

MINUTES OF THE RULES COMMITTEE  
Monday, April 7, 2014  
6:30 p.m.  
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center  
Council Chambers

Present: Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, Ald. Peter Braithwaite, Judy Fiske, Delores Holmes, Ann Rainey, Mark Tendam, and Donald Wilson

Absent: Ald. Coleen Burrus, Jane Grover and Melissa Wynne

Presiding: Ald. Ann Rainey

Staff Present: Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager

Guest: Sue Calder, League of Women Voters, Betty Sue Ester, Bill Smith, Evanston Now, and Bob Seidenberg, Pioneer Press

**CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF QUORUM:**

Ald. Rainey declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 6:41 p.m.

**CITIZEN COMMENT:**

None

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF MARCH 3, 2014:**

Ald. Fiske moved for approval of the March 3, 2014 minutes. Ald. Braithwaite seconded. Minutes approved.

**PLAN FOR CITY MANAGER EVALUATION:**

Ald. Rainey stated she emailed to the committee the City Manager's evaluation form from last year and the ICMA Manager Evaluations Handbook. She also spoke to Ald. Holmes who indicated that she, Ald. Grover and Wynne, the fabulous committee from last year, would be willing to reconvene and come to the next Rules Committee meeting with a proposal.

Ald. Holmes said the ICMA Manager Evaluations handbook had been emailed to the Council about six weeks ago. After receiving the handbook she did a lot of reviewing on it and based on her conversations with Ald. Grover and Wynne they decided there were some changes that needed to be made on the current form. Once Ald. Grover and Wynne return they will meet and incorporate some of the changes and report back at the next Rules Committee meeting. The plan would be that they send a draft copy so that by the next Rules Committee meeting they might be able to finalize the form.

Ald. Braithwaite noted he distinctly remembered from the last evaluation, conversation on adding the Director's piece, and wondered if that's something they are still considering. Ald. Holmes stated they did take notes from last year and can look at that. She asked that he send an email as a reminder and if anyone else has something they would like the committee to look at they should send them an email and they will take it into consideration.

Ald. Rainey asked if anyone would like to volunteer to be part of the committee this year. Ald. Braithwaite volunteered. Ald. Holmes said if someone else wants to volunteer she would be willing to step down because she has been doing it for a long time. Ald. Rainey asked that she not do that. She thanked Ald. Holmes, Grover and Wynne for continuing to serve.

**REPORT ON PLAN TO INCORPORATE FUNCTIONS OF EVANSTON TOWNSHIP INTO CITY OF EVANSTON:**

City Manager Bobkiewicz reported that on the Council agenda for tomorrow evening is an ordinance that would have the City formally receive all of the functions of Evanston Township. The hope is the ordinance will be introduced tomorrow and then a second reading on April 28th. Also planned is to have a final Town Board meeting on April 28<sup>th</sup> and have the Town Board take similar actions with the anticipation that the Township would dissolve on April 30th. Beginning May 1st the General Assistance portion will become part of the Health Department functions. As discussed previously, the existing General Assistance staff would continue and necessary arrangements are being made to bring them on as City staff members as of May 1st. On the Township Assessor side, recruitment will begin for a full-time staff position to be responsible for the property assessment advising services and likely some additional duties as well. So in addition to the City Council meeting tomorrow there is also the Annual Town meeting where some of this will be discussed as well.

Ald. Wilson said there is training and certification that the Assessor would ordinarily participate in. Will the new staff person engage in some similar types of training so that they are up to speed with whatever the prior Assessor was able to do for people?

City Manager Bobkiewicz pointed out that they will make sure the individual is familiar with the Cook County systems, which is different than other systems throughout the State of Illinois, but are most important. The training that has been required for all Township Assessor's goes far beyond anything that the Evanston Township Assessor was really required to do. And as there are opportunities and changes are made they will make sure that individual is integrated in. The intention is to provide the same type of services that have been provided previously for residents.

Ald. Rainey added only the elected Township Assessor was required to have those courses. No clerical, or assistant or Deputy was required to have it. Frankly, she absolutely objects and does not support the addition of a city employee who is going to do tax appeal work of any kind. There is a variety of opportunities throughout the community for those services. One place that does an excellent job is Commissioner Larry Suffredin's office and as she stated earlier in a memo, she would have no problem supporting, by way of some kind of subsidy, Commissioner Suffredin's office at those times when the support is needed. For example, during the appeal process or the reassessment period. But to put someone else on the payroll in the City of Evanston is unnecessary and she objects to that.

Ald. Holmes asked in terms of the closing out of the Township, will there be discussion tomorrow night at the Town meeting on what that process will be in terms of closing out audit, budget and those kinds of things that will have to be covered as they close down the Township? City Manager Bobkiewicz said it is a pretty straightforward process. They will do an audit for the fiscal year that will end, in this case, April 30<sup>th</sup>. Staff is in the process of transferring the accounts payable and payroll to the city's system. The General Assistance payments will continue for now, under the existing system they have, so all that will remain.

Ald. Holmes commented that she remembers last year they did a 9 month budget to get them through Dec. 31, 2013. They have a full budget for this year so will they be closing out in 4 months rather than a year and will they have an audit then for the close out of Dec. 31, 2013 as well as April 30, 2014? City Manager Bobkiewicz said not entirely. They will have an audit through April 30, 2014. The last transactions will be a transfer of funds from the Township to the City. So the activity of the Township will cease on April 30th. What staff is asking the City Council to do is create a General Assistance fund within the City. So they would transfer the balances of the General Assistance fund of the

Township into a General Assistance fund for the City. As for the Town fund dollars, staff is proposing that it be transferred to the City's general fund, the Assessor position will be absorbed within the General Fund. That will be the last transactions of the Township. Then an audit will be done and those books will close on April 30, 2014. A part of the ordinance for tomorrow evening is asking to amend the city budget, accept this funding and to then have that activity continue in the city. So that will be reflected in budget reports that are given to City Council for the balance of the fiscal year and then be part of the audit at the end of the year.

Ald. Holmes said the tax levy that the Township had, of course will no longer be, so how will that be incorporated into the city? Will they not have that levy, will it be dropped completely or will that be added to the city? Will that be explained tomorrow evening or is there going to be another time for this kind of detailed information to be provided to the residents? City Manager Bobkiewicz said they will continue a General Assistance levy, they will not continue the Town levy. The Town functions are largely going away. The General Assistance levy pays for the General Assistance Emergency Assistance Services. The Town levy didn't, in part, pay for the property assessment services and that will not become part of the General Fund. So the only additional levy that will continue under the city's new authority under the legislative act that allowed them to absorb the Township will continue to levy a line for General Assistance so that will be part of the budget process for 2015 and going forward, is that line for General Assistance.

Ald. Braithwaite stated he has concerns with previous comments in terms of looking at potentially eliminating the Assessor position. The function of that person is twofold and a lot of this is based on feedback from residents. There is the piece that helps residents understand how they can lower their taxes without having to spend money and the Township has been doing that for years. The other value in the position is the help provided to the aging and senior population to really help provide that on the spot assistance for the senior freezes and so on. There was a situation with one of his residents where a spouse died and the taxes had to be transferred into someone else's name. It is a really valuable service that is provided. One thing he has said during this whole transition is that he and the Council will continue to fight to make sure they don't eliminate any services. They are looking for ways to make it more efficient. Bonnie Wilson did a really good job of documenting exactly how many people came in for the month and he spoke to the City Manager about that. He understands that it may not be a full-time position but hopes it will still be a position that is paid attention to because there are services that are needed. He has heard no complaints from residents about the new person.

Ald. Rainey added that it is interesting that when there was a push to reduce the Council from 18 to 9 members, it was argued that it was a tax saving effort. Within a year or two of changing the Council from 18 to 9 the Council budget far exceeded the budget of the 18 member Council. So she does not see this movement as a tax saving effort at all. If they are going to continue to pile on expenditures for the City budget, she really doesn't see any point in having abolished the Township. She voted to abolish the Township and did so because she believed the City could be more efficient in providing for General Assistance, both housing and personal expenses. She is very concerned that if they keep adding people they will find themselves in the same situation that the people in the City of Evanston found themselves in after reducing the size of the City Council. She is totally supportive of the effort of Commissioner Suffredin's office and thinks they do a spectacular job and the City could aid them in doing even a better job.

Ald. Braithwaite commented that there are a number of organizations that deal with youth, homeless and the hungry and if they have to help residents with their taxes he is ok with that. Actually you bring up a really good point and something he has had a few discussions with staff on and that is as they become more efficient with getting the word out and providing services there is an opportunity their

caseload numbers will go up. Not sure if that is a good problem to have but it is something they will have to deal with in the near future. Ald. Rainey said there are a lot of taxing bodies that show up on your tax bill and perhaps some of the others can reach out and help with it, but she doesn't see that happening. But Commissioner Suffredin's office will go anywhere to provide the service.

Ald. Rainey announced that once a year the City Council meets on a Tuesday in April as a Council so they can be coterminous, so to speak, with the Annual Town meeting which will be the last Annual Town meeting. There will be a full report at the Town meeting on Tuesday night.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

Mayor Tisdahl congratulated the Evanston students responsible for all the artwork surrounding the Council Chambers. They did a terrific job and she is delighted they can all admire their work while it is on display.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Meeting adjourned 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Darlene Francellno

A video of this meeting is available at [www.cityofevanston.org/government/agendas-minutes/agendas-minutes--rules-committee](http://www.cityofevanston.org/government/agendas-minutes/agendas-minutes--rules-committee).