



COMMITTEE WORK SESSION APRIL 7, 2008

Committee Members Present: Ken Braman
Brenda Hlas
Tom Jones
Dennis McGlone-Excused
Bill Mowery-Excused
Mike Zita
Scott Pelot-Excused

Also Present: Mayor David Koontz
Rick Ryland
John Moss-Excused
Jeff Pritchard
Karla Richards
Ann Campbell-Excused

The Committee Work Session convened on Monday, April 7, 2008 at 7:02 PM, in Council Chambers of the Safety Administration Building. The meeting was called to order by Council Vice President, Mike Zita. Following a salute to the flag and the Pledge of Allegiance, there was a moment of silent prayer.

Committee Work Session General Discussion:

Property Liability Insurance Renewal:

Mr. Zita turned this discussion over to Mr. Ryland for the details. Mr. Ryland introduced Mr. Tom Wichert of Wichert Insurance. Mr. Ryland stated that it is that time of year for the renewal and that he was pleased with the figures that were presented to the City. Mr. Wichert indicated that he has been working on this with Mr. Ryland and Mr. Moss, in addition to providing his services to the City for the last thirty (30) year's. Mr. Wichert stated that the premium for this year is down substantially from last year's as well as the last five (5) years. Mr. Wichert stated that this years premium was down fifteen (15)% from last year, which was due to the City' experience and the change in the market. Mr. Ryland indicated that he is still working on a complete listing of all City owned property. Mr. Ryland indicated that he might also be looking at covering certain property under a blanket policy. Mr. Ryland stated that this year's premium is \$104,000.00. Mr. Jones inquired what our premium was for last year and Mr. Ryland stated that he did not have that figure with him. Mr. Zita moved to place this on Council's next agenda with emergency language and waiving the second and third readings, seconded by Mr. Jones.

Property Liability Insurance Renewal continued:

Roll Call: Yeas: Zita, Jones, Braman, Hlas
Nays: None

Motion passed 4-0.

Joint Dispatch Center:

Mr. Zita turned this discussion over to Mr. Ryland for the details. Mr. Ryland stated that for the past several months there have been meetings with Barberton, Copley, New Franklin and Norton to discuss combining their services. Mr. Ryland introduced Dave Sattler from Copley and Paula Miller from Norton Police Dept. for a presentation. Mr. Sattler provided a Power Point presentation (see attached). Mr. Sattler stated that the benefit of a joint center is reflected in cost savings because we are all doing the same things with the same equipment, we just do it a little differently. Mr. Sattler stated that so far these communities are on board except Barberton, and their only reason was because Barberton is on Summit County's radio system. Mr. Sattler stated that the main goal is to consolidate services and the next step would be to run a pilot program located in Copley effective on September 1, 2008. Mr. Ryland stated that this is something we need to pursue because of the rising cost of dispatching. Mr. Sattler stated that there are a total of twenty-seven (27) people in the four (4) communities. Mr. Sattler stated that you would lose some employees through attrition, and there would be savings on leased for equipment and the purchases of new equipment. Mr. Sattler stated that more importantly is the functionality of the center. Mr. Jones commented that the City of Stow is now doing this and includes Munroe Falls, Tallmadge and Mogadore. Mr. Jones stated that this is a grand idea for potential savings. Mr. Ryland stated that the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) would spell out all of the details including an exit strategy in case this does not work. Mr. Ryland stated that he did not believe Council needs to act on this, it was presented tonight for information purposes. Mr. Mike Meden, a Norton resident, asked if this future dispatch center would be incorporated into the new Fire Station? Mr. Ryland answered yes, the question is where would this new location be. Mr. Jim Lino, a Norton resident, spoke about his concerns with the numerous phones and having all of your eggs in one basket. Mr. Ryland explained the process of routing calls from one community to another to respond to any major catastrophe. Mr. Ryland stated that we also have a strong back up system similar to a bomb shelter. Mr. Jones stated that right now Norton and Copley are involved and Mr. Ryland concurred, adding that New Franklin and Barberton Fire would be next. Mr. George Tomko, a Norton resident, stated that he thought this was a wonderful idea, and questioned the \$820,000.00 the City spent for the 800 MHZ radios. Mr. Ryland stated that these radios would still be used. Mr. Pritchard questioned if there was enough room to be added to the countywide system, and Mr. Sattler stated there is plenty of space and this is a very efficient running system. Mr. Tomko asked how this would be affected with the switch from analog to digital next February?

Joint Dispatch Center continued:

Mr. Ryland stated that this does not effect our equipment because we have already gone digital. Mr. Ryland asked for a resolution of support from Council and Mr. Jones indicated that he would rather have all members present for that vote.

Amend Ord. #28-2008:

Mrs. Hlas stated that this is a new piece of legislation that amends Ord. #28-2008, which was the appropriation legislation. Mrs. Hlas stated that this removes the specific reference to the Community Center location, Mrs. Elaine Tompkins, a Norton resident, questioned the language in Section #1 and that it seems to be conflicting. Mrs. Hlas stated that the location of the current Community Center is still an option and that Ord. #28-2008 specifically stated that location and this new legislation does not limit the location. Mrs. Hlas moved to add this to Council's next agenda, waiving the second and third readings, seconded by Mr. Zita. Mr. Jones stated that he would rather wait for the three (3) excused members to be present for this. Mr. Zita stated that all we are doing is placing this on the agenda, and that all members would be present on Monday.

Roll Call: Yeas: Hlas, Zita, Braman
Nays: Jones

Motion failed by a vote of 3-1 a majority vote of at least 4 yeas is required. Mrs. Hlas stated that she did not understand why Mr. Jones voted no on this, and questioned why he wanted to wait on this just because three (3) members were not present for the discussion?

Part-time Fire Fighters Contract:

Mr. Ryland indicated that our part time firefighters ranked tenth in pay compared with other departments in Summit County. Mr. Ryland stated that of the other communities that border our City, we are last in that group. Mr. Ryland stated that in the last two (2) years we have lost five (5) employees because of the pay differences. Mr. Ryland indicated that this is horrendous because we end up paying for their training at a cost of \$6,000.00 to \$10,000.00, only for them to leave for other communities. Mr. Ryland stated that the goal is to get this in the middle range so we can hire and retain employees. Mr. Ryland indicated that he met on March 18, 2008, with the firefighters union and they reached a tentative agreement for a 2% raise retroactive to January 1, 2008, 2% effective June 1, 2008 and 3% effective on January 1, 2009. Mr. Ryland indicated that these employees work an average of 2800 hours per year. Mr. Ryland stated that this is an approximate total increase of \$38,000.00 over a two year period. Mr. Ryland stated that he could not say enough about these individuals, they go above and beyond their duties and cited the recent snow storm and how some employees slept at the fire station so they could be ready for any calls. Mr. Ryland stated that they are the heart and sole of the EMS and Fire Dept., and it is a shame that we are dead last in their salaries. Mr. Jones commented that it's a 4% increase for 2008 retroactive to January 1, 2008 and 3% in January 1, 2009, and asked if there are other raises set for 2009?

Part-time Fire Fighters Contract continued:

Mr. Ryland replied that at the end of 2009 we go back to contract negotiations with this group of employees. Mr. Zita asked where does this bring us with other communities if accepted? Chief Schultz echoed Mr. Ryland's statements about these employees and he could not ask for a more dedicated group. Chief Schultz stated that at the end of the contract, they would move from being 10th in Summit County to 9th and from 4th out of the 6 communities that surround us as far as salaries. Chief Schultz stated that everyone around us is hiring, and he is afraid we would start losing his staff. Mr. Jones stated that we really are not talking about a whole lot of money for these employees. Mr. Lino questioned the money spent for training and if the City gets reimbursed? Mr. Ryland stated that if the employee leaves within a certain time frame, they would have to reimburse the City for the training. Mr. Jones asked Mr. Ryland how many part-time employees do we have in the department and Mr. Ryland replied that we have 28 part-time, 2 full-time firefighters, plus the Chief. Ms. Gayle Brenner, a Norton resident, stated that she has worked for several local hospitals and knows first hand that these employees are worth every penny they get. Ms. Brenner stated that some day she knows she will need to call on them because she cares for her mother, and she wants to know that they will be there for her and they deserve a raise. Mr. Zita moved to place this on Council's agenda to go all three readings, seconded by Mrs. Hlas. Mr. Zita stated that by having all three readings, it would give those members absent tonight time to ask questions.

Roll Call: Yeas: Zita, Hlas, Braman, Jones
Nays: None

Motion passed 4-0.

Unfinished Business:

Mr. Jones thanked Mr. Ryland and the Service Dept. for patching the roads because one of the roads was patched so well it was like a repaving job. Mr. Jones discussed his list of roads that he turned into Mr. Ryland, and questioned how much money would we be spending on the roads this year? Mr. Ryland indicated that he did not have the figures with him and estimated \$504,000.00. Mr. Ryland stated that the problem is that we are spending between \$1,000.00 and \$1,500.00 per day just for road patch materials. Mr. Jones stated that he thinks all of the ward Council members should turn in their list of the roads they would like done to Mr. Ryland and if we can fit them in that is what he would like to do. Mr. Ryland disagreed with this concept, we drive these roads every day and this is a Service Dept, directive, rather than being dictated by Council. Mr. Jones disagreed with Mr. Ryland and asked what roads they are looking at? Mr. Ryland stated that he did not have the list with him adding that Ward 4 is in horrendous shape. Mr. Jones thanked Mr. Ryland and the road crew for the patching that has been done so far. Mr. Ryland noted that citizens should report any potholes to the City and they would get it addressed. Mrs. Hlas stated that the road conditions are bad all over, not just in Norton.

Unfinished Business continued:

Mr. Zita stated that the Service Dept. crews had every piece of road repair equipment we own out today patching the roads. Mr. Pritchard added that the cost for the road patching material is constantly going up.

Mr. Ryland discussed the inscription for the Ohio Vietnam Memorial Park granite bench that was selected. Mr. Ryland thanked the many residents and employees that contributed suggestions for the inscription. Mr. Ryland also thanked Mr. Bill Sweitzer of the Norton VFW for their input. Mr. Ryland stated that the bench will have the City logo and the words “ Freedom is not free” and, the standard VFW funeral service which states “Sacrifices they made and deeds they performed shall be written in history, and shall remain alive in our memories for generations to come. We express sincerely our pride and gratitude for the tasks they fulfilled”. Mr. Jones asked if all of this would fit and Mr. Ryland replied yes, and that they checked with the engraving company before bringing this to Council.

New Business:

None

Public Comment-Non Agenda Items:

Mike Meden, a Norton resident, thanked the Fire Dept. for their care and assistance recently when he called them because his Mother had fallen and broke her hip. They did a wonderful job and they were all very caring. Mr. Meden discussed the mess in Norton with the littering of newspapers and asked if we have a littering ordinance on the books? Mr. Meden suggested we have a common paper box for all of the various papers to address this. Mr. Meden discussed the comments he has seen on Channel #15 about the various pay raises and the way this is being handled. Mr. Meden commented about the recent award Mr. Moss received from the State of Ohio Auditor and now his work hours are being called into question? Mr. Meden stated that we are getting a real bargain here with Mr. Moss and his experience. Mr. Meden discussed Ms. Campbell and the massive amount of time she puts in with Channel #15, the Cider Festival, etc. Mr. Meden discussed the comments about the City paying for employee training and then they leave. Mr. Meden stated that whether we like it or not we are in a competitive market, and that everyone here is underpaid, adding that we need to try harder. Mr. Meden stated that it amazes him to know that architects and City Administration, business owners and contractors all seem to think converting the Community Center into the Fire Station is a good idea. Then we have a few people who come to the podium saying it's a stupid idea. We are wasting money, lets move on. Mr. Meden stated that the Chief and the Fire Dept. need a new building and we can save money by using the Community Center. Mr. Meden stated that if the we are without a Community Center in the interim there are a lot of people willing to pick up and help these groups out. Mr. Meden discussed an article in the Barberton Herald views line, and was appalled that someone had the audacity to say that the Millers are trying to take advantage of the situation regarding a new Community Center.

Public Comment-Non Agenda Items continued:

Mr. Meden stated that Charlie and Jill Miller do so much for this community donating their time, money equipment to all sorts of organizations. Mr. Meden stated that he knows first hand how much they do. Mr. Meden discussed the public podium and that at first he thought this was a good idea. However, now it has become perverted into a soapbox for people to come up here with their misinformation and just holding up the show. Mr. Meden stated that he was not suggesting Council do away with public comment, but if everyone wants to just get up here and talk then lets just do a town meeting once a month. Mr. Meden stated that to do this at every Council meeting, it's just dragging things down and it is the same people that come up here week after week.

Megan Booth, a Norton resident, commented on Mr. Meden thoughts about regionalism on this one incident and not last falls incident, you might want to check your definition of regionalism. Ms. Booth questioned who pays for the dispatcher's health care? Ms. Booth stated that there would be a new Fire Station because a levy was passed. Ms. Booth stated the question is where will this be located? Ms. Booth stated that she has a problem with the traffic flow being generated by the two (2) new ballfields and all the children that would be in this area. Ms. Booth expressed concerns with a new Fire Station being in this same area, and is a potential for problems. Ms. Booth discussed the issues with the raises, and that Mr. Moss is always on time and up to date. Ms. Booth stated that the minutes from March 17, 2008 and March 24, 2008 still are not up on the website. Ms. Booth stated that all of other Boards have no minutes for 2008 posted. Ms. Booth discussed the tapes for Channel #15 and stated that that they are either late or lost and this typically is what happens. Ms. Booth stated that Ms. Campbell does a good job on a lot of things and there are some things that are lacking here. Ms. Booth stated that this is the question she has as far as a raise goes because she already got a raise in January. Ms. Booth stated that she appreciated the podium and the opportunity to field some questions.

Gayle Brenner, a Norton resident, stated that Mr. Moss and Ms. Campbell do deserve the raises they should be getting. You have to be able to pay these people or they are not going to stay here long. Ms. Brenner stated that when it comes time for Council to get another raise, they need to keep this in mind. Ms. Brenner discussed the comment about the Miller's in the Barberton Herald Views Line. Ms. Brenner stated that she worked for them for nine (9) years and knows first hand how much was donated to this community for the various organizations. Ms. Brenner stated that these employees that delivered the items still got paid even though the Millers never charged the organizations for this. Ms. Brenner stated that for someone to state that they are padding their own pocket is ridiculous. Ms. Brenner stated that if this person put as much time and energy as the Miller's have donated their time and money to this community they might not be so quick to speak.

Public Comment-Non Agenda Items continued:

Charlotte Whipkey, a Norton resident, discussed the standing Committees of Council and asked if they hold regular meetings, are they advertised? Mr. Zita answered no we do not hold usual Committee meetings, and that we are not permitted to have meetings unless they are published due to the Ohio Sunshine Laws. Ms. Whipkey asked if the negotiations with the Police Dept. unions have started this year? Mr. Ryland stated that we have not started negotiations, the city has begun working on what its proposals would be. Ms. Whipkey asked if the health care is included as part of their contract, and Mr. Ryland replied that this would be negotiated as part of their contract. Ms. Whipkey discussed the issues with the Community Center and that she is not for using this building for the Fire Station. She also indicated that she would like to know where we come up with the \$600,000.00 to build a new one. Ms. Whipkey stated that she has a problem with the people being given the wrong information, don't tell us it will cost \$600,000.00 for a new one when this is not much more than what the first one cost us years ago. Ms. Whipkey stated that you get us into it and then we are looking at \$1,000,000.00 to \$1,500,000.00 and we should just use what we have and add on to it. Ms. Whipkey discussed the raises, and that Fire and EMS have taken freezes that they wanted because they were looking out for the City. Ms. Whipkey stated that most of the non-union employees have not received their raises yet, and that everyone should have their 3% raise not 14%. Ms. Whipkey stated that Mr. Moss knew what he was getting into here when he took this job, or had a very good idea. Ms. Whipkey questioned if Ms. Campbell received the same training and degree that Mrs. Richards received, and Mrs. Hlas replied yes. Ms. Whipkey suggested that Ms. Campbell get her raise in pieces not all at once, adding that 14% is too high. Ms. Whipkey stated that Mrs. Richards received her raises over 3 years not all at once. Ms. Campbell only fills in when Mrs. Richards is unavailable, and that nobody pays for health care insurance and not many of us today get to have this.

Kathy Cunningham, a Norton resident, stated that what has been said at these meetings are a joke. We have so many things that are more important that we need to be doing. This is such a waste of time bickering back and forth. We do not need to come here and air our dirty laundry because it always ends up in the newspapers. Mrs. Cunningham discussed the comments made about Mr. Moss and that they do not belong on the floor in public, if you have a problem with Mr. Moss then take it up with him directly. Mrs. Cunningham stated that she does not care if Mr. Moss works 20 hours per week or 40 hours per week, he is a professional and he does not need to be micro managed. Mrs. Cunningham commented on the people who always generate this kind of conversation and that this is a Councilman who sits on Council, represents us, and violates our own city ordinances. Mrs. Cunningham discussed the raises in respect to Ms. Campbell and that this increase was not a lifestyle change for her. Mrs. Cunningham discussed the comments Ms. Booth made about the tapes at Time Warner. Mrs. Cunningham stated that once the tapes get into their hands, she has no control over them.

Public Comment-Non Agenda Items continued:

Mrs. Cunningham stated that Mr. Ryland had it right if we don't pay the people they will leave, and it all comes down to respect. Mrs. Cunningham discussed the negative comments about spending \$120,000.00 for a plan, we need to get a plan so we know where we are going, and you have to pay for it. Mrs. Cunningham stated that we need to get this going so we can get our new Fire Station. We elect you to represent us and she cannot make the educated decision on this, she is not involved in the daily discussions. Mrs. Cunningham stated that the worse thing you could do is put this to the voters, they don't have all of the facts to make such a decision, and it only causes more bickering in the city. Mrs. Cunningham discussed the comments made about the Millers and that it was a cowardly statement if you can't put your name behind it. Mrs. Cunningham stated that she is well aware of everything they do with Christmas for the kids, the Women's Craft Fair, and the Cider Festival. Mrs. Cunningham stated that she is appalled with the mentality of this city, and that we want to pick at each and every thing without looking at the big picture.

Don Cunningham, a Norton resident, commented about the statements made regarding the Miller's. Mr. Cunningham stated that Mr. Miller is his friend, they have been in the Norton Lions Club together for over 20 years and that he felt the need to stand up for them. Mr. Cunningham stated that for anyone to make a comment in the paper like they did is completely ridiculous and they should be ashamed of themselves. The Miller's work and give until they bleed. Mr. Cunningham stated that he is standing up for Charlie Miller and maybe if you don't like it and feel he is doing this for their own gain; he would personally ask Charlie to pull out everything they do for this city and make them pay hard cash for it, and then we will see what happens.

Elaine Tompkins, a Norton resident, stated that for the record, the 2008 start up has been unbelievable as an upper and a downer and all over the place. Mrs. Tompkins stated that she was delighted to see the Cider Festival being moved to Columbia Woods Park, but had concerns about the people in Loyal Oak since it has always been named the Loyal Oak Cider Festival. Mrs. Tompkins stated that she attended the two MAD court hearings, adding that everyone should be proud of Mr. Lyons' presentation because he made some very sage comments on our behalf for the City. Mrs. Tompkins stated that she and Mr. Lyons commented that they were sympathetic to these other districts being added. Mrs. Tompkins stated that Mr. Lyons also spoke with the other Attorneys and explained to the Court that we have replaced the one time \$12,000.00 credit with a over \$40,000.000 for all of he residents. Mrs. Tompkins discussed the issues with the Fire Dept. and the Community Center, and that Council should have a copy of her correspondence with Mr. Moss. Mrs. Tompkins discussed the capital asset of the Community Center when it was built, and Mr. Moss' reply of \$564,573.00. Mrs. Tompkins discussed bringing this up to 2008 figures at a 2% inflation rate and Mr. Moss came up with \$855,000.00.

Public Comment-Non Agenda Items continued:

Mr. Moss had indicated to her that to reconstruct the exact building today, it would cost approximately \$825,000.00. Mrs. Tompkins stated that she has been reading in the papers the figures of \$600,000.00 and cannot imagine Mr. Koontz and Mr. Ryland not recognizing that we need to do something about this. Mrs. Tompkins stated that the city approved a state of the art Fire Station and that is what she would like to see this done with everything they need. Mrs. Tompkins stated that she would like to see the Community Center left alone, put on a new roof if needed, and add on an additional room. There was discussion again about the language in the legislation amending Ord. 28-2008 and she felt it was intended to take out the reference to the Community Center location. Mr. Zita stated that it was discussed as leaving it in as an option and we would double-check the minutes. Mr. Ryland stated that all of Mrs. Tompkins points were well taken with adding ordinary inflation to it. However, with fascia block construction as compared to block and brick overlay it is actually less than what it was back then. Mr. Ryland stated for example the Canal Fulton Safety Center was built for \$87.00 per square foot. If you take 6,000 and multiply that by \$87.00 per square feet using a fascia block construction you would have less than \$600,000.00.

George Tomko, a Norton resident, stated that when it comes to the Community Center, he still thinks this is an error to do anything to it other than adding on to it. Mr. Tomko questioned if there was enough space at the current Fire Station to build there, and keep the Community Center alone until we have enough money to add on to it. Mr. Tomko discussed Norton Pride and in early December he spoke on this issue. Mr. Tomko commented at what Tom Dayton of Dayton Nursery has done with his business. Mr. Tomko stated that several months ago Mr. Ryland indicated that the city would be doing something about recognizing this and others, still nothing has been done. Mr. Tomko discussed the Bennett C & D facility and how much work he has done to fill in areas, and urged Council and the residents to make a list of business that have excelled in this area. Mr. Tomko stated that it should not take you 2-3 months to do it, get it done within the month.

Chris Williams, a Norton resident, discussed the various comments made tonight, adding that history repeats itself, and it is very discouraging. Mr. Williams stated that he has been here 12 times and has discussed bringing his business back into Norton. Mr. Williams now questions why he is considering bringing a \$5,000,000.00 business project back here? Maybe he should keep looking at moving it north toward the Tallmadge area. Mr. Williams stated that if Mr. Ryland decides to go along with what everyone said here tonight and fix up the Community Center instead of converting into the Fire Station you will pay more to do that. Mr. Williams stated that there are lots of misquotes being made, and that you should not let something like this be left up to the voters. If you do that it will fail and put this community backwards. Mr. Williams stated that his company stopped building in Norton back in 1993 because this community could not seem to get it together and move forward for the future.

Public Comment-Non Agenda Items continued:

Mr. Williams stated that maybe he should just sell his two properties, his \$800,000.00 home he just built, and pull his 5 kids out of Norton Schools and move out. Mr. Williams stated that this Council needs to start running this City like a business and stop worrying about the few that come here each week.

Topics for the next Work Session:

Joint dispatch center, CCA Income tax collections, amend Ord. #28-2008, Oriana House agreement. Mr. Pritchard stated that he would be meeting with AMATS about the Cleveland Massillon Road next week.

Adjourn

There being no other business to come before the Committee Work Session, the meeting was adjourned at 8:47 PM.

Mike Zita, Vice President of Council

****NOTE: THESE MINUTES ARE NOT VERBATIM****

All Committee Meetings will be held at the Norton Safety Administration Building, unless otherwise noted. If you do not have access to Time-Warner Channel #15, you may request to view a copy of any VHS recorded meeting in Council Chambers. Please contact Ann Campbell in the Administration office to make the necessary arrangements at (330) 825-7815 ext. 14.