



# City of Grand Island

Tuesday, March 08, 2011

Council Session

## Item G2

**Approving Minutes of March 1, 2011 City Council Study Session**

Staff Contact: RaNae Edwards

CITY OF GRAND ISLAND, NEBRASKA

MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

March 1, 2011

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 March 1, 2011. Notice of the meeting was given in the *Grand Island Independent* on February 24, 2011.

Mayor Jay Vavricek called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following Councilmember's were present: Larry Carney, Bob Niemann, Kirk Ramsey, Peg Gilbert, Mitch Nickerson, Linna Dee Donaldson, Scott Dugan, Randy Gard, and John Gericke. Councilmember Chuck Haase was absent. The following City Officials were present: Interim City Administrator/Finance Director Mary Lou Brown, City Clerk RaNae Edwards, Interim City Attorney Jason Eley, Interim Public Works/Utilities Director Gary Mader and Public Works Engineer Terry Brown.

INVOCATION was given by Councilmember Niemann followed by the PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

MAYOR COMMUNICATION: Mayor Vavricek introduced Community Youth Council members Daniel Carlson and Brandon Pfeifer. Recognized were the Grand Island Senior High wrestling team and coach for the State Championship Team Title for Class A and individual medals won.

Discussion Concerning Commission of Industrial Relations (CIR). Human Resources Director Brenda Sutherland reported that 74% of all regular status employees with the City were represented by a union. Seven unions represented these employees and those agreements would expire on September 30, 2011.

Ms. Sutherland gave a history of the CIR. The CIR was created in 1947 originally for public utility employees. In 1969 it was expanded to all public employees. Any public employee whether represented by a union or not has the right to go to the CIR. The five member commission is appointed by the Governor with legislative approval and serve a six year term.

Councilmember Scott Dugan was present at 6:30 p.m.

CIR orders are "binding on all parties involved and shall be deemed to be the same force and effect as like orders entered by a district court" according to State Statue 48-819. The Commission handles three types of cases: 1) Wages – negotiations reach impasse; 2) Representation – petition to be recognized as bargained for by a labor group or union. A certification election and vote of the employees; and 3) Other – unfair labor practices.

Wage Cases:

- State Statue 48-818 describes the authority

- CIR can determine two parts in a wage case: Array of Comparable Employers and Employee Compensation (wages & benefits)
- Overall compensation is required to be comparable to same/similar work or working conditions
- Array is based on size and proximity – a town no more than twice the size, or no less than half the size

Discussion was held on the array of cities used for comparables. Areas of comparability were: pay scale, personal leave & holidays, medical leave, bereavement leave, vacation, comp. time, overtime, Health Insurance, uniform allowance, and pension contribution.

Explained was the difference between Defined Benefit Plan and Defined Contribution Plan. Defined Benefit Plan tells employee that after they retire there is a set amount. Defined Contribution Plan is a fund where employee and employer set money aside for employee's retirement.

Proposed legislation at the state level for 2011 was reviewed. Presented were nine different bills before the legislature.

Robert Meyer, 648 East Memorial Drive spoke that both sides needed to negotiate in good faith and felt CIR should be a last resort. He stated CIR was a good thing as they looked at everything on both sides.

Legislative and Lobbyist Discussion. Human Resources Director Brenda Sutherland reported that there were many legislative considerations before the Nebraska Legislature. Reviewed was the current practice the City used for Legislative Policy. Mentioned were the major issues facing the cities: State Aid to Cities, occupation tax revenue, CIR, Horseracing, Defined benefits retirement plan for firefighters, and Firefighter scheduling. Pros and Cons were presented concerning hiring a lobbyist.

Robert Meyer, 648 East Memorial Drive spoke in opposition of hiring a lobbyist and stated part of the City Administrator's job description was to represent the City in the Nebraska Legislature.

Comments were made by Council regarding the importance of being involved with the State Senators. Pros and cons of hiring a lobbyist were mentioned. Mayor Vavricek commented on our current lack of legislative policy and the importance of having a lobbyist to represent the City of Grand Island. Mentioned were Request for Proposal's that had been received for hiring a lobbyist.

Council took a break at 8:06 p.m. and reconvened at 8:18 p.m.

Discussion Concerning Closing the Elm Street/Union Pacific Railroad Crossing. Interim Public Works Director Gary Mader reported that staff had been working through the railroad quiet zones and found a cost saving of approximately \$250,000. Introduced was Public Works Project Manager Scott Gripenstroh who gave a PowerPoint presentation on Phase I of the Quiet Zone Improvements.

Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) requested that the quiet zone project at Walnut and Elm Streets upgrade the sidewalk crossing panels on the siding tracks that serve the Peavey Elevator. UPRR also requested that the project at Walnut and Elm Streets fill in the area between the existing street surfacing and the sidewalks with crossing panels.

Costs (Phase I):

- |                                            |           |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------|
| • Elm Street Wayside Horns                 | \$228,800 |
| • Walnut Street Wayside Horns              | \$219,500 |
| • Pine Street Supplemental Safety Measures | \$ 78,900 |
| • Oak Street Supplemental Safety Measures  | \$ 63,000 |

Total Costs for Phase I	\$590,200
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Cost to Close Elm Street:

- |                                            |                 |
|--------------------------------------------|-----------------|
| • Close Elm (estimate)                     | up to \$20,000* |
| • Walnut Street Wayside Horns              | \$219,500       |
| • Pine Street Supplemental Safety Measures | \$78,900        |
| • Oak Street Supplemental Safety measurers | \$63,000        |

Total Costs for Phase I	\$381,400 (\$208,800 savings)
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\*Assumes \$40,000 contributions from NDOR, UPRR and Gavilon (Peavey)

Mentioned was that Elm Street had the least number of vehicles compared to Walnut Street, Pine Street, Oak Street, Broadwell Avenue, Lincoln Avenue and Eddy Street. Pros and cons of closing Elm Street were presented.

Robert Meyer, 648 East Memorial Drive commented on the number of years the City had been working on the quiet zones. He spoke in opposition of closing Elm Street. Jim Spiels, representing Gavilon Grain (Peavey) spoke in support of closing Elm Street. Billy Rapp, 1221 North Beal spoke in opposition of closing Elm Street.

Discussion was held regarding a comprehensive traffic study of Elm, Walnut, Pine and Oak Streets and closing more crossings than just Elm Street. Comments were made by Council of the importance of moving forward with this project.

Mr. Griepenstroh stated to get a grade separation at Broadwell Avenue the City would need to close Lincoln Street, but the Nebraska Department of Roads and UPRR would pay for 90% of the cost. It was mentioned that closing Elm Street would not benefit any other possible grade separation project.

Police Captain Pete Kortum answered questions concerning accidents on Elm Street crossing. He stated there were none and closing Elm Street would not be an issue for the Police Department.

Community Redevelopment Authority (CRA) would contribute \$140,000 to Phase I. with the City contributing \$160,000. Interim City Administrator Mary Lou Brown commented on Phase II. The City was researching funding and moving forward with it. The use of the Transportation Committee was mentioned.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 9:13 p.m.

RaNae Edwards  
City Clerk