

City of Reading
City Council
Work Session
Monday, August 20, 2007

Council Members Present

Vaughn Spencer, President
Stephen Fuhs
Marcia Goodman-Hinnershitz
Stratton Marmarou
Dennis Sterner
Jeff Waltman

Absent

Maria Baez

Others Present

L. Churchill
C. Younger
L. Kelleher
C. Jones
F. Denbowski

Call to Order

President of Council Vaughn Spencer called the work session to order at 7:10 pm.

Managing Director's Report

Managing Director Leon Churchill reviewed the report distributed to Council at the meeting covering the following:

- Project Labor Agreement (PLA) requiring a contractor to participate in unionized provisions before participating in government funded construction projects
- Wrap-up Policy or Uncontrolled Insurance Programs (OCIP) which provide general liability and worker's compensation for employees on a particular construction project
- Glen Road Wall Grant in the amount of \$60,500 approved by DCED to repair 365 linear feet of the wall along Glen Road, north of the Lindbergh Viaduct
- Housing Permit - requiring the submission of a specialized application along with documentations relative to the rental of a

property

Mr. Sterner questioned the stated December 1 deadline for the Housing Permits. Mr. Churchill replied that December 1 will provide the Administration with sufficient time to process the applications. He noted that additional staff has been added to ease this process.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz questioned if Glen Road connects with the East Ends Athletic Club located in Mineral Spring Park. Mr. Churchill stated that he was unsure.

Mr. Waltman stated that he was pleased to see the extension of the Housing Permit deadline to December 1. He noted the hard work of Council and the Administration to get this issue addressed.

Mr. Spencer noted that a good example of a PLA exists with the Sovereign Center. He asked the Managing Director to let Council know when the next PLA step will occur. Mr. Churchill replied that the City will next work with the consultant.

Mr. Spencer also noted the need for the City to revisit the East Ends lease agreement as it expired a few years ago. Mr. Churchill replied that he and the Solicitor are working on that.

Sense of Community Survey Results

Lisa Wilder, Economics Professor at Albright, and Mike Thompson, student, stated that the survey began as a small project surveying a few 16th Ward communities by the NHS. The survey has been enlarged to include the entire City. The results were distributed to Council.

Approximately 3,500 homes City-wide were targeted using bi-lingual telephone surveys. Contact was made with 768 homes and 191 actual connections occurred. Larger community concerns identified are:

- Perceived safety
- Rental rate
- Non-violent crime
- Violent crime

Mr. Thompson focused on the need for community discussion concerning the application of land/value tax which would encourage home improvement and redevelopment.

Ms. Wilder noted the need for the City to focus some attention on the City's human and social capital. She noted that the results obtained using a City-wide model are virtually the same as the smaller study completed by the NHS. She noted her wish to continue this study over the next five years assisted by Mr. Churchill.

Mr. Fuhs and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz thanked Ms. Wilder and Mr. Thompson for the report and noted his interest in updates as the study continues.

Mr. Waltman noted the work of government to foster community groups. He noted the need for citizens to take a responsible roll in keeping properties in good repair and reporting quality of life and crime issues.

Mr. Marmarou questioned if the results were compared with the migration pattern from the 1920's. Ms. Wilder stated that some similarities with the 1920's , 1950's, 1960's and 1970's were identified. However, no change has ever been more significant than that currently occurring.

Mr. Waltman left the work session at this point.

Mr. Spencer agreed with the need to continue the study and work to improve public participation. He inquired how the global marketplace will affect the study and its results. Ms. Wilder replied that participation was improved over the past two years. It is hoped that continuation will encourage additional participation over the upcoming two years.

Mr. Sterner thanked Ms. Wilder and Mr. Thompson. He questioned if the lack of trust citizens have with government reflects lack of trust with local government or the larger trust issues with State and Federal governments.

Solid Waste Ordinance Amendment

Solid Waste Manager Frank Denbowski stated that the good suggestions made at the public hearing several weeks ago will be combined with Council's comments this evening to create an amended ordinance. He stated that at the hearing the participants noted the need for the ordinance to contain a better definition of "contract." Mr. Jones stated that the report submitted by Council intern Trevor Getz was well done and provides a good reflection of the tenor of the meeting.

Mr. Fuhs expressed the belief that the contract language be removed entirely. He requested additional information on the process used for

missed pick-ups. Mr. Denbowski replied that missed pick-ups must occur within a 24 hour period following the miss. If the trash is not collected at the end of the 24 hour period residents are to remove the trash from curbside. If they do not remove the trash from the curb they are subject to citation.

Mr. Fuhs questioned the requirement for properties to be placed onto the City's trash program. Mr. Denbowski explained that if a property owner does not reply to first a postcard and second to a letter asking them to submit the name of their private hauler they will be placed on the program. He stated that property owners who have been listed by an independent hauler will not receive a postcard or letter which will reduce the mailing expense.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the good dialog that occurred at the hearing and agreed with the amendment to improve the property owner's requirement to provide the name of their hauler. She questioned the need to include language referring to the licensing process used by the DEP. Mr. Denbowski explained that he is currently working with the Law Department to build guidelines. He noted that many entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the City's past lax system.

Mr. Marmarou questioned the citation process and the collection of trash improperly set out. Mr. Denbowski replied that if trash is improperly set out it must be removed from curbside within 48 hours. If it is not removed within 48 hours the City will collect the trash and bill the property owner for its collection. He described the due process required in billing.

Mr. Marmarou left the work session at this point.

Mr. Denbowski explained the appeal process that has been added to the ordinance which will allow property owners the ability to challenge a citation.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for the City to provide clear communication on the terms of the new ordinance to citizens and private haulers.

Ms. Kelleher questioned the progress made on providing Mr. Denbowski with enforcement authority. This request was made at the July Public Safety Committee meeting. Mr. Churchill replied that this requires further discussion and a proposal will be sent forward within 30 days.

City Business Plan

Mr. Churchill explained the HPO (High Performance Organization) system began with a group of 15 employees two years ago to develop a mission statement, a vision statement, a values statement and a leadership philosophy. The next phase included meetings with a larger group of employees to discuss City operations and areas requiring improvement. He stated that the Call Center was born out of those discussions.

Mr. Churchill reviewed the business plan currently in place and described the quarterly meetings held with the group of employees to learn about inter-departmental progress. He stated that each department has a business plan and each department must provide updates at the quarterly meetings.

Mr. Fuhs congratulated the Administration for adopting a process that has served the public sector well over many years.

Mr. Churchill asked Council to consider adopting a resolution to validate the business plan put together by City employees.

Mr. Sterner announced his belief in the mission and vision statements. He thanked Mr. Churchill for bringing professionalism to Reading City government.

The work session was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

Linda A. Kelleher, City Clerk