

MINUTES OF THE RULES COMMITTEE
Monday, April 17, 2017
7:00 p.m.
Lorraine H. Morton Civic Center
Council Chambers

Present: Ald. Peter Braithwaite, Ald. Judy Fiske, Ald. Delores Holmes, Ald. Brian Miller, Ald. Ann Rainey, Ald. Eleanor Revelle, Mayor Elizabeth Tisdahl, Ald. Donald Wilson, and Ald. Melissa Wynne

Absent: Ald. Mark Tendam

Presiding: Ald. Donald Wilson

Staff Present: Wally Bobkiewicz, City Manager, Grant Farrar, City Attorney, Corporation Counsel, and Patricia Efiom, Equity & Empowerment Coordinator

Guest: Bill Smith, Evanston Now

CALL TO ORDER/DECLARATION OF QUORUM:

Ald. Wilson declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:30 p.m.

CITIZEN COMMENT:

Junad Rizski spoke on the conflict of interest with the new Mayor continuing to serve on the board of First Bank and Trust.

Madelyn Ducre asked for a quick summary of what the Rules Committee is about and who is on it.

Ald. Wilson said the Rules Committee is composed of all Council members and the Mayor. It's the only committee the Mayor has a vote on. In short form, the committee deals with the process and procedures on how City Council undertakes its duties and responsibilities.

Ald. Holmes added for clarify that they will not have a new Mayor until May 8. Mayor Tisdahl added that she does not sit on the board of the bank.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETINGS OF AUGUST 1, 2016:

Ald. Braithwaite moved approval. Ald. Tisdahl seconded. Minutes approved.

POLICY ON BANKING:

City Manager Bobkiewicz stated there was a referral from Ald. Rainey regarding how financial institutions are selected. Mr. Lyons provided a report that reviews that procedure and notes that the last time the city went through an RFP process was in 2012. That was anticipated that it would be a 5 year period and if they were to move forward they would be looking at the end of the calendar year to make a change.

Ald. Fiske commented that she has a problem with service on the Board of Directors of First Bank & Trust. She asked for information on whether service on that board is compensated and whether the compensation is tied to an increase or decrease in businesses to the performance of the banking institution. City Manager Bobkiewicz stated he did speak with Mayor-Elect Hagerty who is a member of the board of First Bank & Trust. Mayor-Elect Hagerty is compensated. Not certain about the particulars of that compensation but Mayor-Elect has indicated that he is reviewing his service on the

board and has not yet made a decision if he is going to make a change in that service. If that is the case, Ald. Fiske said she would like to include in their Rules under Section J. Disclosures and Potential Conflicts elected officials and not just persons doing business with the City of Evanston that may be tied to the banking institutions. There will be a potential conflict there and it needs to be addressed. It appears the Rules may cover that but would like to make sure.

Ald. Miller reminded the Council about the incident with the sale of Chicken & Waffles. First Bank & Trust was the primary on the loan and the City was secondary. First Bank & Trust got fully reimbursed for the short sale and the City didn't receive any of that. They are going to run into a number of these considerations unless they consider the Mayor-Elect's sitting on the board of First Bank & Trust and potential deals with the City. This isn't something to be taken lightly because there are a variety of incidents where the City does business with First Bank & Trust. He agrees with Ald. Fiske that on page 480 Section J, might cover it but this is a serious issue that they really need to be aware of in the coming years. They might want to examine stricter rules regarding this potential contract.

Ald. Wilson clarified that the Committee would be provided the proposed RFP and will have an opportunity to contribute whatever thoughts or inputs on that process. City Manager Bobkiewicz said that is correct.

POLICY ON ADVERTISING:

City Manager Bobkiewicz stated that staff tries to advertise with all the various publications that serve Evanston to spread the media dollars around. Advertising is done in print with the Evanston Roundtable, Evanston Review and the Daily Northwestern, boost post on Facebook, and also advertise on Evanston Now.

Ald. Wilson pointed out that there were some members of the community who had reached out to them and spoke at public comment on concerns about content, particularly one of the businesses that the city does advertise with. He tried to review things like comments and information on other sources of news and one of the difficult things is that people say all sorts of awful things on all of the news comments. That should be relevant in their ongoing conversation on how they get information out. One thing he would like going forward in the future is an independent budget for advertising. Mr. Lyons reported there is an advertising line item in several areas. But there are also expenses that are part of the purchasing process. For instance, there is a large expense every year with the Roundtable when the treasures report is published. Early he did a search of their 3 main vendors Roundtable, Pioneer Press/Tribune and Evanston Now and came up with about \$59,000.00 in payments to those 3 entities. The Tribune is the largest and that is representative of the required legal advertisements, or notices that are put in there for bids, zoning and a variety of things that are put in the Tribune to get a very large circulation. Ald. Wilson said he would like to see it broken down in 2 categories, the legally required notices and the other he would refer to as marketing. City Manager Bobkiewicz added that staff can provide general numbers on the non-legal responsibility.

Ald. Fiske asked if the non-legal dollars could be used to encourage people to go to the city's website and sign up and whether they would be achieving the same thing going forward at almost no cost. City Manager Bobkiewicz said over time they have spent less because more is done online now. They have gotten away from those full and half page ads that were done consistently in the Evanston Roundtable and Evanston Review. Unfortunately a lot of that has to do with the decrease in the circulation of the Evanston Review. They do try to mix it up and also realize that many residents are not online or not comfortable online and still look at a print newspaper. Most of the printed advertising is in the Roundtable. The Thursday e-newsletter reaches 35,000 so compare that to the circulation numbers of the other publications that is much larger than most.

Ald. Fiske said it would be good if they could help train people to go to the City's Facebook page, for example. City Manager Bobkiewicz said that has been done but they still hear from people that if they didn't read it in the Roundtable it must not exist. They are catching lots of people in lots of different ways.

Ald. Miller added that there is concern in the community about the city not having standards of where those advertising dollars are being spent. People have felt the reporting on Evanston Now is bias and discriminatory. This isn't just a question of how the dollars are being spent across a couple of news outlets. It is a question of what type of outlets are they supporting. He reference to the Equity Empowerment Coordinator to consider setting guidelines for how they spend the advertising dollars in regards to the content.

Dr. Efiom stated she did meet with the parties who were concerned. In looking at their concerns, the language is not always nice, but to call it racism and to stop advertising would be detrimental. It is really important if they are going to do this to at least do a broader study. In her opinion at this point, there is just nothing there to say they shouldn't advertise. She agreed with Ald. Wilson, if you look at the newspapers, not only locally but nationally, they just don't use language that people necessarily like, and uses language that doesn't always portrait persons in the best light. But you are also talking about their publishing facts and people may not like what they say but they are publishing the facts. In terms of an equity perspective she would be very concern if they had persons who came to City Council and said they wanted us to look at something as racists and then they make a decision based on that. What she would rather see is a comprehensive policy that gives guidelines of what is racism and then where do they draw the line. It is really important from an equity standpoint to not make a quick decision on things like this because it really is not fair.

Ald. Rainey commented that one of the thing that came out of this was those that were criticizing became bullies. There was a lot of bullying going on online by grown adults who otherwise portrait themselves as very sophisticated and conducted very sophisticated bullying campaigns. She felt that she was a victim of some of that. Moving on she said one of the best ways to drive people to the city's website is by these kinds of ads on Evanston Now. When you click on those ads and it sends you right to the city's website. She asked if they are able to calculate the number of people who go from the ads to the website. City Manager Bobkiewicz said he thought they could calculate that information and will share it.

Dr. Efiom added that with the equity piece it is always important to hear from the people who are being harmed. Racism is a serious issue but it is always easy to through the word out and get folks to freeze and stop when they really need to consider is this an act of racism. Part of the equity empowerment role is to get people together to hear what the community as a whole is saying and then develop policies based on the whole of the what the community is saying as opposed to a group. Ald. Rainey stated that one of the interesting things she found was that a lot of the accusations and bullying was coming from Caucasian women. She can't wait to get into some of the conversations on equity and empowerment. She just thought that was interesting that they were doing all the accusing, at least the out loud bold bulling accusing.

Dr. Efiom pointed out that today Equity & Empowerment had their first town hall meeting. This issue was very much a part of the conversation on how do they not speak on behalf of others and instead allow those voices to emerge. Equity and Empowerment is about engaging in conversation with the entirety of the community. Her fear is at City Council meetings you often don't get full representation.

Therefore, how do you reach beyond City Council to get to hear those voices and get adequate representation?

Ald. Braithwaite shared simple math information he received from staff to on advertising spending. In 2016 the city spent \$10,649 with the Evanston Roundtable, Pioneer Press \$46,488, and Evanston Now \$1,752.

Ald. Fiske noted that when they advertise in a place that allows anonymous comments they are actually contributing to the dialogue that is going on there. If they are going to be spending their advertising dollars they can say they want to spend their dollars in a place that reflects the values that they hope they want to instill in the community. And that is everybody comes together, can say whatever they want and do it face to face and person to person and not hide behind some anonymous name. She knows some people who have been excluded from posting on Evanston Now. She doesn't know about the Roundtable or anywhere else but her sense is that people are either asked or do use their real names when they post at the Roundtable.

Ald. Wilson noted that is a good and legitimate point but their election season is a good example of how that doesn't actually work. People in the community were subjected to wicked and vicious and horrifying, bullying for saying things about candidates or campaign issues. It was so disturbing. People that posted something perfectly legitimate as far as an opinion was concerned were just attacked and that carried over into school parking lots and into the community. He thinks that accounts for why people still feel strongly about anonymous posting. He personally doesn't like anonymous posting, but thinks that people don't feel safe or comfortable saying the things they want to say. Some people don't feel safe or comfortable putting certain yard signs in their yards. Some people aren't comfortable putting a Black Lives Matters sign in their yard because they are afraid of repercussions for that. That is very, very, very unfortunate but that is a practical reality so in balancing these things out it is a difficult balance. You want people to have a voice and opportunity but he thinks there is a large number of people who just simply are not comfortable using their name even though they may have something legitimate to say. And I think it is the legitimate comments that far out weight the ones that are really awful.

Ald. Holmes added that a part of this cultural, in terms of when they started to look at social media, which everyone knows she has issues with, you don't have that need to do that in print media. People will sign their names and put it in the Roundtable and same with the Evanston Review. But online you can just do that crazy stuff that they do on Instagram, Facebook or wherever. The things that you hear about are horrible and people are really mean to each other.

Ald. Miller said if they are going to have a true conversation then the editor should be posting every comment that comes in as opposed to picking and choosing the ones he wants. Bill Smith said some comments are racist, liberalist and some are terribly offensive. They impose restrictions on what people will say and what they will be allowed to say because they maintain some community standards. They might not be exactly the standards that you would like or that anyone else would like but they do have standards that they apply. He is also absolutely certain, from his past experience working in print media, that newspapers don't print every letter that is sent to them. Ald. Miller said that is the point. If they want to have an honest discussion of where they are spending taxpayer dollars it is the Evanston Now's opinion they are paying for.

Mayor Tisdahl said when you start trying to control the press by spending \$1000 or not spending \$1000 with Evanston Now you are on a slippery slope and they are not equipped to read all the press and follow everybody's comments. The most anonymous comments and the ones that worry her the most

are those of great anonymity. When you say you are not speaking for yourself but for other people and these other people have voices that are not able to be heard. She goes through Evanston a great deal and meets all sorts of people and tries to be a good listener. When she listens she hears very articulate, wonderful voices and she does not find people whose voices cannot be heard and need someone else to speak for them. To her anonymous is when you don't sign your name but anonymous that is even more dangerous is when you say you speak for other people and not for yourself and you don't name the other people you just speak for them. She hopes they will not go into the land of trying to control the press.

Mayor Tisdahl moved to accept and place on file the information received. Ald. Holmes seconded. Motion approved.

NEW BUSINESS:

None

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned 11:15p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Darlene Francellno

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