

**MINUTES OF A STUDY SESSION OF THE PRINCETON CITY COUNCIL
HELD ON NOVEMBER 4, 2021, 2021 4:30 P.M.**

1. Call To Order / Roll Call

Mayor Thom Walker called the meeting to order. Council members present were Vicki Hallin, Jenny Gerold, Jules Zimmer and Jeff Reynolds. Staff present, Finance Director Tracy Peters, Public Works Director Bob Gerold, Community Development Manager Stephanie Hillesheim, Police Chief Todd Frederick, Wastewater Plant Manager Chris Klinghagen, Fire Chief Ron Lawrence, and Clerk Shawna Jenkins. Absent was Liquor Store Manager Nancy Campbell

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Presentation from Fire Relief Committee

Heitschmidt presented a few proposed funding amounts and ratios for the Fire Relief Association. The current benefit is \$4100 per year of service. Upon receiving a cost analysis from PERA, a \$4900 benefit would be at 117% funding ratio, a \$5100 would be 112% and \$5300 would be at 108%.

Zimmer asked how our current amount compares to other community departments. Baumunk said it is not easy to compare amounts as it greatly depends on the department, age of their firefighters, length of service, etc.

Walker stated that he isn't comfortable using projected numbers, he wants to use exact figures. If a bunch of people retired when the market was down, we could be in big trouble. He thinks the market is due for a correction soon.

J Gerold said she will abstain from voting, but would like to share her thoughts. She feels that we will have another crash like what happened in 2008 and the Council has a financial responsibility to the city residents. If the market crashes again, the city would have to pay the balance. They also have a responsibility to the young firefighters to make sure there are funds available for them when they retire years from now. Her opinion, she would be comfortable with a funding ration of 113%, and at 50% state aid. She thinks the numbers would be a great compromise for the city and the fire relief association. At 113%, that would put them at almost \$5000 per year of service.

Reynolds added that since he has been on the Council, the ratio number he hears as safe is 115-120%. He would be okay going with the 113%, but not any lower than that.

Zimmer believes in trying to be fair, and believes the Council has done that. He resents that when he asked what the benefit levels are at other local departments, it was skirted. The city residents are the ones that would be affected if things go bad. He thinks bringing it down to 113% or 115% is very fair for everyone, and he would be comfortable with that.

Hallin agreed, and said using projected figures is kind of scary as the city needs to have a safety net. The city has had to pay the balance three times now, and it was very difficult for everyone. She would also like to see a comparison to other departments.

Reynolds stated he would like to see the hourly benefit be raised as well, as that will affect all the firefighters immediately.

Walker summarized that the Council would like to see funding amounts from other departments and what the numbers look like if projected amounts were not used.

3.1. Discuss Draft Fire Relief Policy

McPherson stated that the City Council, at its September 9 meeting, received information from Sharyn North, Principal Accounting Officer, PERA regarding the Fire Relief Fund's status for the City. At that time, there was discussion regarding setting a policy regarding benefit levels.

The Fire Relief Committee has been meeting and has requested information from Ms. North regarding various benefit levels and their impact on the fund. Her analyses are attached. The Fire Department is meeting November 2 to agree to a benefit level request in preparation of a presentation at the Study Session. Additional information may be uploaded to OnBoard regarding this topic from the Fire Department.

Analysis:

Staff drafted the following policy language for the Council's consideration:

The City Council shall, annually, review the PERA Fire Relief Fund to determine if an increase in the benefit level may be made. The surplus will be divided, at a minimum, equally between the Fund and the benefit level increase except when the funding ratio drops below 115%. In those cases, the division of the surplus shall occur in a manner that the funding ratio is maintained at 115%. The final determination of the benefit level shall be made by December 1 of each calendar year.

Request:

Staff requests that the Council:

1. Receive the presentation from the Fire Relief Committee,
2. Review the proposed policy language, and
3. Provide direction to staff regarding the policy language and any change in the benefit level the Council desires. A resolution implementing the benefit level will be presented for approval at a later date.

4. Review 2022 Fire Department Budget

Peters, Lawrence and McPherson went over the Fire Departments Budget.

5. Review 2022 Police Department Budget

Peters, Frederick and McPherson went over the Police Departments Budget.

~~6. Discuss Revised Uniform Policy~~

7. Discuss Land Exchange

Butch Drews has purchased a parcel of land along West Branch Street, and the city owns both parcels to the east.

The west end of Mr. Drews' property is across from the opening in Highway 95. The Comprehensive Plan has identified a roundabout in this location and there are engineering layouts for the same which also identify routes for utilities to serve the north side of Highway 95.

Analysis:

The city should preserve the option for the installation of a roundabout as identified in the Comprehensive Plan. To that end, staff met with Mr. Drews regarding the exchange of land as illustrated below:

Staff offered that the City would take on the costs of platting the property (\$13,000); there is adequate area to get almost three building sites on the area Mr. Drews would retain. It is likely, given the short depth of the property, that some setback variances would be needed; those applications would be the responsibility of Mr. Drews.

Mr. Drews then requested that the assessments be forgiven on the parcel(s). The total of the out-standing assessments is \$8,677.46.

Request:

Staff requests that the City Council review the information and provide direction to staff as to whether negotiations should continue regarding this issue.

Zimmer stated that his opinion is for staff to move forward and work with Drews on a land exchange.

8. Adjournment

HALLIN MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 6:28PM. J GEROLD SECONDED THE MOTION. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANMOUSLY.