

ARLINGTON CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 4, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m., Mayor Czech presiding.

Members present: Mayor Czech, Borchert, Reetz, Voight, Wills

Members absent: Griep

Also Present: Administrator Krueger, City Attorney Arneson, Street Supt. Thomes, Jim Kreft, Mike Vrklan, Dwight Grabitske, Greg Goblirsch, Robin Johnson, John Zaske, Larry Sorenson, Deputy Clerk Tesch, Kurt Menk

Motion by Voight, seconded by Reetz, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the agenda with the following addition:

9.5) Possible Assessments.

Motion by Reetz, seconded by Wills, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes from the November 6, Special Closed November 13, and November 20, 2006 meetings as corrected.

Motion by Voight, seconded by Borchert, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the bills as presented.

Sesquicentennial Chairman Dwight Grabitske and Historical Society Financial Officer Greg Goblirsch presented the final report regarding the Sesquicentennial Celebration. Grabitske complimented everyone who helped with the celebration. He gave a breakdown of expenses (\$70,334.22) and revenues (\$71,093.05). He stated that \$3,500 was being given back to the Chamber to be used for future parades; \$4,800 was being given to the Historical Society to be used towards the restoration of the old fire hall building project; \$1,046 was being set aside to cover the costs of the monument for the time capsule; and \$99 was set aside as postage so the remaining Sesquicentennial T-shirts could be sent to Afghanistan. Grabitske commented that \$758.83 was the remaining balance after all expenses and donations were taken care of. It was the committee's recommendation to have frames made for the existing pictures in the Community Center or have more pictures made. Goblirsch stated that it is their intent to go back to the committee that handled the pictures for the Community Center originally. Mayor Czech thanked Councilmember Borchert for the donation of the time capsule and also for getting the monument at cost for the City. Mayor Czech commended Dwight Grabitske for all his time and work with the Celebration.

Street Supt. Thomes commented that due to the cold weather the ice rinks are just about ready for skaters. It is his intention to have the warming house open for the weekend, which is approximately 2 weeks ahead of schedule. He stated that 4 applicants (3 students and same individual from last year) had applied for the skating rink attendant position. He was recommending Robert Sauter, who was the attendant last year, for the position.

Motion by Voight, seconded by Wills, and passed by unanimous vote to hire Robert Sauter as the skating rink attendant for the 2006-2007 season at the part-time hourly rate of \$8.75.

Administrator Krueger and Supt. Thomes spoke briefly on the 2006 Street Surfacing Improvements-Final Assessments. Thomes stated that both he and Engineer Bittner reviewed the work done at the 3 properties (105 W. Brooks St., 302 NW 2nd Ave., 312 E. Baker St.) that had brought questions to the public hearing held at the previous meeting. The property owners were talked to. It was Engineer Hawbaker's recommendation to the City to have the contractor re-do the work in spring at the city's expense because the contractor should have done a better job.

Motion by Reetz, seconded by Wills, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the recommendation from Engineer Hawbaker to fix the curb and gutter for the above 3 properties at the city's expense.

Mayor Czech recessed the regular meeting to hold a public hearing.

At 7:00 p.m. Mayor Czech called to order the public hearing regarding the Truth and Taxation for the City of Arlington property taxes payable in 2007. It was noted that Robin Johnson, John Zaske, and Larry Sorenson were present with questions. The questions asked were related to property valuations, which is controlled by the County Assessor, not the City. Administrator Krueger then explained that the preliminary 2007 Budget was basically a wish list for the upcoming year for each department (items they would like to have, but do not necessarily need), plus some other unknowns such as cost for health insurance, trends in fuel costs and natural gas costs, etc., therefore the proposed tax levy was higher (13.9%). He stated that once the proposed tax levy is set in September, it can only be lowered and the City is in the process of eliminating items from each department to get the tax levy down for 2007 (approximately at 7.783% overall with the general levy at 4.82%). Administrator Krueger gave the breakdown of how they were able to lower the proposed 2007 tax levy. He stated that the Council was involved this year in the budget process by holding numerous committee meetings and working with each department. The Council was pleased with the reduction achieved.

Mayor Czech adjourned the public hearing and reconvened the regular meeting.

Discussion continued on the proposed 2007 Budget. Administrator Krueger commented that for the most part the changes had been made from the committee meetings, excluding possible changes to employee salaries and the clothing allowance for the Police Department. Wills was opposed to the additional \$300 clothing allowance. Mayor Czech tabled this discussion until the next regular meeting.

Deputy Clerk Tesch presented a list of potential properties to be assessed. She explained that the list consisted of people who were either delinquent in paying their utility bills or EMT reimbursements to the City. She stated that these individuals had been notified and were given until December 15th to pay in full or their property taxes would be assessed.

Attorney Arneson updated the Council on his research regarding the legality of contracting out for police services. He re-read the City Charter and found that the police department is actually included in it and if the City wants to contract out for police service it will have to go through the process of amending the Charter. He commented that there are State laws that allow cities to contract for police service either through another city or the Sheriff's department. However, because a Charter exists and covers police service, the State laws do not apply (Charter over rules State laws). Arneson explained the 2 different processes to change the Charter:

- 1) By an election of the voters, which requires a 5% petition of the number of voters who voted in the last general election; or by a 4/5 vote of the Council (for 4th Class cities-classified by population, which Arlington is) with the Mayor's approval, the Council can initiate the Charter amendment issue and then it goes to the public to vote on either at the next general election or a special election held specifically for this purpose and must pass by 51% of the vote (not simple majority).
- 2) By forming a Charter Commission and then the City must adopt an Ordinance changing the Charter. He explained that the Commission must consist of no less than 7 or no more than 15 voters of the City of Arlington who are appointed by a District Court Judge. The Commission then studies the issue at hand (under a specified timeline-can be a long drawn out process) and decides if an amendment should be made. If the Commission's findings indicate that an amendment is warranted, an Ordinance amending the Charter is presented to the Council for approval, which must be approved unanimously by all 5 Councilmembers and the Mayor.

He indicated that either process will take a minimum of 6 months or longer, which gives the City plenty of time to review the issue at hand and cannot be done in a month's time. Voight questioned how much coverage is actually provided to the City right now (City is already paying for through taxes). Arneson commented that he

really couldn't say as he has a limited perception of the department, but felt there was a considerable amount of drive thru's and very good mutual aid assistance happening. Mayor Czech commented that the Sheriff's department has officers in town every Saturday night, plus during the County Fair. Reetz pointed out that the Sheriff's Department has indicated that they will not worry about stray dogs, public nuisances or other ordinance violations within the City if they were providing contracted police services. Voight questioned if the City could just have a Chief of Police and still contract out additional police services. Attorney Arneson commented that there are quite a few gray areas with that scenario (defining what constitutes a department, would Charter still need to be amended). He stated that an Attorney General's opinion could be obtained on the issue.

Motion by Voight, seconded by Borchert, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the annual Gambling Permit for the Pheasants Forever organization.

The Council reviewed the November Building Permit report from P&Z Administrator.

Mayor Czech asked the Council for permission to proclaim Friday, December 8th as Dwight & Pat Grabitske day in recognition of their time and work they put into the Sesquicentennial Celebration.

Motion by Reetz, seconded by Borchert, and passed by unanimous vote to proclaim Friday, December 8, 2006 as Dwight & Pat Grabitske day.

Reetz commented on the most recent Fire Department Officer's meeting. The department was asking for some new updated water maps that included all the new developments and showed where all the hydrants were located. He stated that the department was also asking for permission to get training on the portable generator (in old ambulance and stored at the wastewater treatment facility) and also be allowed to use it for calls (out of town). The third item the department inquired on was to be able to use the generator at the old city office building to run the fire department during emergencies. Mayor Czech suggested bring this back at the next regular meeting. Administrator Krueger suggested having the Utility Committee discuss this at their next meeting, before the next Council meeting. Wills commented that at the meeting it was stated that there will not be a FEMA grant available this year. He added that the department will be eligible for a Minnesota Valley Electric grant in February 2007 and is looking into a grant through Hamburger Helper Corporation.

Mayor Czech recessed the regular meeting and called the closed meeting to order.

Minutes Incomplete – See Council Folder for Complete Information

The Council discussed employee wages. It was decided to give certain employees a ½ step increase, 1 employee a 2 step increase and the remaining employees a 1 step increase, plus all employees are to receive a 2% COLA. It was also decided to not pay the City Administrator's health insurance premiums 100%.

Mayor Czech adjourned the closed meeting and reconvened the regular meeting.

Motion by Wills, seconded by Borchert, and passed by unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting.

Administrator David L. Krueger

Mayor David Czech