

**MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON MAY 7 2020 4:30 P.M. VIA ZOOM**

Mayor Brad Schumacher called the meeting to order. Council members present were Jack Edmonds, Jenny Gerold, Jules Zimmer and Jeff Reynolds. Staff present, Administrator Robert Barbian, Finance Director Steve Jackson, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Community Development Specialist Stephanie Hillesheim, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Clerk Shawna Jenkins, Wastewater Plant Manager Chris Klinghagen, Liquor Store Manager Nancy Campbell, Fire Chief Ron Lawrence and Attorney Damien Toven.

Approve agenda

Barbian stated that he is suggesting the removal of item #10, EDA Grant Application – There is some additional information to come on this.

PUC - interviews

Barbian stated that It was J Gerold's recommendation to wait until the June 11th meeting so the candidates could be interviewed in person.

Barbian advised that Jack Edmonds and Eldon Johnson have both withdrawn their applications.

EDMONDS MOVED TO INTERVIEW THE PUC APPLICANTS AT THE JUNE 11TH MEETING. J GEROLD SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Hennagir asked if the meetings will be open to the media. J Gerold replied that they will be open to the media, and on video. Each applicant will enter the Council Chambers one at a time, while others wait in the hallway.

Schumacher suggested a friendly amendment that the interviews will be done individually and the appointment will be made at the June 11th meeting.

EDMONDS AND GEROLD ACCEPTED THAT FRIENDLY AMENDMENT

City Council meeting protocol

Frederick stated they were asked to put together plan, so they are recommending the following to get the Council back into the City Hall chambers, and allow people to come in to talk if they so choose.

Regarding: In person meeting for council meeting, strategic Covid-19 plan

City Council Chambers (rotating camera)

1. Mayor Schumacher
2. Council Member Reynolds
3. Council Member Zimmer
4. Council Member Gerold
5. Council Member Edmunds
6. City Administer Bob Barbian
7. Tim Hennagir – Princeton Union Times
8. City Attorney Damien Toven
9. Open (Podium – speaker for agenda items or open forum)
10. Open

City Hall conference Room (zoom)

1. Fire Chief Ron Lawrence
2. Police Chief Frederick
3. Public Works Director Gerold

City Hall Office area (zoom)

- S. Jenkins – Desk
- S. Jackson – Office
- S. Hillesheim – Office

Off-campus (zoom)

- C. Klinghagen – home / office
- N. Campbell – home / office
- J. Edison – home / office

- Open forum will still notify S. Jenkins prior to meeting to notify of attendance.
- Individuals will stay in hallway outside of city hall chambers and be invited in to chambers by city staff.
- Staff and Emergency Management Team will work with guest to manage council meetings with open seats or speaking to council who are on Agenda or wish to speak to council.
- Individuals are encouraged to remote in from off-campus area.
- Seating in chamber area will be set up by Emergency Management Team. Signs will be on tables directing individuals to tables and chairs
- Medical questioner will be asked and temporal thermometer will be utilized of all individuals wanting to attend council meeting.
- Mask will be strongly recommended for attendees to all council meetings.
- Emergency Management strongly encourages council and staff to wear a mask.
- This will be phase 1 with hopefully more restrictions lifted in phase 2 by Emergency Management.

The goal of Emergency management is to provide safety to the council and the public. Our goal will always be to maintain our government operations with a healthy council and staff and provide operational support to allow council to operate at a high level. The goal of the Emergency management Team would be to move into Phase 1 (above) for the council meeting on June 11th, re-evaluate after the meeting with hopes of making adjustments and moving to phase 2 with less restrictions by the July 2nd study session based off of guide lines and restrictions by the CDC and MDH.

Oak Knoll Cemetery

Petition to allow Volunteers to maintain Babyland area & Cemetery Board Request

Jenkins advised that at the May 14th meeting, the Council approved some recommended changes to the Oak Knoll Cemetery Rules and Regulations. A post was made on the City's Facebook page and shared with both local Princeton Facebook pages. Letters were also sent to some of the grave owners in Babyland that contained a lot of items. Unfortunately, many of them came back as the addresses we had were from when the graves were purchased.

Melissa Ramage has a daughter that was recently placed in Babyland. She started a petition that was shared on the Princeton Bulletin Facebook Page regarding the Babyland area of the cemetery requesting items to be allowed there.

J Gerold stated that the Cemetery Board dissolved many years ago. All of the decisions have been made by staff, and then approved by the City Council. She thinks that has been working well, and doesn't feel we should bring back a board that dissolved many years ago. It also concerns her to allow volunteers to work in the Cemetery. It is the city's responsibility to mow and care for the cemetery. If someone was out there maintaining the cemetery and they were to get hurt, they could sue the City. If they want to be more involved, it would be to keep that area cleaned up to make sure the area isn't in violation of the rules.

Edmonds said he is a little on the fence, and feels it would be nice to have a citizen input into things. However, they can also do that by coming to the meetings. He totally concurs with J Gerold about allowing people in with mowers and weed trimmers.

Zimmer said he likes the rules that are adopted. There was a lot of time and effort put into it by staff, and the rules should help get a handle on the cemetery. Citizen involvement could become a concern. It is a city cemetery, and with the liability, it should be taken care of by the city.

Reynolds would like to see a proposal that would include some cooperation from gravesite owners to move items to make maintenance possible for Public Works. He would like to see what allowances we could make in that area.

Schumacher mentioned the trailer that was in the Parking lot. B Gerold reported that they allow memorials and flowers to put on the graves prior to Memorial Day, and 10 days past. If items are still there, they collect the plastic flowers and items and put them on a trailer for those to collect. For non-traditional or memorable items, they are bagged and boxed items with a label so people can collect those items by contacting Public Works. They are trying to accommodate those that do wish to keep some items but were not able to get back to pick them up right away. If the items on the trailer are not collected within a week, the items are offered to be used for parade floats, and/or disposed of.

Schumacher stated he doesn't feel it is necessary to change resurrect the Cemetery Board, staff and the Council can review and approve suggested amendments to the rules.

Melissa Ramage said they really didn't want to be part of a committee. The point of the petition, is that they were asking to be able to keep their items at their gravesites. She is hearing that the consensus is that they cannot keep any items there. She stated she never signed anything stating that they cannot keep items. She has a wreath that she made that she would like to keep there, as well as a small box.

Schumacher suggested that those items can be kept in a plant holder, or on a shepherds hook.

Reynolds would like to see some changes for rules in regard to Babyland

Canoe and Kayak

Hillesheim advised that the City of Princeton was able to hire an outfitter, Paddler Bridge, LLC. for the 2019 summer and season. Working with the Paddle Bridge, was a great opportunity for the City of Princeton for many reasons including liability and staff time. The City Council appropriated \$6,000 for the Canoe and Kayak program for 2020 and staff have requested and received donations of \$8,500 for the program and the events associated with the program. With this funding the city has been able to negotiate an outfitting contract for the 2020 season.

The City of Princeton has been working to find agreeable terms to pay the outfitter for staff time, transportation costs, liability insurance and other costs associated with the outfitter being located in Riverside park for the summer of 2020. The agreed upon price is: \$8,700 for Saturday and Sundays June 6-Labor Day. In the event weather or other unforeseen circumstances arise and operations must close, \$120 will be reimbursed back to the city for the day. Any extra events added outside of the agreed upon schedule will be agreed upon by staff prior to the event.

City Staff recommend the Council accept the attached contract for outfitting services for the 2020 season.

Toven said he would like to see a stipulation added in to the contract in regard to the Covid-19 cleaning requirements.

Schumacher stated he feels the council could approve the contract with the added language regarding insurance and COVID-19 cleaning protocols. Hillesheim replied that she knows they have things in place for Covid-19, but they can be clarified in the contract.

Edmonds asked for clarification of approval with the discussed language. He hopes it is not a deal breaker, but we do need to protect the City's residents and visitors.

EDMONDS MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONTRACTED WITH THE ADDED LANGUAGE, CONTINGENT ON THE ATTORNEY'S FINAL APPROVAL. REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION.

Jules asked what the numbers were last year. Hillesheim will get those numbers to the Council. She added that there appears to be quite a bit of interest for it this year.

Edmonds asked if the cost was similar to last year. Hillesheim said it is very similar. Barbian asked what the cost was and pricing packages.

Hillesheim stated that it is on Groupon, which works to entice out of town users. It is we \$25 to rent kayak, and \$40 for 2-person canoe. The rental includes paddles, life jackets and one-way transportation. There are some buy one get one deals as well. Staff has some coupons that the Council can pass out if they would like.

Approval to hire 2 liquor clerks

Campbell is asking for approval to hire Stephanie Moses effective 6-2-20 and David Hicks effective 6-9-20. It appears to be difficult to find and keep people, as they are able to receive quite a bit of extra \$ on unemployment right now due to Covid-19.

REYNOLDS MOVED TO APPROVE THE HIRING OF STEPHANIE MOSES EFFECTIVE 6-2-20 AND DAVID HICKS EFFECTIVE 6-9-20. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Sewer – waiving of late fees

Staff reported that at the March 26th the City Council moved to approve PUC to waive the sewer late fees through the May billing cycle.

March late fees waived: \$1,246.67
April late fees waived: \$1,432.95
May late fees waived: \$1448.65

Barbian asked how long the council would like to waive the sewer late fees. Schumacher asked what the percentage is of late payments. Barbian replied that he knew at some point, but does not know at this time. Schumacher stated that for an example, Sherburne County kept the late fees, but reduced them to about 1%.

Zimmer stated he is okay with waiving late fees, but when things are back to normal, those late fees should be put back in place.

Barbian added that his concern is not waiving the late fee, but just the accumulation of the amount due. If that builds up, it could create a hardship for people.

J Gerold questioned if people are paying the balance and just not the late fee. She feels we need further information on whether people are in arrears with their full bills.

Schumacher asked if staff could get some information together for the next meeting. Barbian responded that staff can work on that. He and Jackson can have that discussion tomorrow or Monday.

Schumacher asked if the past due balances could be assessed to the property taxes. Jackson replied that they could be assessed. Schumacher said his thought it to maybe continue this through July since things are just starting to open up a little. Reynolds wants to make sure what the City does aligns with what the PUC is going to do.

Edmonds agreed that it is the right thing to do. Its hard to know who is laid off and who isn't. Although, unfortunately there will still be some people who will take advantage of the situation.

ZIMMER MOVED TO CONTINUE WAIVING THE SEWER LATE FEES THROUGH JULY.
REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION.

Edmonds mentioned the 1% that Sherburne county is doing, and may be something to look at if needed at some point.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Public utilities sewer discussion

J Gerold said the PUC had mentioned they were thinking of separating their billing due to the confusion having them all on one. Her suggestion would be for water and sewer together, and the electric separate. If they decided to do them separate, that could be a lot of extra work and expense for the City if we were required to take over the sewer billing.

Schumacher thought they were color coding the bill to separate them, they are spending good money to print them in color. thought they started the color coding to try to separate the bills.

Zimmer said he thinks it is pretty safe consensus that City staff does not want to take over the sewer billing. Lets see where the PUC goes with this.

Edmonds agreed and doesn't think we should consider anything until they made a decision. if they did decide to make a change, there would be some time for the City to decide what direction to go.

Reynolds would hope that they do not ask the City to do the billing, as we are not set p for that, and there would be a lot of cost involved in setting that up.

Barbian replied that the City could likely look for a third party to contract that out, but the PUC would still need to provide the city the water units used as that is utilized to calculate the sewer.

Schumacher asked if they were to stop billing for sewer, could the City do it just once a year? Could we just assess it to their taxes. Jackson responded that they can only be assessed if they are delinquent.

Email policy – councilor Edmonds

Edmonds said his first question if we have an email policy. Barbian responded, the city does have an email section in the personnel policy. He feels Edmonds is probably looking more at the council or regarding the emails that the Mayor asks to be forwarded to the Council. He does not feel that would fall into that policy.

He questioned an email that he received from Mayor, that the clerk forwarded to the council on a Sunday. He questioned why staff was working on a Sunday. He also felt the email that was send was not relevant to the city, but the Mayor's Realty business. Schumacher responded that the email was in regard to a real scenario about a family that was going to move to the city, but were concerned about the utility costs int eh City. He will let Jenkins respond to why it was sent on a Sunday.

Jenkins replied that it was a Sunday that rained all day. Since Staff had been working from home due to Covid-19, she thought she would get a few hours of work in.

Zimmer agreed that some emails forwarded have been more of an opinion than factual.

Reynolds feels more information is a good thing.

J Gerold stated that she does not recall getting an email that was not informational. She has not seen an issue with any of the emails she has received.

Toven added that the city does have ownership of the emails, and the public could request those emails with a Data Request. Reynolds agreed that everything should be considered public

Toven said that since the issue is being discussed, even personal emails can be subject to a public data request, if they a councilor was emailing from their personal email and it was regarding city business. He reminded everyone to be cognizant of what you put in emails, or even text messages.

Edmonds said he feels that some are not using the email for its designated purpose and feels it is unethical.

Schumacher advised that the Mayor email go the Mayor and the City Clerk, as it will in the future.

Toven said everything is very specific and dependent on the circumstances. for an example, it would be okay for one person to send out a viewpoint or opinion, but if it elicited a response that would not be allowed. He asks the council to be careful about sending things out that would initiate a response.

Zimmer added that when you send an email to the Council, if you were to respond "reply all" by accident, that would be a violation. He feels it is okay to email something that is urgent, but not just because you want to get a point across, or ran about something. It should be something that is beneficial to the Council. Everyone should be very care in what is sent.

Schumacher stated he does not email the Council directly, that he always sends the emails to the Clerk and asks her to forward them to the Council. The Clerk sends them via blind copy.

Hennagir commented that as he understands the law, it is not a violation if it goes just one way. If a clerk sends an email out, and someone responded then it would be a violation.

He also said if an email is discussed in a meeting, then it would technically be part of the agenda at some point. For an example, if that email was sent from a Gmail account, it would be a concern and he would make a data request for that email account. He has done that with the City in the past, and will continue to do so when he feels it is necessary. He added that the City is being very transparent in how we are holding meetings and handling everything.

Edmonds thanked everyone for the discussion.

EDA Grant Application

Closed session – Land acquisition

J GEROLD MOVED TO CLOSE THE MEETING AT 6:14PM. REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

REYNOLDS MOVED TO ADJOURN THE CLOSED SESSION AT 6:39PM, J GEROLD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Toven provided a summary of the closed session discussion: The city recently entered into a purchase agreement for land near the public safety building. The council discussed ideas, numbers, and what work to do to finalize a purchase agreement.

Closed Session – City Administrator Review Process

J GEROLD MOVED TO CLOSE THE MEETING AT 6:41PM. REYNOLDS SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

_____ MOVED TO ADJOURN THE CLOSED SESSION AT _____. _____ SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Toven advised that the closed portion of the meeting was information gathering for the purposes of the City Administrators next review, no action taken.

Adjournment

_____ MOVED TO ADJOURN THE STUDY SESSION AT 8: PM. _____ SECONDED THE MOTION. MEETING ADJOURNED

Respectfully Submitted,

Shawna Jenkins Tadych
City Clerk

ATTEST:

Brad Schumacher, Mayor