

Council Chambers
Ely, Minnesota
Tuesday, March 31, 2009
6:00 P.M. Regular Monthly Ely City Council
Study Session

Regular Monthly Ely City Council Study Session was called to order at 6:00 P.M. by Mayor Roger J. Skraba.

PRESENT: Council members Debeltz, Nikkola, Omerza, Salerno, Shedly, Zupec, Mayor Skraba (7)

ABSENT: None (0)

Council member Shedly requested that the following addition be added to tonight's study session agenda: VI. New Business, Item #1 - Boundary Waters Blues Festival; Mayor Skraba requested the following addition: VI. New Business, Item #2 – Ely Chamber of Commerce. Council members concurred with requested additions to agenda.

Police Chief Manning presented Council members with a COPS Hiring Recovery Program Overview, notifying the availability of funding under the COPS Hiring Recovery Program, with grants being accepted through April 14, 2009. Police Chief noted that the City of Ely would probably qualify for this program, which consists of police officer being retained at an entry level salary for three years, with the City then having to pick up this individual and pay the going salary, for at least one year. Current Police Chief informed Council members that he is still looking at the probability of retiring from the City sometime in 2009; current Police Officer William Hawley will be deployed this coming fall, and an additional officer will be needed by the Ely Police Department. Council member Nikkola noted that with the Chief of Police ready to retire, and there being other senior officers in the current department, the City of Ely could probably use this additional officer. * Council consensus was to place this issue on the April 7th Regular Ely City Council Meeting Agenda, for discussion and consideration of this entry level position.

Council member Omerza reported on behalf of the Ely Public Library Board: at the last Board Meeting options were discussed as to the replacement of former Library Clerk who had retired this past February. Due to staffing issues the Board is recommending that a 32 hour per week employee be retained in that position, to replace the 40 hour per week employee that had recently retired. Additional staffing is needed due to the excess hours the Librarian is now working and also to fill in for vacation replacements in that department. Council member Nikkola recommended that this request be brought before the Employee Relations Committee and union negotiating process, but that the City should wait on hiring any employee until the City sees the financial direction it will be going in the coming months. He also noted that entry level positions are to be discussed with all bargaining units in negotiations, and that the Council needs to get together and make a stand on this issue. Librarian Rachel Heinrich informed the Council that if a 32 hour employee is not put in place the library will have to cut current days and hours they

are open, recommending that the Council start the process for hiring an additional employee as soon as possible. Council member Nikkola stated that the City might be cutting service hours in other departments as well in the future. Mayor Skraba noted that the State House came out with a new budget proposal today addressing LGA, and that the City still does not know what cuts are going to be made – he feels the Council needs to look at the 2010 budget for these reductions if necessary. He questioned whether the Council is doing justice to the public in prematurely cutting services at this time. Council member Nikkola cautioned Council members that the City needs to do what is necessary to get ahead right now financially, and there are opportunities to cut costs. Council member Omerza noted that by cutting the Library Clerk position from 40 to 32 hours, she feels that is a cost cutting saving measure. There needs to be three persons staffing the Ely Public Library with the current schedule. Council member Shedly questioned whether city bargaining units have been approached to open up contracts, as he feels changes need to be made in employee starting points regarding entry level positions for new hires. Mayor Skraba noted that the Legislature is sending all kinds of mixed signals regarding LGA but the City does not know where we stand at this time. Council member Salerno also stated that the Council has to move forward in getting budgets in order; agrees that the library is an asset to the entire community and outlying areas, but that a decision needs to be made at next Tuesday's Council meeting. Matter of information.

Ely City Council Members met on March 21, 2009 for an Ely City Council Budget Retreat. All council members were in attendance at this meeting, with Council members noting that it was a good session, thanking City Accounting Consultant Mary Lee Erickson and EADA Executive Director Nancy Larson for their contributions. It was noted that "homework" to be completed by Council members is due by the April 14, 2009 Budget Retreat continuation.

Clerk-Treasurer Boese had placed City Employee Handbook on tonight's agenda for review by Council members. Council member Salerno recommended that the Employee Relations Committee be tasked with going through the handbook and making recommendations for any changes to the Council for action. Council member Nikkola recommended that all Council members review and submit any "markups" to the City Attorney's Office by Thursday, May 7th, as this issue will be placed on the May 14th ER Committee Agenda. Council members concurred with recommendation.

Ely City Council Adopted Goals and Objectives was placed on tonight's agenda as a standing item. Matter of information.

Civil Enforcement Update was placed on tonight's agenda as a standing item. Civil Enforcement Officer George Burger presented Council members with a status update on civil enforcement process, noting that all is going well since the implementation of this program. Matter of information.

Mike Jankovec and Mary Cich requested placement on tonight's agenda regarding the 2009 Boundary Waters Blues Festival. Council member Salerno commended Mike

Jankovec for his efforts in volunteering to assist animal rescue in the Grand Forks flooding area.

Mike Jankovec informed the Council members that he would like to put to rest the following rumors now circulating regarding the upcoming 2009 Boundary Waters Blues Festival;

1. the festival is not going to be relocated to Giants Ridge;
2. the festival is not cancelled for 2009

He noted that the sound engineer for festival checked out the Hidden Valley Recreation Area and that current power installation would be a long stretch for where stage area would be; drainage problem in performance area; parking in Leustek and DNR pits are dangerous. Above issues along with various fees to the DNR, property deposits, bonds/license fees, liquor license application through the Town of Morse, all seem to pose a problem for this venue. The site currently being looked at is 7th and Miner's Drive East, South Side of Miner's Drive, parking on the Northside, with specific area being East of Irresistible Ink where bermed, focusing brunt of sound facing Northwest. Council member Nikkola questioned whether power is necessary there, with City Operations Director reporting that power is already down there. He has no operational issues, feeling that there would be more police and fire department issues. Council members expressed their support of the idea of holding the festival in town, with Mayor Skraba questioning the location of camping on this property. Mike Jankovec noted that they would be asking to allow camping at the end of the performance area, across Miner's Drive on the Northside. The site will all be contained and fenced off. Festival hours normally end approximately 10:30 P.M., but he would be looking at ending each night at 10:00 P.M., possibly going later if rain delays performances. The area will not be completely shut down, there will be ample security provided along with Morse/1st responders who have assisted in this event for many years. Liquor sales will be confined to a separate area by licensed bar tenders. Sunday would be clean up day. City Attorney cautioned members that the City does have a purchase agreement in place with Duluth Metals, and she would recommend that they be contacted regarding this proposed festival. Council member Sheddy stated that Duluth Metals are good neighbors. Council members requested that Mike Jankovec report back to the Council on the following:

1. working with Police and Fire Departments
2. definite hours of the festival (Mayor Skraba noted that he would not want to see the music going too late in that area)
3. liquor license permit requirements / gambling permit

Council member Sheddy also requested that the official ad placed for the Boundary Waters Blues Festival also include a list of local campgrounds, motels, restaurants in Ely. It was the consensus of the Council that a meeting be scheduled between the Clerk-Treasurer, City Operations Director, Police Chief, Fire Chief, Mike Jankovec, Mary Cich, to identify issues that need to be addressed regarding above proposed site for the 2009 Boundary Waters Blues Festival, with City Attorney Kelly Klun offering to schedule such meeting. A full report will be made to the Council at their April 7th regular council meeting. Mikey Jankovec thanked the Council and Ely Nordic Association for consideration of the Hidden Valley Recreation site; also to Aaron Leustek for his assistance while discussing Hidden Valley site.

Mayor Skraba informed Council members that the Ely Chamber of Commerce is looking at Ely hosting the Summer Olympics in 2016. Ely is a destination opportunity with all kinds of talking points and at this time Chicago, Rio De Janeiro, Tokyo, Madrid are submitting bids, but believes the committee should choose Ely, Minnesota. There is a 255 page Olympic Games Impact Statement that must be completed. Mayor Skraba complimented the Ely Chamber of Commerce for their good work in putting together this promotion.

Moved by Omerza supported by Salerno, that the regular study session adjourn.
Carried. Adjournment at 7:05 P.M.

Patricia M. Wellvang
Deputy Clerk
City of Ely