

**City of Reading
City Council
Work Session
Monday, September 21, 2009**

Councilors Attending: V. Spencer, M. Baez, S. Fuhs, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, S. Marmarou, D. Sterner, J. Waltman

Others Attending: C. Geffken, H. Jackson, B. Hill, C. Heim, J. Oehler, B. Reinhart, L. Kelleher

Vaughn D. Spencer, President of Council, called the work session to order at 7p.m.

Managing Director's Report

As Mr. Hottenstein was absent, Mr. Geffken read the Managing Directors report distributed to Council at the meeting covering the following:

- Centre Park Artifacts Bank Door Buster Sale on Sunday, September 27.
- Act 47 Public Hearing, October 14th at 7 pm
- Follow-up on Raymond Street complaint

Mr. Marmarou noted the importance of residents reporting neighborhood issues so they can be investigated and remedied where possible..

Earth Day 2010

Nick Herfer stated that he is aware that the City's financial problems may lessen the City's financial support for the annual Earth Day celebration. He noted that in the past the City has helped with reducing the cost of liability insurance providing electricity, offering free rental chairs and tables. He stated that the organizing committee wishes to move Earth Day 2010 to City Park. He stated that last years celebration, which was located at Riverfront, cost approximately \$3K. He noted that the organization is a non-profit and requested the City's reconsideration for supporting the event.

Mr. Spencer stated that the City is not dodging the question; however, Council has not yet seen the proposed 2010 budget. He noted the need for Council to understand the 2010 budget before making a commitment for financial support.

Mr. Herfer stated that Earth Day 2010 is scheduled for late April.

Mr. Fuhs inquired if the organization has considered venues outside the City. Mr. Herfer noted the importance of holding the event in the City, as they focus on walk-ability and a holistic environment. He noted that last year the County Commissioner's assisted with tent rentals.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted that the changing economics often requires organizations to take alternative approaches.

Kenhorst Police Service Contract

Kenhorst Councilor Bob Hill and Kenhorst Manager Harold Jackson joined Council at the table. Chief Heim explained that the police shared service concept provides turn key police services. He stated that the proposed service matches up to a regional type model. Chief Heim stated that Kenhorst has 2,679 residents, .4 square miles, and 11 roads. He stated Kenhorst is not large enough to provide its own force; however they still need preventative policing. He stated that the proposed service contract would provide 300 patrol hours per month. The two (2) officers assigned to Kenhorst will provide approximately 290 hours of patrol and the remainder made up by other police officers responding to calls each month. He stated that Kenhorst will be paying for the equivalent of a third officer to compensate the City for responding to calls and additional patrol when the two (2) assigned officers are not working.

Mr. Spencer noted that he and the Mayor began these discussions with Kenhorst officials as Kenhorst borders touch Reading.

Mr. Hill and Mr. Jackson stated that they look forward to working with the Reading Police Department.

Mr. Fuhs inquired if the City provides back up service to other communities. Chief Heim stated that Reading provides a back up service on an as-needed basis.

Mr. Fuhs inquired if police officers who will serve Kenhorst will be new employees or if they would come from the existing force. Chief Heim stated that it depends on the proposed budget. Mr. Fuhs noted that the agreement with Kenhorst could save the jobs of 2-3 police officers.

Chief Heim next explained the factors of figuring overhead costs, such as days

off, vacation days, sick leave, health insurance, pension, into this cost of service. He also noted that his service concept was derived after reviewing the calls for service made to the County 911 system.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz inquired if serving Kenhorst will negatively affect patrol services in the City. Chief Heim replied not that he does not expect any reduction in service for Reading residents. He stated that currently police officers respond to a 83% percent of the calls for service in less than twenty (20) minutes.

Rental Housing Process (Codes and Zoning)

Mr. Reinhart and Ms. Oehler joined Council at the table. Ms. Oehler and Mr. Reinhart distributed a report on the Zoning and Codes housing permit process updates.

Ms. Oehler stated that 242 properties applied for Zoning in August. A total of 2,380 have been approved through the AHO process. In May, June, and August 2009, 3160 properties have been approved through the AHO process. Mr. Reinhart explained that staff began working on the billing process for those currently having housing permits. He stated that since August 25th staff has been working on non-compliant files in anticipation of billing for 2008-2009 housing permits. Mr. Reinhart stated that 10,836 properties are currently in the housing permit process.

Mr. Marmarou inquired how many rental units are out of compliance. Mr. Reinhart stated that approximately 3,500 rental units are out of compliance; however, they fall into two (2) categories.

- Landlords who have chosen not to respond to Codes notification.
- Landlords who have dropped out of the process at some point.

Mr. Sterner asked Mr. Reinhart how many of the properties placarded have displaced tenants. Mr. Reinhart replied that end dates are set to provide balance due to the effect displacement has on the tenant.

Mr. Waltman explained the five (5) and ten (10) year criteria policy developed by City Council. He described the work of City Council with landlords and realtors and staff to create the housing permit ordinance, along with the implementation ordinance which sets out the AHO criteria and process.

Zoning Fee Increase

Ms. Oehler distributed a handout showing the current zoning fees the (Maximus proposed fee and fees used in West Reading, Exeter, and Wyomissing). She explained the need to provide balance between fees charged to residents and fees charged to commercial users.

Ms. Kelleher added that some other fee examples are provided with the agenda pack. She noted that Spring Township, for example, charges more for variance, special exception, and conditional use. She noted that these three (3) fees are usually set higher as a deterrent. Ms. Kelleher also suggested adding a PRD fee.

Mr. Geffken stated that the zoning fees will be determined and forwarded to Council for introduction.

Business Privilege Tax

Mr. Younger stated that he is working to address Council's suggestions and explained his review of the various legal issues. He suggested adding the revocation language in a separate ordinance.

Mr. Fuhs stated that he will agree with a stand alone revocation ordinance.

Mr. Waltman agreed and noted that this stronger approach will strengthen the City's ability to strike hard against those who choose to continually bend the rules.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for clear definition of the revocation terms and due process.

Mr. Fuhs suggested using an approach similar to the Blighted Property Review Committee ordinance criteria.

Sidewalk Vendor Ordinance Amendment

Ms. Kelleher explained that Ms. Butler suggested revisiting allowing sidewalk vendors in residential neighborhoods due to Council's denial of the two (2) sidewalk vendor permits.

Mr. Sterner stated that the Public Safety Committee has reviewed this issue and believes in the need to amend the ordinance to prohibit sidewalk vendor activity in residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Waltman noted the need to enforce the current regulations. He questioned the continued operation of Tacos Mexicanos at 501 North 8th Street and the two (2) vendors set up in the parking lot at 9th and Oley Streets. Ms. Kelleher stated that Tacos Mexicanos has applied for a zoning permit to operate on private property and the taco stand in the 9th and Oley parking lot received a temporary zoning permit that will allow them to operate until the Taco Restaurant is constructed at 9th and Green Streets.

Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz noted the need for simplified language so it is easy to determine where sidewalk vendor carts are in and where they are out.

Mr. Sterner suggested prohibiting sidewalk vending in residential neighborhoods. He asked Ms. Kelleher to draft the appropriate ordinance.

The Work Session adjourned at approximately 9pm.

Respectfully submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

FOLLOW-UP ISSUES

- Amendment To Property Maintenance Code – Ticketing System
- Business Privilege Tax Ordinance Adding Revocation
- Zoning Fee Increase Ordinance
- Copy DEP Report WWTP Inspection
- Zoning and Codes – Housing Update