

PROCEEDINGS OF THE SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE CITY OF GRAND FORKS

April 19, 2021

The Subcommittee of the Committee of the Whole of the City of Grand Forks met in City Hall – Room A102 at 5:03pm CST with Council Member Danny Weigel presiding. Present at roll call were Council Members Ken Vein and Katie Dachtler (via Zoom).

REVIEW OF VARIOUS CITY COUNCIL MEETINGS AGENDA SETTING PROCESS AND ANY FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION REQUESTED

Todd Feland (City Administrator) began by declaring that the goal of the meeting would be to further define what the Subcommittee would like city administration to further research. He expressed he did not feel agenda setting was a major issue and gave a summary of the current process and the timelines for other cities in relation to the agenda, staff reports, and final action by the legislative body. Mr. Feland said they have found that other communities only meet twice a month and often have large consent agendas. Mr. Feland proposed the Subcommittee consider possibly moving City Council meetings to only twice a month with work sessions as desired by the council in off weeks in lieu of meeting four times a month between Committee of the Whole meetings and City Council. Mr. Feland said if that were done, staff could get the agenda and staff reports out further in advance. He also expressed that moving from four meetings a month to two meetings could result in more engaging conversations for Council Members.

Council Member Vein said the process for setting the agenda is pretty straight forward. He spoke about the process for Council Members getting items they would like on the agenda. Mr. Feland said they will typically put those on the agenda when requested. He said that he as the City Administrator will usually write staff reports for those Council Member requested agenda items on behalf of the Council Member. Mr. Feland added that all the Mayors he has worked with during his time with the City have allowed staff and Council members to put items on the agenda and stated that there were agenda items requested by Council Members during the COVID-19 pandemic placed on the agenda.

Council Member Weigel said it would be nice to get agenda items further in advance on either Wednesday or Thursday before meetings. Council Member Dachtler reiterated that sentiment.

Council Member Weigel asked about Council Members adding agenda items on the day of a Council meeting. Dan Gaustad (City Attorney) provided feedback on what he found from looking at other cities' agenda setting processes.

Council Member Vein said he likes having a Committee of the Whole and City Council meeting as it gives the public time to react after Committee of the Whole recommendations are made in advance of the final action at City Council. He said the Committee of the Whole is where most of the discussion takes place and then results in most going onto the consent agenda at the following City Council meeting. Mr. Feland added that if more discussion is needed, they can always bring it back to another council meeting

for further consideration. Council Member Weigel said there are many items the public does not pay much attention to, like public works and engineering related items. Council Member Vein said the key is to find the right balance between length and quickness. Mr. Feland said there is a lot of time spent on more perfunctory items like engineering bids and public works contracts that have already identified the lowest bid and cost for the City. Council Member Weigel said that this could be something discussed at the next meeting.

REVIEW OF VARIOUS CITY OF GRAND FORKS COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS PROCESS AND ANY FURTHER RESEARCH AND ACTION REQUESTED

Mr. Feland said that a vast majority of the time the Mayor selects community members to serve on local committees and boards and that the City Council confirms those nominees. He added that one thing that has changed during Mayor Bochenski's tenure is that more people are applying for these positions than in the past. He added that one of the concerns in the past were that it was often many of the same community members serving on all of these boards.

Mr. Gaustad said the language in City Code regarding appointments are written a number of different ways and that he would be looking for some direction on what the Subcommittee members would like to see.

Council Member Vein said he did not understand the reasoning or rationale for the numbers of different phrasings and why sometimes the City Council President nominates people and other times it is the Mayor. He said the ultimate goal should be to ensure that good people are appointed to these positions. Mr. Feland said that the separation of powers between the executive branch and legislative branch are an effective way to make sure there is oversight and accountability in the appointment of these various board members.

Council Member Dachtler said she agreed with the comments from Council Member Vein. She said it would be helpful if the reasonings for these processes were streamlined and communicated up front for future Council Members. She added that these checks and balances are important. Council Member Dachtler said her biggest concern is the opportunity for Council Member engagement during the process, especially if there is a Council Member on the board with the opening. She said she would like to see the appointment process be a more collaborative effort and that turnover on the current library board is concerning.

Council Member Weigel said they should take a week to write down further ideas. Mr. Gaustad said next meeting will be a good chance to identify a more direct and formal direction.

Mr. Feland said he would plan for this Subcommittee to meet at 4:30pm on Monday, April 26.

OTHER PERTINENT MATTERS

No discussion.

ADJOURNMENT – 5:30pm CST