



CITY OF WAUWATOSA
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COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
Tuesday, June 20, 2006 – 6:45 p.m.

PRESENT: Alds. Grimm, Hanson, Herzog, Krill, Krol, Maher, Meaux, Purins, Stepaniak, Sullivan, Treis, Becker, Birschel, Didier, Donegan, Ewerdt -16

ALSO

PRESENT: Mr. Kesner, Interim City Administrator/City Attorney; Fire Chief Redman

Ald. Becker in the Chair

Fire Station #1 Review Process. The purpose of the meeting was to decide upon a process to follow for considering the fire station #1 project.

Ald. Krol observed that the issue has many residents concerned and is very important in terms of public safety. The future needs of the city must be considered.

It was moved by Ald. Krol, seconded by Ald. Maher to request the Mayor to appoint an ad hoc committee composed of four council members (with one being from District 2), 2-3 staff members, and 2-3 members of the Police and Fire Commission. The objective is to make recommendations concerning the replacement of fire station #1. The recommendations will be made to the Committee of the Whole prior to approving the 2007 city budget. It is expected the committee will review site location, functions and operations presently housed within fire station #1, and pertinent cost considerations. –

With the consent of the Mover and Second, Ald. Meaux made a friendly amendment to include one council member from District 1, as well as representation from other aldermanic districts as the Mayor wishes –

Ald. Donegan clarified with Chief Redman that the square footage and parking lot specifications in the Zimmerman Design Group facility study do not necessarily reflect the fire department's request or position of what is needed, but merely reflect current design standards.

Chief Redman concurred, stating the department had not set forth any limits on the study. The request was to design a building meeting current standards. The study reflects a facility meeting current design standards without regard to any limitations. The department is well aware that while the study's facility would serve all department needs, certain concessions will likely be necessary which reflect fiscal or property restraints.

Ald. Donegan inquired whether the city already owns adequate space that is dedicated to fire prevention with the three existing stations to house (with some improvements) equipment and operations while still providing an acceptable level of fire protection.

Chief Redman replied that there are ways to achieve this goal. While plan modifications may be necessary, council members must keep in mind that certain decisions can affect efficiency and effectiveness of operation. The impact of each decision (i.e., relocation of an operation, reduction in facility size, etc.) must be weighed. It is a complex process.

With the consent of the Mover and Second, Ald. Donegan made a friendly amendment that the first task of the ad hoc committee be to determine as soon as possible whether or not additional land is needed based on square footage requirements. It is only fair that property owners potentially affected be informed of the decision as soon as possible.

Ald. Purins opined that 90% of the research will have to be completed to answer this question. He noted that while training, administration, and maintenance are currently housed on-site, part of the research that will need to be done will be to determine whether this practice ought to continue. Much analysis will have to be completed to accomplish this first task. It will likely not be a fast process.

Ald. Stepaniak voiced opposition to the original motion, noting that a committee structure is already in place to handle issues such as these. It takes the responsibility of elected officials and puts it into the hands of a committee which included non-elected personnel. This is a major city issue with budget ramifications that an ad hoc committee may not be prepared to deal with. Much public input is needed and this is assured by the existing committee structure. The staff is available at these standing meetings. A clerk is available for recording purposes. The evening meetings have a regular schedule, unlike ad hoc committees which may or may not. Ad hoc committees were not used for the GE project, for the Burleigh Triangle project, or for the police building expansion project.

With the consent of the Mover and Second, Ald. Donegan withdrew his friendly amendment.

Ald. Krol reiterated that an ad hoc committee would report back to the Committee of the Whole which would then forward the issue to a standing council committee. The standing council

committees already have full agendas and there is much information to be examined on this subject. This issue needs lots of focus and input.

Ald. Maher suggested that this issue is too broad for a standing committee to consider. The issue does not only involve fire station #1; there are also recommendations for the remodeling of fire station #2. One thing that must be determined is how to best provide the most effective fire protection service to the city. The standing committee structure has built-in time constraints. An ad hoc committee will allow people to have an impact on policy. Using an ad hoc committee maximizes public input. The people need to know as soon as possible whether their properties will be affected. He also noted that it is absurd at this juncture to even discuss eminent domain.

Ald. Sullivan stated that the primary responsibility of a government body is to its citizens. People's homes and neighborhoods may be impacted by the fire station project. Accountability to the residents is at the heart of this issue and rests with elected officials. Citizen input is vital. The time factor issue for this project may mean more meetings, or later meetings. It is not a reason to hand the project off to an ad hoc committee. Difficult decisions are the responsibility of the council.

Ald. Krill echoed Ald. Stepaniak's remarks that a committee structure is already in place to facilitate maximum public input. It may be a long process and the potentially impacted property owners must be kept in mind.

Ald. Birschel noted that if appointment of an ad hoc committee is agreeable to the mayor, it must be stressed to them that time is of the essence. However, if the mayor is not comfortable with appointing an ad hoc committee, so be it.

Ald. Treis inquired about complications, if any, involved with forming an ad hoc committee.

Mr. Kesner confirmed that appointment of an ad hoc committee is up to the mayor. He noted that appointees may be less familiar with the issue than are council members. A committee structure is already in place that is assured of clerical support and cable television recording. The creation of another committee may require an additional allocation of staff time for these two functions that is unbudgeted.

Ald. Treis opined that the common council will end up discussing this issue at length at some point. It is better to proceed through the typical committee structure and move forward now.

Ald. Meaux noted that the council just learned one month ago that there is an issue involving fire station #1. This seems to be an issue that is not black and white. There is the potential land acquisition issue, and the issue of increased fire fighting capabilities. An ad hoc committee would only be advisory to the decision-making body and may not be the most appropriate group to deal with these issues.

Ald. Krol reiterated that the issue should be refined before going to a standing committee. As mentioned in the original motion, recommendations by an ad hoc committee would be forwarded

to the Committee of the Whole, who would then forward them to a standing council committee. The Council does not meet in August, but an ad hoc committee could still meet.

Ald. Stepaniak countered that several meetings will be needed at each level of consideration. Adding the ad hoc committee level means asking the public to attend even more meetings and unnecessarily complicates the process.

Roll call vote on original motion, as amended, Ayes 6
(Grimm, Herzog, Krol, Maher, Becker, Birschel),
Noes 10. –Motion failed.

It was moved by Ald. Stepaniak, seconded by Ald. Krill
that the President of the Common Council and the Interim
City Administrator direct this issue to an appropriate
council committee. Roll call vote, Ayes 15, Noes 1
(Maher).

Mr. Kesner advised that the timing of the referral to committee will be discussed and information will be made available on the city's website. The issue may appear as early as June 27th, or may be held to the next committee meeting after that.

The meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m.

Carla A. Ledesma, City Clerk

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