

MINUTES OF THE GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
September 30, 2020 – 4:30 p.m.

Committee Members present: Councilor Richard R. Michaud, Chair
 Councilor Donald Austin
 Councilor Matthew Gerding

Administration/Staff present: City Manager, Bob Belmore
 Police Chief, David Kretschmar
 City Clerk, Jonathan Slaven
 Mayor, Dana Hilliard

Absent: Nancie Cameron

Chairman Michaud called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Councilor Gerding made a motion to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2020 meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilor Austin and approved 3-0 by voice vote.

ORDINANCE NO. 23-20, HEALTH INSURANCE AMENDMENT

Manager Belmore stated that after further research and discussions with City staff, he would like to rescind the recommendation to approve this Ordinance Amendment. In his discussions, it was established that City rules clearly state that when a City employee, who has a family member also employed the City, and that employee receives health insurance from another source, they are entitled to the health benefit stipend. He explained that the employee would have to prove they have health insurance from another company in order to qualify and they would not receive it if they decided to take City health insurance.

Councilor Gerding made a motion to recommend to Council to remove Ordinance No. 23-20 and move to not pass the Ordinance amendment. The motion was seconded by Councilor Austin and passed 3-0 by voice vote.

LICENSING BOARD – CITY ORDINANCE, CHAPTER 14

Manager Belmore spoke to the history of Chapter 14, specifically the possible reasoning behind having the City Clerk as a member of the Licensing Board. He explained that the City Clerk may not necessarily be staffed by an individual who is most attuned to the full needs of City review Manager Belmore said he is fine with replacing the City Clerk with someone the Committee deems

appropriate. Councilor Austin said he agrees with Manager Belmore's rationale and would like to see the Board members be comprised of the Mayor, Chief of Police, and City Manager or his/her designee. Councilor Austin stated he believes it is important to get someone with a broad knowledge of the City. Councilor Gerding inquired about looking at other sections of the Chapter while amending this section. Manager Belmore suggested to make the current change and later meet with the other members of the Board to see if other items need to be amended in any way or removed.

Councilor Austin made a motion to sponsor an Ordinance amendment to change the composition of the Licensing Board to remove 'City Clerk' and add 'City Manager or his/her designee'. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gerding and passed 3-0 by voice vote.

ORDINANCE NO. 7-21, AMEND CHAPTER 6, CITY OFFICIALS

Manager Belmore spoke to an initiative from the Mayor to amend Chapter 6, City Officials, Public Safety Committee. The new sentence, "In order to maintain our present quality of life, the Committee may also provide assistance in guiding Police, Fire, and other emergency operations in delivering services ethically and effectively to ensure the safety and security of the Public, and, Public Trust is not compromised", would be added to capture language that reflects today's environment in an effort for City operations to remain transparent and keep the Public Trust.

Mayor Hilliard indicated the language for the amendment came out of discussions with other Councilors who suggested the thought of creating a Police Commission. Mayor Hilliard said his concerns with establishing a Police Commission is that they can get extremely political and policies are sometimes established that do not properly reflect the temperature of the Police Department. He further explained that the Public Safety Committee is already examining issues as they arise in order to keep our Community safe. He said that under Chief Kretschmar the practices of ethical policing and striving for Public Trust have been better than ever, though he is still sensitive to the issues that surround the current climate of police departments. He explained that the Public Safety Committee is where we can have open conversations and deep dive into issues. Mayor Hilliard said this gives us the opportunity to share opinions openly while receiving recommendations from experts. He expressed the upmost trust in Chief Kretschmar who, he knows, understands the dynamics of ethical policing and who has been exemplary in outfitting his department with the best officers to uphold this.

Councilor Gerding thanked Mayor Hilliard for his input and appreciated the compromise to fit both of their thoughts on the idea. He understands we already have a difficult time filling Committees and does not want to politicize an issue that is already hyper-politicized.

Councilor Austin expressed a question of why we would need this kind of wording. Mayor Hilliard replied that though, this Committee can have these conversations already, this amendment is formally assigning the task to the Public Safety Committee. Instead of a question of whether the

Committee can do this or not, they are now charged with the task of doing so. When there are questions of the purview of the Committee, we always fall back to what the charge of the Committee is. It adds the language for the protection of the Public. We can always say ‘of course that’s what we do’, now we are spelling it out. Mayor Hilliard said he has full faith in Chief Kretschmar, but at the same time must listen to the cries from people who are saying they are not being treated equally.

Councilor Austin inquired if the wording in this amendment gives the Committee powers to do something they cannot do now because the wording isn’t there? Mayor Hilliard replied that it does not and he does not want to get to a point where we are dictating things, rather speaking issues out and reaching consensus through Committee discussions.

Manager Belmore clarified that this is not suggesting the Public Safety Committee and Council to direct the Police Department or Chief Kretschmar. He explained that our City Charter is written such that Council directs the City Manager to carry out actions and run the day to day operations of the City. He further explained that Police Chiefs have their own statutory duties and obligations they must abide by as well. Manager Belmore said he does not see this as giving the Committee any authority to make changes to the Charter requirements.

Chief Kretschmar explained that there are 8 pages of changes from the State directing the police on different policies to include body cams, hiring, training, and more. Councilor Gerding stated he was curious as to what City policies currently exist if there were to be an incident with our police. Chief Kretschmar replied that there are policies in place for many different incidents some of which pull in additional agencies.

Councilor Gerding inquired if there are any foreseeable gaps that could be addressed by the Public Safety Committee. Manager Belmore explained that things come up where we engage the City Attorney, insurance company, County attorney or AG’s Office, etc. He elaborated that we are constantly looking at our policies. We don’t have the answers for everything that is going to happen, but we have the resources to handle issues as they arise and have been successful with our approach. Chief Kretschmar added that to write policy that covers everything is impossible.

The Committee discussed improvements to the language to best capture the intent of the amendment.

Councilor Austin made a motion to change the present proposal’s opening language to read: ‘in order to continuously improve our quality of life, the Committee may also provide recommendations and guidance’. The motion was seconded by Councilor Gerding and passed 3-0 by voice vote.

MISCELLANEOUS

There were no items discussed under miscellaneous

ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn made by Councilor Austin, seconded by Councilor Gerding, motion passed 3-0 roll call vote. Meeting adjourned at 5:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jonathan Slaven, City Clerk