

## REGULAR MEETING DES MOINES CITY COUNCIL

### MINUTES

June 6, 2002

At 7:30 p.m., City Manager Piasecki announced that the City Council would continue in Executive Session for approximately another 15 minutes.

The regular meeting of the Des Moines City Council was called to order at 7:52 p.m. by Mayor Wasson in the City Council Chambers, 21630 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, Suite B.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE to the Flag was led by Councilmember White.

ROLL CALL - Present: Mayor Don Wasson, Mayor Pro Tem Richard Benjamin, Councilmembers Gary Petersen, Bob Sheckler, Maggie Steenrod, Scott Thomasson and Susan White. Also present were City Manager Tony Piasecki, Assistant City Attorney Linda Marousek, Interim Finance Director Dick Scott, and Deputy City Clerk Angela Chaufy.

CONSENT CALENDAR was read by Deputy City Clerk Chaufy as follows:

1. Motion is to approve a Utility Easement through Steven J. Underwood Memorial Park for use by Highline Water District and other utilities, and to authorize the City Manager to sign such easement substantially in the form as submitted.

MOTION was made by Councilmember White, seconded by Councilmember Sheckler and passed unanimously to approve the consent calendar as read.

### DISCUSSION ITEMS

Creation of a Standing City Council Committee on Budget/Finance  
City Manager Piasecki introduced the subject.

Interim Finance Director Scott informed Council that he had contacted twelve surrounding cities regarding their Council committee structures. He detailed the function and scope of purpose for each city's budget/finance related committee. He summarized the following findings:

- Almost all of the surveyed cities had a finance related committee;
- The purpose of the finance related committee varied from city to city;
- Most finance related committees audited claims and payroll;
- Most committees were established by resolution or some other formal means; and
- Most finance related committees met at least twice a month.

Interim Finance Director Scott listed the following pros and cons associated with establishing a budget/finance committee:

#### Pros

- Staff would receive a preliminary review from Councilmembers allowing fine-tuning and better communication;
- The Council Committee would be provided an opportunity to have a close look before going to full Council;

- Council as a whole could receive specific recommendations from the committee; and
- Items could often be placed directly on the consent agenda, thereby potentially facilitating Council action.

Cons

- More time would be spent in meetings by Councilmembers and staff;
- Possible bottlenecks to Council review or action could occur; and
- The level of finance detail could cause confusion to those who are not number or accounting oriented.

Councilmember Steenrod felt that it was reasonable for the city to have three to four council committees. She suggested that Council look at combining committee duties as Tukwila, Auburn, and Kent have done.

City Manager Piasecki noted that per Council resolution, Council as a whole decided when a particular issue should be given to a committee.

Councilmember Thomasson clarified that committees currently work on those issues that Council has delegated to them. He noted that DMMC 3.28 and RCW 42 delegate the auditing duties of the city to the Finance Director. He said that he was comfortable with the current system as it insured Council operated at a policy-making level.

Councilmember Sheckler suggested that the new councilmembers observe the budget process in order to see how it works internally before discussing the need for a finance-related committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin felt that the City did not have a year to wait due to the current budget shortfall. He felt that it was important for Council to make cuts now and to create economic development.

Councilmember Steenrod said that she felt the vouchers provided an opportunity for the city to consolidate costs and save money. She felt that the purpose of a finance-related committee would be to reduce expenses and to bring more money into the City.

Councilmember Thomasson felt that auditing of warrants would not accomplish the goal as warrants paid for work or services already received. He said that administration was currently seeking ways to trim expenses. Councilmember Thomasson noted that the full Council reviewed the financial policies every year during the budget process. He stated his preference for maintaining the current system as the full Council dealt with financial issues. He said that councilmembers already had the opportunity to review warrants without the establishment of a new committee.

Councilmember White said that she preferred for Council to deal with budget and finance issues as a whole. As Council operates as a legislative body, she felt that they should avoid micro-management. She noted that Council can contact staff now with their concerns or questions.

Mayor Wasson stated that Council was required by law to approve vouchers but that they often did not know what they were approving. He reiterated that other cities' council committees reviewed vouchers.

City Manager Piasecki asked that Council clearly define the functions of the committee if Council wished to create a finance-related committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin recommended that the Public Safety and Transportation Committee be given the public safety issue identified at the council retreat. He stated his belief that the committees serve an important purpose and save time.

In regard to the public safety subject, City Manager Piasecki reviewed the following options before council:

- Create a new committee;
- Remand the issue to an existing committee; or
- Continue to review the issue before full Council.

Councilmember Thomasson stated his belief that financial issues dealt primarily with policy issues rather than details. Therefore, he felt that the financial issues were so important that they should continue to be reviewed by Council as a whole rather than by committee.

Councilmember Steenrod questioned whether Council could study economic development in committee.

Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin voiced support for Councilmember Steenrod's recommendation to form a committee. He said that experienced business people served on Council.

Mayor Wasson said that the private sector often utilized a finance committee to deal with financial issues. He felt that Council should operate the city based upon a business-like model.

Councilmember Steenrod recommended that voucher review be included as a duty of a finance-related committee.

**MOTION** was made Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin and seconded by Councilmember Steenrod to direct staff to draft a resolution to form a council committee regarding finance and economic development.

**VOTE ON MOTION:** Motion passed, 4 – 3, with Councilmembers Sheckler, Thomasson, and White opposed.

Councilmember Thomasson suggested that the specific duty of voucher review be included in the proposed resolution.

Councilmember Steenrod agreed.

**MOTION** was made by Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin and seconded by Councilmember Thomasson to remand the development of a draft public safety strategy discussed at Council retreat to the Public Safety and Transportation Committee.

Councilmember Thomasson noted that police and legal staff were currently working on several crime reduction issues. He clarified that the committee would assist with policy direction regarding related issues.

Mayor Pro Tem Benjamin said that the committee should assist, not interfere, with staff's work.

**VOTE ON MOTION:** Motion passed unanimously.

Possible Separation Agreement of City Attorney

**MOTION** was made by Councilmember Petersen and seconded by Councilmember Thomasson to table the issue to the June 13, 2002 meeting.

**VOTE ON MOTION:** Motion passed, 5 – 2, with Councilmembers Sheckler and White opposed.

NEXT MEETING DATE

June 13, 2002, Regular Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:17 p.m. **MOTION** was made by Councilmember Thomasson, seconded by Councilmember Sheckler and passed unanimously to adjourn the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela M. Chaufy  
Deputy City Clerk