY":

- Nebraska National Guard Apache Base site selection
- Approval of LB 840 – Economic Development Plan and the creation of a Citizen Advisory Committee
- Interstate 80 South Locust Street exit construction for completion in 2004
- Community Development Block Grant in the amount of \$350,000 awarded to the Grand Generation Center
- Water Contamination Assistance to aid affected homeowners
- Completion of the Wood River Diversion Project
- Improved dialogue for greater cooperation with the Hall County Board of Supervisors and attendance at the 2003 and 2004 City Council Retreats
- Increased Communication efforts with other state and federal officials

DEVELOPING CONSENSUS ON GOALS: Listed were the following goals of the City Council and Mayor:

- Jobs
- Public Safety
- Quality of Life – Library, Parks, Diversity of Community
- Communication
- Fire & Police Training Center (National)
- Greenspace
- Infrastructure – Water & Sewer in New Subdivisions, Utility Development
- Maintain Efficient Government - Prioritize Spending and Eliminate Duplication of Services
- Economic Development
- Shift Tax Burden
- Accessibility (Corridors)
- Fire Station
- Legislative Traffic Enforcement Issues

- Regional Hazardous Waste Site
- Youth Development
- Downtown Development
- Community Support for Nebraska National Guard Apache Helicopter Mission
- Initiate State-Wide Events
- Joint Meetings with other entities dealing with Economic Development

PRIORITIZING GOALS: The following goals were prioritized and will be brought back to council at a Study Session:

Public Safety

- “Training City” – Fire
- Fire Station
- Legislation
- Community Policing
- Domestic Violence/Abuse
- Drugs

Economic Development

- Jobs
- “Training Center”
- Downtown
- > 50,000 Population (Before April 2010)

Infrastructure

- Accessible
- Traffic
- Legislation
- Plan
- New Subdivisions

Government Efficiency

- Communication – GITV
- Duplication/Consolidate
- Cost
- Sales Tax – Shift Burden
- Information Technology

Quality of Life

- Library
- Ethnic Diversity
- Greenspace
- Softball Fields
- RV Park

- Trails
- Housing

Community

- Youth Development

Public Health

- Regional Hazardous Waste Site
- Housing
- Drugs
- Public Smoking

COMMUNICATION:

City Administrator Gary Greer commented briefly about the following issues:

- Open Meeting Laws in Nebraska – City Attorney Doug Walker briefly updated the Council concerning open meeting laws regarding e-mails
- Staff/Council Communications
- Future Communications

LUNCH WITH HALL COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:

The following Hall County Board Supervisors were present for the Joint City/County Special Study Session: Jim Eriksen, Pamela Lancaster, Bud Jeffries, Bob Humiston, and Marla Connelly County Clerk. Hall County Supervisor Chairwoman Pam Lancaster updated the Council on the New Jail Planning & Design Final Report. Discussion was held concerning the proposed site and Federal Standards by which jails must be built.

SALES TAX DISCUSSION:

City Administrator Gary Greer presented a PowerPoint presentation concerning the sales tax issues. Recommended was to use \$2,000,000 of the \$4,000,000 estimated ½ cent sales tax funds for property tax relief, sales tax not to be used for operational or personnel expenditures, and funds be allowed for future projects and growth. Reviewed were current projects and estimated costs of each.

It was recommended to suspend the Broadwell and 3rd Street underpass project and railroad noise reduction project. Mr. Greer encouraged a Railroad Corridor Study to be broadened to include re-routing the rail lines around the city.

SALES TAX BALLOT:

City Administrator Gary Greer presented the elements of the ballot and recommended that council repeal Resolution #2002-270 dated August 27, 2002 and pass a new resolution that would be specific with the wording in the ballot language for May 11, 2004, Primary Election. Discussion was had concerning including property tax relief wording in the ballot language.

Proposed language was to include property tax relief, Fire Department facilities, Police Department facilities, Library facilities, Parks and Recreation facilities, Senior/Grand Generation facilities and infrastructure.

Councilmember Pielstick requested that this ballot language be brought forward to the Study Session on March 2, 2004 and change the meeting date of March 9, 2004 to March 8, 2004 so Council could attend the Annual Chamber Banquet. After a brief discussion it was the consensus of the Council to leave the meeting date of March 9, 2004 for final approval of the Sales Tax ballot resolution.

WRAP UP:

Mayor Vavricek and several Councilmembers complimented City Administrator Gary Greer and staff on a great retreat. Mayor closed with a poem about moving forward in our community.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 2:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

RaNae Edwards
City Clerk