



# **City of Grand Island**

**Tuesday, January 23, 2007**

**Council Session**

## **Item G2**

**Approving Minutes of December 16, 2007 City Council Study Session**

**Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards**

## OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

### CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

#### MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

January 16, 2007

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 January 16, 2007. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on January 10, 2007.

Mayor Margaret Hornady called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Councilmember's Pielstick, Walker, Cornelius, Gericke, Brown, Gilbert, Whitesides, Haase, and Meyer. Councilmember Nickerson was absent. The following City Officials were present: City Administrator Gary Greer, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Finance Director David Springer, and City Attorney Dale Shotkoski.

INVOCATION was given by Associate Pastor Alan Davis, Independent Bethel Baptist Church, 1223 East 6th Street followed by the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

MAYOR COMMUNICATION: Mayor Hornady commented that the City Council had received an invitation from EDC to fly to Atchinson, Kansas to look at an ethanol plant similar to the one being proposed here in Grand Island.

Discussion Concerning Amendments to Chapter 34 of the Grand Island City Code Relative to Telecommunications Occupation Tax. Paul Briseno, Assistant to the City Administrator reported that at the request of council from the December 19, 2006 City Council meeting this topic was brought back to a Study Session to discuss the amendments to Chapter 34 of the Grand Island City Code Relative to Telecommunications Occupation Tax.

Mr. Briseno reviewed the history of the occupation tax for telephone services which started back in 1958 with a population of approximately 25,742. Today the population was well over 45,000. In 2002 the percentage of calls received in the 911 center from mobile phones were 14%. Since 2002 the percentage had drastically increased to over 50%. Telephone occupational tax dollars had decreased throughout the years due to the number of landlines decreasing.

The 911 Call Center and Emergency Management Department were in need of extensive software and equipment upgrades to meet the current and changing demands of technology. Reviewed were the 911/Emergency Management capital needs such as: warning sirens, radio channels and control stations, backup 911 Center, dispatchers, computers, 911 mapping, 911 radio consoles, expansion and renovation, vehicle, generator, and radio combiner totaling \$1,415,744.

The amendment of the telephone occupational tax ordinance to include mobile phones would generate revenue to offset the increased work created by mobile phones. It would also allow the Emergency Management Department to purchase equipment that would eliminate deficiencies and increase safety of Hall County citizens. The proposed ordinance would add mobile telecommunications services as subject to the occupational tax. Expected revenues from the occupational fee would be approximately \$450,000.

Discussion was held regarding the timeline if the surcharge was implemented. Larry Smith, Interim Emergency Management Director stated they were currently working with the mapping at a cost of \$29,000. Currently department's such as rural fire, sheriff, and police were on one radio channel. Communication between departments would be enhanced with the mobile surcharge.

City Administrator Gary Greer commented that in 2003-2004 it was discovered that the phone companies had not been collecting the correct amount and since then the problem had been corrected.

Reviewed was the Emergency Management budget. Currently the city was looking at a deficit of \$339,202 for 2007. Questioned was whether the phone companies could increase their fees. Mr. Greer stated this did not allow them to increase their fees and council could stipulate that in the ordinance.

It was the intent of City Administration to increase the FTE's in the Emergency Management Department by two in next year's budget. Track phones were discussed in which they were also charged the surcharge fee.

The recommended occupation tax to the City would equal 3% of the gross receipts from the legally established basic monthly charges collected for local exchange telephone service to subscribers within the City.

Discussion was held concerning where the additional surcharge fees would go. The current surcharge fees were going to the City's General Fund and the purposed additional fee would be included in the General Fund. Concerns were brought forward by the council wanting the money to go directly to the 911 Center and improvements needed.

Scott Arnold, Chairman of the Hall County Board, 412 North Custer mentioned the County did not have the opportunity to levy a surcharge fee. The interlocal allowed for a 50/50 split between the county and the city which would affect the counties ability to pay because they would not be able to levy an extra fee. City Administrator Gary Greer stated the Interlocal Committee would need to determine the budget and if there needed to be a change in the 50/50 split.

It was recommended that this ordinance be brought back before council at the next regular meeting of January 23, 2007.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

RaNae Edwards  
City Clerk