

MINUTES OF THE RULES COMMITTEE
MONDAY, MARCH 4, 2013
6:00 p.m.
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center
Council Chambers

Present: Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, Ald. Coleen Burrus, Jane Grover, Delores Holmes, Ann Rainey, Mark Tendam, Donald Wilson and Melissa Wynne

Absent: Ald. Peter Braithwaite and Judy Fiske

Presiding: Ald. Donald Wilson

Staff Present: Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager, Joe McRae, Deputy City Manager, Fire Chief Greg Klaiber, Police Chief Richard Eddington, Grant Farrar, Corporation Counsel and Godwin Chen, Community & Economic Development

Guest: Sue Calder, Bill Smith, and Matt Smith, Firefighter/Paramedic

CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF QUORUM:

Ald. Wilson declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 6:12 p.m.

CITIZEN COMMENT:

None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 5, 2012:

Ald. Burrus moved approval. Ald. Holmes seconded. Minutes approved.

CHANGE IN MEMBERSHIP TO THE M/W/EBE COMMITTEE:

Ald. Rainey moved approval. Ald. Tendam seconded. Deputy City Manager Joe McRae noted, that Ald. Braithwaite requested that this item be held until the next meeting. Ald. Rainey clarified if the change had to do with a missing Economic Development appointee and wanting to appoint a citizen member instead? The response was yes.

Item held until the next meeting.

PUBLIC SAFETY RESIDENCY SURVEY:

City Manager Bobkiewicz stated several months back a request was made to conduct a survey of police and fire staff about the opinions of those living in Evanston, those who don't and if there were programs or incentives put in place to change that, what might those be?

Godwin Chen reported the request was made at the October 1st Special City Council meeting. In the time that has elapsed the survey has been created in consultation with the fire and police departments, reviewed by certain members of the City Council, and staff completed collecting the survey results at the end of January of this year. The responses are from all those that were received and are verbatim. Respondents from both the police and fire only answered questions that were applicable to their own circumstance, which explains the different number of respondents for each question.

Of the 120 respondents from police, 23% indicated a willingness to reside in Evanston. Barriers preventing these officers from residing in Evanston were indicated as tax load at 87%, cost of housing at 80%, out of 78 officers who responded to that particular question, A third lesser reason

was family rootedness at 25%. A significant minority of the comments in the open ended section revealed concerns about encountering residents during off duty time, residents who they had interacted with in the line of duty and also concerns about familial safety. Reasons indicated for not wanting to reside in Evanston were in line with the barriers indicated in the previous question. And that is 85% of officers indicated city affordability of housing as a barrier, 85% cited tax load, and 60% indicated that they didn't want to reside in an Evanston they also policed. However the open ended section also revealed strong feelings among some about their own perception in the community. And finally, police officers indicated that the top three incentives that they would respond to are reduced property taxes at 61%, interest free loans at 54%, and a reduction in tax load at 50%.

Of the 76 responses collected from the fire, 36% of the firefighters indicated they would be willing to reside in Evanston. Top barriers to residing in Evanston were tax load at 75% and cost of housing at 51%. Reasons cited for preventing fire personnel from residing in Evanston or wanting to reside in Evanston were in line with the previous question as well. Tax load at 64% and affordability of housing at 62%. The top three incentives identified for being effective were interest free loans at 62%, reduction in tax load at 55.4%, and down payment assistance at 51%.

Ald. Holmes found the comments to be very discouraging in terms of their opinions on our schools and community. She thought Council was being very supportive of both departments and would like to figure out how they can do that better, not certain how to go about bridging that. Mayor Tisdahl agreed. She also was concerned by the comments and would like some advice from Chief Klaiber and Chief Eddington on what they can do better in terms of police and fire morale.

Ald. Grover agreed as well. There is some candor involved with the comments and it might have been helpful to include a bigger list of the barriers because almost 30% of the police respondents found that "other" was a significant barrier. Perhaps Matt Smith, new union president for the Evanston Firefighter's Association could help shed light on the firefighter's thoughts about the survey.

Matt Smith, firefighter/paramedic said bear in mind that housing and where you raise a family is such an extremely personal choice and the comments, polls and numbers maybe derive some trends out of that. He is speaking from his own personal insight and/or the opportunity he had this afternoon to talk to a few trusted advisors on this topic. None of this is inclusive but maybe they can get a little better handle on maybe the issues, comments and the ideas that are disturbing. The trends for firefighters are a little lower than for the police when they talk about not wanting to work and live in the same city. Some of the comments talk about that as respect to safety regarding themselves and their family. What has to be understood is that often firemen and paramedics are on the same calls as the police officers. They are there side by side running into the same issues and difficulties as the police officers on these calls. From time to time they are threatened physically by the same people as well. Likewise, when tensions are high and emotions are running high, they cannot differentiate between a police officer giving them a command or telling them what's going on or what happens to them afterwards and a firefighter that's there for everybody else as well. It's very difficult and that is part of why the firemen might not want to work and live in the same place.

Unfortunately, a lot of times firefighters see people at their absolute worst and because of that many of the results aren't always the greatest outcome. It's difficult for some of the members to grasp the idea of possibly walking down the street or responding to someone in their neighborhood and the possible outcomes if they're not positive. He also heard from firefighters that they do live in Evanston for approximately one third of their lives. They shop here and a third of their food budget is spent in Evanston. Some of the members think it's good to have a little variety and not live your entire life in the same small neighborhood. Overall the majority of the people he talked to today, the biggest reasoning is the fact that they test in a lot of different communities, and get hired in Evanston, and felt it was not practical or fair to uproot their families to come live in a town 20 or 25 miles or so away.

Ald. Burrus felt the comments were honest and on target. She stated in this past year particularly she can understand how they didn't feel complete support of all of the elected officials. Of the ones she spoke with back in the fall, many officers were hurt by several Council members apologizing for something when there wasn't a lot of information with something having to do with the police, and through the course of this past year with the shootings. As for the safety of their children, that is probably the most important thing many people look at. Those children do get comments from other kids at their schools about what their parents have done when their kids go to school in the same town. As a police officer you must be completely fearful that when you arrest somebody's brother, dad or uncle, what those other kids are going to do in school. She appreciates the candor and honesty from both the police and fire.

Ald. Rainey feels she supports the police department 150% and resents the commentary. Both fire, police, city employees in general, public servants in general have an obligation to know their community whether they live here or not. She has no interest other than the Chief of Police and the Fire Chief living in our community. And she has no problem with most of the reasons why, taxes are too high, housing is too expensive, and being afraid for your children if you arrest someone. What she objects to is the bashing of our schools and the bashing of City Council who has supported raises, equipment, and many of them including Ald. Holmes and Braithwaite have fought to get cameras where cameras are needed. She has noticed that unless you really know a police officer if you pass them on the street and speak that they might not speak back. There are lots of young ones who have no idea who any of them are, but it shouldn't matter, when anyone speaks to a police officer or firemen they need to speak back. But she is absolutely shocked by the police department, she had no idea they thought this city was being poorly run by their Council. They have to take this survey very seriously and maybe sit down and interact with them or something. They need to talk to the rank and file because it is really scary to think that the police that are serving and protecting our community thinks our schools are rotten and our Council is not supportive.

Ald. Grover stated she is thankful that they send a police officer to Leadership Evanston every year. That is one way to bridge the gap by bringing an officer in to learning broadly and deeply about everything and understanding the community better. They should look at putting their sworn personnel, the rank and file, and policy makers in the same room at the same time or at least at the same event somehow to have the chance to be human to them as they know they are every day on the job.

Ald. Wynne said she agrees with a number of the things that have been said, but what bothers her is the edge that's in the tone in these comments. She understands if someone says "I don't think the schools are high enough quality" or "I would prefer to send my children to a different school district." But over and over there is this edge or tone that's quite frankly contempt. That is what bothers her most, the schools in Evanston are so central to the lives of Evanstonians and to realize that whatever percentage of our police and fire, they all think everyone is an idiot for sending their kids to these schools. What they need to do is get firefighters and police officers into the elementary schools, middle schools, and the high school so they can see what really happens in those great institutions. Because for some reason they don't think we have schools that operate in a normal, safe, happy, learning-enriching environment. They need a public relations campaign between the police and fire departments to actually get them to events, have them come to YAMO, sporting event, Lincoln School on Martin Luther King Day, or for any of the other really interesting and creative things that are going on.

Ald. Holmes stated to be real clear in terms of the survey, the survey came up last year, but the request in terms of incentives and what could be done to entice first responders to live in Evanston has been an ongoing conversation ever since she has been on the Council. It didn't happen, as it states in the document, because of the Greenwell issue. That might have pushed it forward as far as

the survey is concerned. She was not surprised that people didn't want to live where they worked. They've been hearing that all along. That's why they were trying to see if there was anything that might entice them to maybe think about living in Evanston. If the comments were just focused on living in Evanston that would have been fine. But she felt like it was an attack on the community in terms of who they are as Evanston and then her question would be "why do you want to work here?" It made her feel really, really sad.

Ald. Burrus feels there are a lot of comments about what's in the comments but not enough about what police and fire are saying to them and what can be done to make the life safety personnel feel more welcome and appreciated. Every day without them the people are in danger, they are between us and a bullet, between us and someone running us off the road, between us and a heart attack and getting to a hospital, and between us and a fire.

Ald. Wilson stated there are a limited number of negative comments. Out of the total number being talked about is a handful. If they went to the grocery store and polled a hundred people more than three, four or five would say the schools in Evanston are bad or have something negative to say about them. That is not surprising or shocking. They should share the information with the schools. We know Evanston because we live here, but there's a whole outside world that looks at things in the news and only see what's newsworthy. Oftentimes those items are negative. The interactions that first responders have tend to be crisis, problems, and things that are going wrong. It is also important to look at the comments and think about what we might be doing as a Council that is impacting people's perception, these employees' perception. And not just with the fire and safety, these are a segment of the population that is outside looking in and also people who are inside and should have better insight. If they are still seeing these things and have these perceptions it warrants addressing a little bit further and a little bit more deeply.

Ald. Holmes suggested to members who do not sit on the Human Services Committee to go back and read the minutes or view the tape regarding the Greenwall case in terms of not supporting. If she remembers correctly even though apologies were made that evening, they were made not for the actions of the police but something that had happened to the lady. And they were told that evening that that was not before a committee, and they did not have any information and could not make any comments on it. She is not certain what the police saw, read or looked at but that was it. You can certainly apologize to a citizen who's upset in terms of them being upset for whatever reason. The members didn't have any reason to give except to apologize for her being so upset that evening. An apology was made but not because they were apologizing for something the police did to her.

Ald. Grover added she was one who apologized that evening, and it wasn't making apologies for anything the police did. She believes it was apologizing for the repercussions for their child. Not for anything the police did, not for any judgments they made, not for decisions that day, just because his parents were hurting and upset and there was room in that discussion for sincere apology for how they were feeling and for the repercussions for their child and that's what it was all about for her.

Ald. Tendam stated he was the odd man out that evening but he thought it was premature that night to really offer that apology and still thinks it was premature and obviously it was conceived differently by members of the public.

City Manager Bobkiewicz said he is thrilled that employees felt comfortable enough to actively take part in the survey, to know that they would be honest in their comments and to know that those comments would be shared with Council. There are not many other management teams of cities that would take those kinds of comments and put them on a public agenda. He thinks there are kernels of truth in the comments and one of those kernels is that all of the employees, not just police and

firefighters, but everyone in all of the departments are a little out of touch with what's going on in Evanston. It is important to continue to work with all city employees to see how to better expose them to the schools and special events. Find out how many are going to the Next Theater, Piven Theater, and Actor's Gym for those kinds of events. This is an important topic to continue talking about at Rules, and hopes Council would consider expanding this topic, not just to police officers and firefighters, but to all employees in all departments and really focus on how to do a better job not only of connecting them to the larger Evanston community, but also to continue to look at how the Council can be more involved in recognition ceremonies, recognition efforts.

His proposal would be to let him come back at a future Rules Committee meeting with a project as to how can they can greater engage all of employees. Because this is an issue in every department and something they should be vigilant on that many communities ignore and many Councils don't care. This Council absolutely cares and if he can help provide some practical ways to move forward and deal with this constructively he would like to try and do that.

DISCUSSION OF AD PLACEMENTS AND HOW OUTLETS ARE SELECTED (Ald. Rainey):

City Manager Bobkiewicz reported there is no policy in place on ad placements. Printed advertising is largely confined to the Evanston Review and the Evanston Roundtable and online advertising to Evanston Patch and Evanston Now. There's not a lot of advertising but things that are done associates with the budget. A lot of advertising is done through the Parks and Recreation guide and 18000 people get the email blast every week. If the committee would like a more precise policy staff would be happy to bring one forward. The recommendation is that given the small dollars being spent on the four outlets that are largely dealt with, would be continue to do this more on the ad hoc basis.

Ald. Wilson asked if tracking is done on who is used and how much is spent. City Manager Bobkiewicz said not specifically, but through the bills list all of that is captured. But in the scheme of the 250 million dollar budget, annually he thinks they are in the low tens of thousands of dollars for advertising with all media.

Ald. Rainey thinks it's a spending issue that there is no policy for and there should be one. They have lots of media outlets and should be grateful for all of them. She suggested they should have some kind of plan as to how they advertise to different things. Public notices are separate, but has concerns about the number of display ads that are done. A lot of things that are advertised should be announcements in the papers. For example, ice shows at Robert Crown, why can't they get articles in the paper about upcoming Robert Crown ice show?

City Manager Bobkiewicz said he has been talking to the recreation division about the ads that the various community centers place. They bring that one up particularly as an emphasis that that ad generates a tremendous amount of ticket sales. There's an awareness that the event is happening and all of the media outlets are very generous. They print every press release that is sent to them. But staff has learned over time, especially Parks, Recreation, and Community Services that there are some particular ads placed for some particular events that generate additional revenue to the City and additional participants. If it's the Committee's desire, staff would be happy to come back at a future meeting with a proposed policy and additional information. Ald. Rainey asked if other communities have policies on advertising.

City Manager Bobkiewicz responded that most communities have a pretty modest amount of money budgeted for advertising so he does not think the issue comes up. They have two print publications, one that's weekly and one that's every two weeks, plus two more viable online entities that a lot of communities don't have. Most have one print publication and perhaps no online publication so the options aren't as great. He is personally very aware of sensitivity to costs associated with advertising,

and thinks they keep it to a minimum.

Ald. Tendam asked if there has ever been thought of buying a year contract with a publication and try to negotiate a price that was based on quantity of things that are anticipating being in print. City Manager Bobkiewicz said not in the recent past, again just because of the volume they haven't thought it has justified that. But it's certainly something they could look at.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned 7:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Francellno

A video of this meeting is available at www.cityofevanston.org/government/agendas-minutes/agendas-minutes--rules-committee.