



## **MINUTES**

### **Committee of the Whole**

The Committee of the Whole met on Tuesday, February 7, 2012 in the City Hall Council Chambers, 30 West Central Street, Chippewa Falls, WI. The meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. by Council President CW King.

**Committee Members Present:** Brian Flynn, CW King, Jane Lardahl, Bill Hicks, and George Adrian.

**Also Present:** Mayor Greg Hoffman, Attorney Bob Ferg, Finance Manager/Treasurer Lynne Bauer, Captain of Police John Liddell, Director of Public Works/City Engineer/Utilities Manager Rick Rubenzer, Parks & Recreation Director Dick Hebert, and City Clerk Bridget Givens.

#### **1. Review City organizational structure and department needs.**

King opened the meeting by stating that the City is anticipating a number of retirements this year and as such, we have the opportunity to look at our structure. King further advised that the purpose of this meeting is to gain feedback and ideas, including the possibility of combining departments and/or functions.

Adrian suggested that the Water Department and Street Department could be combined as they utilize much of the same equipment and already work closely together. This could also provide the opportunity to sell the Water Department building on River Street. King shared that combining these departments may also take some of the burden off the Engineering Department. Rubenzer advised that this topic has been discussed at previous Public Works and Plan Commission meetings, agrees that the departments are closely related, but has not reviewed the job descriptions at this point.

Flynn advised that with the end of collective bargaining, we may have opportunities for cross-training that we did not have before. We have already reduced our local government and are running lean, but we should continue to explore the idea of shared services within the City, County, and School District.

Lardahl questioned if now would be the time to sit down to work out the options. King advised that we are not to an implementation phase yet as we need to get a further sense of what we can do and what our options are. King further stated that as he sees it, there are three main groups in the City, listed as follows:

1. Public Safety Department – Police/Fire
2. City Hall/Library
3. Water/Streets/Parks Department

King further advised that he is not pushing to merge the Police and Fire Departments, but we may see a substantial number of retirements in these departments and should consider the

issues of overlap. Attorney Ferg advised that according to state law, councils cannot combine the Police and Fire Departments; however, the Police and Fire Commission could appoint one individual to oversee both departments.

Hicks supported the idea of combining the Water and Street Departments if it enhances our services and also liked the idea of the three major city groups.

King stated that he sees major changes for the library as it moves towards more of an e-facility. He advised that the library has done a good job of this by incorporating electronic checkout, etc. We are in the middle of a change as we move to more electronic access and the future needs of library expansion would be predicated on the need for paper copies of books.

Lardahl expressed concern with combining the Parks Department as she does not feel it is a good fit based upon conversations with donors. Donors would like to see the park remain a separate entity so when donations are made, they are going directly to the park.

The Mayor stated that 2012 will be a unique year as we see a number of retirements in long-time positions. This should be considered an opportunity to look at the departments and make decisions. We have cut approximately 30 positions in the last 10 years and we are still getting the job done for which the Mayor commended the Department Heads.

The Mayor then advised the Committee of the need for a decision in relation to the Dispatch Center. Liddell stated that we will have to either update the system or add personnel if we do not merge with the County. The Mayor shared the idea that we may want to outsource this type of work and we should explore all options. Hicks stated that it became a cost issue to consolidate with the County and all the different cost factors would need to be evaluated in order to make a decision.

The Mayor also expressed concern with the structural integrity of the South Side Fire Station and advised that a decision regarding that building will also need to be made.

Hebert brought up the point that the handbook will probably impact the number of retirements and questioned if we would wait to see how many retired. King stated that we cannot wait; we will look at where the most retirements will probably take place and proceed accordingly.

King will propose to Council the formulation of an ad hoc committee made up of the Mayor and Council Members to discuss long-range planning, the Dispatch Center, and South Side Fire Station with input taken from the Department Heads and final recommendations made to Council.

There was no further discussion.

## **2. Adjournment**

**Motion by Lardahl/Hicks to adjourn at 5:50 p.m. All present voting aye, motion carried.**

Submitted by:

Bridget Givens, City Clerk