

**WORTHINGTON CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING - WORK SESSION, JANUARY 9, 2015**

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 a.m. in City Hall Council Chambers by Mayor Mike Kuhle with the following Council Members present: Scott Nelson, Diane Graber, Larry Janssen, Mike Harmon, Rod Sankey.

Staff present: Brian Kolander, Finance Director; Brad Chapulis, Director of Community/Economic Development; Kevin Black, Greens Superintendent; Janice Oberloh, City Clerk.

Others present: Mark Shepherd, City Attorney; Justine Wettschreck, KWOA; Erin Trester, Daily Globe; Tom Jansa, Dakota Golf, was contacted via conference call for a portion of the meeting.

PRAIRIE VIEW GOLF LINKS - RATES AND SHORT TERM/LONG TERM PLANNING

Mayor Kuhle reviewed the purpose of the meeting, and reminded Council of prior Council action to leave Prairie View open for this year and come up with a long range plan by establishing a committee. The first thing is the rates, which Council tabled at their December 28th Council meeting - it is his plan to keep Prairie View open this year and keep rates where they are (2014). His suggestion for members of a long range planning committee regarding Prairie View would be two members of Council (Graber and Harmon), two members of the Golf Advisory Board (Carl Nagel and Dale Carlson), and three people from the public, not tied to either course and who do not golf, but are tax payers (he's contacted Amy Ernst, Roger Nelson and Scott Rall, and Bob Demuth, Sr.).

City Attorney Mark Shepherd provided background information on the Prairie View contracts that are currently in effect. We have a year left on the contract with Dakota Golf, and when he contacted Tom Jansa from that organization, Mr. Jansa said based on their earnings from the course last year, he would request a payment of \$15,000 to release the contract. Also, there are two contracts for golf carts, the small contract had one year remaining and would cost the City about \$2,300. The other cart contract is a longer term lease, and he thinks the City could get out of it after one more year, but not his year. That would cost about \$13,000, maybe a little more after 2015. It would cost about \$6 or \$8 thousand to close the course this year. The other consideration is the employee, Kevin Black, who is not under any contract but probably has expectations of employment this year - they would have to deal with that situation. Additionally, there is a joint ownership agreement with the Country Club that provides for value and sharing the equipment. Mayor Kuhle said that Kevin is a long term employee with the City, and whatever happens we need to find a place for him - he's not interested in messing with current employees.

Council Member Sankey said regarding his unawareness or unwillingness to understand Prairie View Golf Course, he has since taken another view. It's a beautiful course and a great asset/amenity to the city. The field house costs should be the same as our parks with budgeted maintenance so it doesn't affect profit and loss. The Clubhouse may then show a profit. He initially wasn't happy with Dakota Golf's proposal to lower the rates, but now thinks they should put more emphasis on management skills. He is willing to work with whatever the consensus is, but the cost for fuel/maintenance should be put into the park department and have an emphasis on making a profit - that

can be accomplished with better management.

Council Member Graber said she would like to stand by the commitment for another year made by prior Council to allow for the planning. Closing would be a big mistake - we need to honor our commitment. There are significant changes going on in this town with other golf courses - we need to take the time and do it right and honor our commitment.

Council Member Nelson said he was concerned about going forward with the same rates as they are significantly higher than our new competitor's. If you stay or reduce - will the subsidy go up even higher?

Council Member Harmon - he read the study that was done for course in 2010 or 2011 - one thing that stood out was the recommendation that Prairie View could not afford to contract with someone, and that's what we did. He would agree with staying open for a year and getting the committee together as soon as possible - they did have some good suggestions in the report.

Council Member Nelson added his personal belief is that we need to close it but in a graduated method.

Council Member Janssen said he thought it was important to go ahead with the contracts for this year and take the time to do the study. What would it cost to lower the rates - has anybody looked at that? Mayor Kuhle responded that he has a personal conviction that government shouldn't get into a price war with private business. Council Member Nelson said he agreed and would like to keep the rates as is. Following additional discussion, Kevin Black suggested that contact be made with Tom Jansa at Dakota Golf if Council wished to discuss rates.

Mr. Jansa was brought into the discussion via conference call. Mr. Jansa said his feeling is that this is a "Custer's last stand" on how it fits into the community, and that there is no wisdom in keeping the rates the same and expecting different results. You need to try something different. His opinion is the rates would need to be 20% lower than Great Life's. The goal is to increase utilization of the course.

Council Member Graber recommended to continue to go for a year as discussed, but that the rates should be separate from the one year plan. Council Member Sankey added it is a beautiful course - if we give quality we don't have to offer a discount. Keep the rates the same as last year unless we want to increase. Mayor Kuhle thanked Mr. Jansa for his time. Mr. Jansa said it would behoove everybody to make a decision on the rates sooner rather than later so they can get the information out and people can make their decision. Mayor Kuhle said they would make the decision Monday night.

Mark Shepherd suggested that Council had reached the end of the line on where they could go with

their discussion in the work session, and that they could continue the discussion on Monday evening.

REVIEW/DISCUSSION WITH CITY ATTORNEY - MEETINGS

Mayor Kuhle said he had asked City Attorney Mark Shepherd to come in and visit with Council regarding what's acceptable and what is not acceptable as far as meetings and communications and those types of things. Mr. Shepherd reviewed a handout distributed to Council from the League of Minnesota Cities regarding the open meeting law, and following review, suggested that Council take it home and read it carefully. The handout and discussion covered types of meetings, serial meetings, penalties for violation, and noted that a Member can be removed after three violations of the open meeting law, and any penalty imposed on a Council Member for violation is not reimbursable by the City.

Mr. Shepherd also talked about the current lack of a City Administrator to act as a liaison between Council and staff - having Council act as management is dangerous. Past Council had decided to have department heads step in, but current Council can change that decision at any time. Mr. Shepherd also cautioned that if individual Council continues to contact staff, it will be difficult for staff to get their work done, that perhaps it would be better to schedule more work sessions to get a consensus on what Council as a whole wants to move forward. Council Member Graber said she likes the work session idea as everyone gets the same information. Council Member Sankey added a caution to Council against hitting the "reply to all" button in email involving Council.

ADJOURNMENT

The motion was made by Council Member Sankey, seconded by Council Member Janssen and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 8:01 a.m.

Janice Oberloh, MCMC
City Clerk