

SPECIAL MEETING DICKINSON CITY COMMISSION AUGUST 30, 2005

I. CALL TO ORDER

President Dennis W. Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:40 AM.

II. ROLL CALL

President were: President Dennis W. Johnson, Commissioners Joe Frenzel, Bill Reitmeier and Rhonda Dukart. Carson Steiner joined the meeting at approximately 10:30 AM

The purpose of the meeting was a preliminary budget presentation session and discussion.

Chamber of Commerce Presentation:

Sund reported that he asked Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Richard Wardner to address the City Commission regarding the Chamber of Commerce request for \$30,000 from the Hospitality Tax Fund in 2006. Mr. Wardner gave a presentation regarding the financial condition of the Chamber of Commerce and the future needs of the organization. He said they currently have over 500 members. He also said they have a \$15,000 shortfall in their budget. He said they are requesting \$30,000 and although they referenced the Hospitality Tax in the request, they do not have any preference regarding the source of the money. Mr. Wardner listed many of the recent accomplishments of the Chamber of Commerce such as assisting with efforts to save the local Social Security Administration Office, re-establishment of a Small Business Development Center in Dickinson, and achieving a reliable long-term revenue source for the Sunrise Youth Bureau. He said his salary of \$27,000 is not sufficient to hire a qualified, dedicated person to replace him and he plans to retire at the end of 2006.

Johnson said this need should be a commitment of the Chamber of Commerce members, not the city government. Wardner responded that the Chamber of Commerce struggles to get businesses to join the organization at the current dues level. He said if dues were increased to cover their needs, they would likely lose some members. Johnson said he thinks this would be viewed by the public as another government subsidy to a business organization.

Terri Thiel of the Dickinson Convention and Visitors Bureau addressed the City Commission and said while she understands the plight of the Chamber of Commerce, she does not believe the Hospitality Tax is the proper funding source for this need. Diana Knutson, President of the Dickinson Convention and Visitors Bureau Board echoed Ms. Thiel's comments. She suggested the City look to other sources. Knutson and Thiel described ways the CVB and the Chamber work together to improve services. Sund suggested two alternatives to using Hospitality Tax Funds should the City Commission agree to grant the request. He said the Chamber's mission is closer to that of Stark Development Corporation than it is the mission of the Convention and Visitors Bureau. For this reason, one possible source might be the 14% share of the sales tax dedicated to economic development. Another possibility would be to establish a business license and grant all or a portion of those proceeds to the Chamber of Commerce.

Reitmeier asked for an explanation of how a business license would work. Sund responded that a few would be placed on businesses for the privilege of conducting business in Dickinson. Johnson said he is philosophically opposed to a business license to fund the Chamber. He said he thinks such an approach is contrary to the concept of right to work and choice.

Community Curator:

Ms. Thiel explained the reasons why the CVB supports the creation of the community curator position. She explained how the person in this position would benefit the Museum Center and the community.

Budget Discussion Among City Commission and Management:

Johnson suggested consideration of reducing the proposed shift differentials for employees who work regular rotating shifts from \$0.50 per hour for afternoon shift to \$0.25 and reducing the \$1.00 per hour for graveyard shift to \$0.50. There was no support from the rest of the commission to make this change.

Johnson suggested reducing the proposed transfer to the maintenance reserve for the Library from \$25,000 to less than \$15,000 to eliminate the need for a property tax increase. There was general agreement to do this. Sund said he would make the change.

Johnson asked Police Chief Rummel to give reasons why the City should hire three additional police officers as proposed in the preliminary budget. It was agreed during discussion that Chief Rummel will work up a bullet list of reasons that would be presented on September 19 during the hearing on the proposed budget.

Frenzel asked if the City should continue its policy of allowing employees to take compensation time in lieu of overtime for hours worked in excess of 40. There was general opinion among the City Commission that compensation time should be eliminated. In order to make the elimination of compensation time more palatable, it was suggested that the City make vacation and sick leave available to all employees immediately after it is earned, including employees on probation. It was stated that this proposal would be the subject of discussion during upcoming Meet and confer committee meetings.

Johnson suggested taking the proposed purchase of citizen relationship software out of the budget as he believes the City Commission should see a demonstration before considering its approval. If they agree with the proposal after seeing a demonstration, the software purchase could be added at a later time. There was general agreement that this is a good approach.

In regard to subsidies to outside organizations, it was agreed that the Airport subsidy should be moved from the General Fund to the 30% share of Sales Tax II. In addition, reductions in subsidies to other organizations were discussed.

It was also agreed that another review of sufficient budget authority for fuel purchases should be reviewed and revised as necessary.

Finally, it was agreed that the City should begin working up a conceptual plan for the construction of a grade separation at the railroad crossing on State Avenue.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 12:40PM.

OFFICIAL MINUTES PREPARED AND APPROVED BY:

Greg Sund, City Administrator

APPROVED BY:

Dennis W. Johnson, President
Board of City Commissioners

Date: _____

