

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE  
City Hall Council Chambers  
March 17, 2014

Council present: Aldermen Judy Stearns, Mboka Mwilambwe, Karen Schmidt, Joni Painter, Jim Fruin, Ron Fazzini, Kevin Lower, Scott Black and David Sage, and Mayor Tari Renner.

Staff present: David Hales, City Manager and Tracey Covert, City Clerk.

Mayor Renner called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mayor Renner opened the Public Comment section of the meeting. He added that there would not be a response from the Committee under the Public Comment portion of the meeting.

Bruce Meeks, 1402 Wright St., addressed the Council. He requested to make a parliamentary point of order to obtain and offer information regarding parliamentary procedure and the City Code. He noted agendas had listed five to six (5 – 6) minutes be allowed for public comment. He claimed that Chapter 2. Administration, Section 17. Regular Meetings; Seating; Order of Business, was violated by offering these time limits.

Mayor Renner stated that public comment is not an engagement with the Council and there would be no Council response.

George Boyle, Asst. Corporation Council, addressed the Council. He cited Chapter 2. Section 15. Meetings – Regular and Adjourned and Section 17 that allowed up to five (5) speakers with a three (3) minute time limit.

Mr. Meeks stated that Council was not following parliamentary procedure. He was opposed to the proposed change to the Home Rule Sales Tax, and the proposed Amusement Tax, Utility Tax and Local Motor Fuel Tax.

He believed that the Mayor and City Manager had too much control over meeting agendas. This issue should be addressed at a Committee of the Whole meeting due to the impact upon minority members of the Council.

**PROPOSED SOCCER COMPLEX AND COMMUNITY CENTER PROJECT AND REQUEST FOR PUBLIC FUNDING (0.25% HOME RULE SALES TAX INCREASE)**

Mayor Renner introduced this topic.

Dave Magers addressed the Council. Mr. Magers stated that he and Jeff Tinervin represented Citizens Advocating For Area Youth (CAFAY). Mr. Magers stated that this project was very important to the community. Handout material had been provided to Council. He acknowledged

the City's budget constraints and hoped that this project would be considered a priority. It would provide structured activities. Mr. Magers added that neither himself or Mr. Tinervin or anyone associated with CAFAY have any personal financial involvement in this project. He wanted to see this project come to fruition. These projects had started separately. Mr. Magers had been involved in the soccer project for over six (6) years. Mr. Tinervin had been involved in the community center project almost as long. Both projects had endured many starts and stops and have been fully vetted.

Mr. Magers referred to an aerial rendering of the soccer complex. It would include twenty-six (26) pitches of various sizes, (nine/9 were lighted and irrigated), parking, concessions, seating, restrooms, and locker rooms. The proposed location would be west of I-74/I-55 and south of College Ave., (i.e. near the former outlet mall). Other locations had been considered. The selected location was in the Enterprise Zone, and on the west side. It could be accessed easily from the interstates and was in close proximity to shopping, hotels and restaurants. This would be a joint opportunity for the City and the Town of Normal.

Julia Turner, former soccer mom, addressed Council. Over 2,600 individuals in the area participated in soccer, (PCSL/Prairie City Soccer League, club and adult players). Currently, there was only one (1) local volunteer operated tournament. It attracted 170 teams and 6,000 - 7,000 people. This year, there would be a 140 team limit. She expected that the area would host four to six (4 - 6) tournaments per year due to the new facility. The proposed facility could attract an Olympic Development Program (ODP) as the City's central location in the state was key.

Jeff Tinervin addressed Council. He began investigating a new YMCA facility and found a larger need existed for programming that served other local organizations as well. The proposed community center would serve a number of groups, address programming needs and combine programs. The center would also serve senior citizens. The former Great Escape located at 1710 RT Dunn Dr., had been selected due to its proximity to RT Dunn fields which would allow access to outdoor activities. He noted the groups involved in this project. Details were provided in a handout provided to Council. There had been too much talk regarding funding. The focus needed to be on addressing youth needs and investing in their future.

Rev. John Rayford addressed Council. He urged the Council to move forward. The project should be viewed as an investment, not an expense. He was concerned about at risk youth. The center would create a safe place. He believed that there would be a huge return on investment. Local tournaments would provide a financial return. It was a comprehensive project that bridged various groups. He encouraged the Council to work with the Town of Normal. It was better to invest in properly growing youth than to correct them later.

Mr. Magers thanked Council for the time and consideration of this important project for area youth and the entire community. He added that the Council must consider the fact that the current fields were going away. He requested that the Council review the material provided and give consideration to the letters of support.

Alderman Schmidt was struggling with funding this proposal. The proposal identified important needs in the community and would be an investment in the future. She cited the collaboration that had developed. The key question was how to fund this project. She noted the community good and hope that all of the parties involved would come together in order to move this project forward.

Mayor Renner stated that the YMCA was not sustainable at its current location. He acknowledged that the soccer fields were going away and this fact needed to be considered.

Alderman Fruin commented that it was a good project but financing was in question. He cited intergovernmental cooperation and west side development. He noted the tax burden that would be placed on the next generation. The project had the potential to attract outside investment to the area. There were a number of smart individuals in the community that needed to come together and determine how to fund this project. The current soccer fields would be vacated.

Alderman Black noted citizen presence for this item. He had received emails related to this item. He had also received negative feedback from his ward. Public buy in was lacking. He cited a public referendum as a means of gaining support. He noted the City's infrastructure needs. The community's youth were important. The community needed to get behind this project. He would not feel confident informing his ward that the City would fund this project instead of repairing infrastructure.

Alderman Mwilambwe acknowledged that this was a difficult item as his children played soccer. He needed to separate his passion for the sport and the best interests of the City. He expressed his interest in finding a creative way to fund the project. He noted the City's sewer and street issues. He compared this project to the Miller Park Zoo. He recommended fundraising and establishing seed money. He restated his interest in community youth as he had four (4) children.

Mayor Renner informed those present that a Budget Work Session was scheduled for March 22, 2014. The City must resolve an \$8 million budget shortfall.

Alderman Lower stated that developers have offered green space that would provide space for soccer fields. They would mow the grounds but the green spaces must be maintained/secured by a soccer organization. He believed that there was goodwill in the community. There would not be a central location. There were other avenues available to meet the need.

Alderman Stearns noted the effort made regarding this project. It was a well executed plan. She cited the City's budget pressures. She addressed the sales tax referendum and proposed sales tax increases. She also addressed the City's pension funds shortfall and her belief that the obligation would double in coming years. She invited all present to the Budget Work Session. She encouraged a referendum as a means to move this project forward.

Mayor Renner stated that a referendum could be placed on the November 2014 election ballot.

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN - DISCUSSION OF THE SCOPE OF WORK, COUNCIL EXPECTATIONS AND PROJECT TIMELINE

Mayor Renner introduced this item.

Vasudha Pinnamaraju, McLean County Regional Planning Commission's (MCRPC) Executive Director addressed Council. The Comprehensive Plan was proposed to be addressed in four (4) phases. The phases would address issues/analysis.

Phase 1 would be Existing Conditions Analysis which was ongoing and would take four to five (4 – 5) months. Phase 2 would be Community Visioning which would begin in July 2014 and would take four to five (4 - 5) months. Phase 3 would be Strategic Planning and Phase 4 would be Plan Making and Adoption. Together the last two (2) phases will take six to eight (6 - 8) months.

Phase 1 Existing Conditions Analysis was a snapshot of what existed today. All current City plans and studies would be evaluated, as well as state and federal plans and policies that would affect the City.

The second part of this phase would be data collection and analysis. She cited census data as an example: the City has sixty-eight percent (68%) home ownership and thirty-two percent (32%) rental. Local data told a different story: sixty-three percent (63%) home ownership and thirty-seven percent (37%) rental, a difference of five percent (5%). The existing conditions report would be evidence based. This phase should be completed in June 2014 for presentation to Council and the Planning Commission.

She requested the City form two (2) committees: Steering Committee and an Advisory Committee. Both will be important to the overall process.

Comprehensive Plans were changing. They were being redefined to accommodate a range of needs. The City needed to be committed to this work, (i.e. buy in). There would be frequent presentations and committees needed to provide direction.

Phase 2 Community Visioning. Outreach would be key. The goal was to reach at least thirty percent (30%) of all City residents for education, to encourage participation, and to evaluate who was participating. She cited the recent Bike Plan which generated 700 responses. This figure represented good results. An organized effort could reach out to all interested residents. There would be outreach to community groups/organizations as opposed to making individuals come to the City.

Educational tools would include outreach, a project web site, a promotional video, various types of promotional information, and targeted speaking engagements. These tools would be creative and there would be outreach to school districts in addition to wards and organizations.

Participation generally lacked in the fourteen to twenty-four (14 – 24) age group. She cited the recent Bike Plan. The timeline for this process was four to five (4 - 5) months. It would not take

too long. At the conclusion of this phase, a Community Vision Plan would be presented to Council.

Phase 3 Strategic Planning. This phase involved putting the vision into action. The City would be compared to peer communities. Kalamazoo Promise was cited as an example. This project used lottery revenue to fund college education for students who attended Kalamazoo's public high schools. This led to a twenty-five percent (25%) population increase. One goal would be to review best practices and be inspired by the success of others. Working Groups would be created. Initially, there would be seven (7) Working Groups, (Neighborhoods, Natural Environment, Healthy Community, Regional Cooperation, Arts & Culture, Economic Vitality and Infrastructure) with focused subgroups under each area.

Phase 4 Plan Making and Adoption. This phase would overlap with Phase 3. The time frame for these two (2) phases was six to eight (6 - 8) months. Working Groups would meet once per month plus there might be other virtual meetings.

Alderman Sage thanked Ms. Pinnamaraju for her presentation which he found enjoyable. He noted the use of technology. He questioned philosophy and/or process. He noted past conversations with the MCRPC. MCRPC would prepare the plan which would belong to the City.

Ms. Pinnamaraju responded affirmatively. The City needed to be involved with MCRPC providing technical support.

Alderman Sage believed that there would be citizen interest. He questioned how someone could become involved.

Ms. Pinnamaraju cited the Working Groups. The Steering and Advisory Committees needed to be established first. Interested individuals should submit an email to MCRPC and their names would be placed on a waiting list until the two (2) committees were formed. Working Groups would begin their efforts at the start of Phase 2. The initial input would be comprehensive.

Alderman Sage requested that David Hales, City Manager, provide the Council with the appropriate email address. Ms. Pinnamaraju added that there was a general email address for the MCRPC.

Alderman Lower also thanked Ms. Pinnamaraju for her presentation and for attending a ward meeting. He encouraged citizen involvement. He was in favor of keeping the City the City and retaining its culture. He was troubled that this plan was driven by a federal government requirement. This project would be limited due to the expense. The plan needed to be effective and cost efficient. The Council needed to keep things in perspective and keep the cost for this plan to a minimum.

Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that the plan would be provided to the City at no additional cost. She was sensitive to concerns that this plan would sit on a shelf. There would be community input.

Alderman Lower expressed his concern regarding implementation costs. He noted that the plan proposal cited 'rapid population growth', (see page 2 of the proposal). He believed that there would be a population decline. He also questioned best practices. He specifically cited the definition of 'Accessory Dwelling Units', (see page 9 of the proposal).

Ms. Pinnamaraju noted that the plan proposal referenced other communities. An example of an accessory dwelling unit was a housing accommodation for 'mother in law' apartments. This was an example of thinking outside of the box.

Mayor Renner stated that the City had continued to gain approximately 1,000 people per year.

Ms. Pinnamaraju clarified that plans normally encompass thirty-five (35) years. Population was difficult to predict (growth/decline) and the plan should reflect 'what if' scenarios. The City had experienced rapid growth in the recent past.

Mayor Renner stated that this process would be different than what had been done in the past.

Ms. Pinnamaraju agreed and added that planning must adapt as there were new ways of doing business.

Alderman Fruin was encouraged by the efforts and energy shown by the MCRPC. This project would be regional in scope.

Ms. Pinnamaraju hoped to engage the Bloomington Normal community. She was noted that the recent Bicycle Plan received over 700 responses. She planned to build upon existing plans.

Alderman Black noted Ms. Pinnamaraju's presentation at a joint meeting. The City needed a plan and he supported reaching out to the community to solicit information. He questioned the time line for Phase 1 and hoped to solicit Council feedback. He noted the importance of Steering and Advisory Committees. He encouraged Ms. Pinnamaraju to keep the Council informed.

Alderman Stearns questioned the cost to the taxpayers. Time was money. She noted the plan's scope. She also requested an update on the current plan.

Alderman Fazzini suggested that Ms. Pinnamaraju's contact information be included on the presentation materials along with instructions for potential volunteers.

David Hales, City Manager, informed the Council that information regarding this project would be made available through water billing inserts and the City's web site. The MCRPC had recommended that the Mayor and two (2) Aldermen serve as on the Steering Committee. He and City department heads would also be involved. The plan should be owned by the citizens. There was great potential to define what citizens wanted. Sub area plans would be addressed in the future. Council needed to be involved throughout the process. He complimented Ms. Pinnamaraju and her staff for a creative, innovative process.

**DISCUSSION - TERM LIMITS FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Alderman Fruin introduced this item. The initiative was generated by the public. He thanked the Council for their willingness to discuss this matter. This issue appeared to be important to the citizens. The public had raised questions after term limits were placed upon board and commission members. The question addressed if the same philosophy, practices and standards should be applied to Council. The rules should be consistent, (i.e. walk the talk). The topic should be discussed in order to be responsive to the citizens.

Mayor Renner clarified that a limit of nine (9) years was approved by Council for board and commission appointments. After reaching this limit, members must take one (1) year off and then may be eligible for appointment again. This text amendment originated from working with Aldermen Schmidt and Sage regarding an evaluation of the appointment process. He believed that many board and commission members held a sense of entitlement and were isolated from the Council. Members were appointed not elected. The Council was accountable to the citizens, (i.e. electoral process).

Alderman Black acknowledged that this was an important topic. He also had been questioned regarding the double standard. Boards and commissions were under the radar. There was an accountability gap. The term limit for the Council was an election. This was the difference. The Council was held accountable by the public.

Mayor Renner restated that after one (1) year, individuals may reapply to serve on a board and/or commission.

Alderman Stearns believed that this issue should be subject to referendum in order to gain the public's opinion. There were no career aldermen. She expressed her disappointment at the limited public input. The public did not understand and was not informed. Residents needed a better understanding of what the Council did.

Mayor Renner noted that a referendum would be advisory only.

Alderman Lower stated that at first glance, the common perception was that Council was similar to state and federal elected officials. At the state and federal level of government it was common for elected officials to serve for long periods. He added that a number of Chicago collar communities have imposed term limits. The City was different form of government. The City operated under the City Manager form of government. Council members give of their time. He noted the effort to serve. He did not see the point of a referendum. He cited Alderman Fruin tenure and questioned the number of challenged elections for Alderman. Citizens were apathetic.

Alderman Mwilambwe had read the materials provided. He had several questions. First, he wanted to know what the problem that needed to be solved was. There had been a history of turnover and therefore there was opportunity to serve. There had been several uncontested elections in recent history. He questioned what was applicable to the City. He cautioned against unintended consequences. There was limited research on the subject of term limits for local government. He recommended a wait and see approach. If the City made this change, might it

be trading problems and was the City willing to live with same. Education was the key for an informed public.

Mayor Renner noted that based upon the current makeup of the Council eight (8) of ten (10) were elected after 2007.

Alderman Schmidt believed that the distinction between the Council and boards/commissions was accountability. Accountability came through elections. The decision belonged to the people. She recommended that the League of Women Voters distill the information presented.

Alderman Fazzini noted that shorter terms would lead to fresh ideas and more participation in local elections. He had visited other city council meetings and saw things differently. He supported a referendum on this topic.

Alderman Fruin restated that the purpose was to initiate discussion. The differences between Council and boards/commissions were clear. Any future action should come from others outside of the Council.

Mayor Renner supported Alderman's Schmidt's recommendation to involve the League of Women Voters.

**CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS:** David Hales, City Manager, addressed the Council. He reminded them that the Budget Work Session would be held on Saturday, March 22, 2014 starting at 8:00 a.m. in the Osborn Room.

Alderman Stearns questioned if the Budget Work Session would be streamed live to the web.

Mr. Hales stated that the Osborn Room was not optimal for this option. The Work Session agenda had not been officially posted.

Mayor Renner stated that the meeting would be moved to the Council Chambers and streamed to the web.

The meeting adjourned. Time: 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Tracey Covert  
City Clerk