

CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
Municipal Court Room
Monday, August 22, 2016
5:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Mayor Sharon Konopa and Councilors Rich Kellum, Ray Kopczynski, Floyd Collins, Dick Olsen, Bill Coburn, and Bessie Johnson.

Councilors absent: None.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

None.

PARKWISE FEES

Transportation Systems Analyst Ron Irish explained the request to increase the fees for parking citations, as outlined in the letter from ParkWise Executive Director Peggy Burris. ParkWise is contracted to enforce downtown parking restrictions and impose fines and fees as set forth in the Albany Municipal Code (AMC).

Councilor Ray Kopczynski stated that he is willing to explore potential increases, but he needs to see additional information related to revenue and expenditures.

In response to questions from Council, Burris explained that the additional revenue is needed to update their ticketing system, which is outdated and no longer supported by the software provider, and to budget for pay increases for parking enforcement employees. Burris will bring information back to Council outlining how the increased fees would affect their budget.

City Attorney Jim Delapoer noted that all other fines and fees provided for in the AMC have increased over the last eight years, while this section of the AMC has remained static. He voiced concern that such low fines could reduce the rate of successful enforcement because the penalty for violation is not steep enough.

Councilor Rich Kellum asked questions related to collection of unpaid fines. Burris stated there over \$18,000 worth of citations currently uncollected by ParkWise. Discussion followed. Burris noted that occasional violators tend to pay; repeat offenders are the ones with whom they have so many issues. Kellum said the larger issue appears to be the number of people who can dismiss their tickets without recourse. He would like to see the fine increase dramatically after a certain period, 60 days for example, so that tickets are taken more seriously and more likely to be enforced.

Councilor Bill Coburn agreed, saying it sounds like there's more of an enforcement issue than a revenue issue, and he doesn't believe increased fees are a good idea for downtown business. Discussion followed related to other options for enforcement including filing suit against the debtor in Municipal Court or, even, the City resuming administration of parking enforcement. Delapoer believes that once a major judgment is filed against a debtor, the word will spread and people will begin to take their citations more seriously.

Konopa voiced support for the increase and believes it is needed to continue with a successful ParkWise program, which she feels is able to run much more cost-effectively than if the City were to handle parking enforcement.

Councilor Floyd Collins questioned whether some of the issues stem from a lack of parking spaces available to employees. Burris explained that there are lease spaces in the Bridges lot, located off NW Water Avenue, between NW Ellsworth and N Lyon Streets, as well as employee permit parking throughout downtown. Discussion followed. Kellum and Councilor Dick Olsen also voiced support for raising fees.

MOTION: Olsen moved to direct staff to prepare an ordinance outlining the increase in fees. Kopczynski seconded.

Coburn said it is premature to support the motion. He is unable to make a decision without more information related to the number of tickets issued for each type of violation, how that figure is represented in overall ticketing, etc. He sees no value in raising fees for tickets that are hardly ever issued. On the other hand, if 95% of the tickets issued are for parking over four hours, perhaps the fee needs to be increased for only that category. Discussion followed. Councilor Bessie Johnson agreed that more information is needed before making a decision.

VOTE: Konopa called for a vote on the motion and it failed 4-2 with Collins, Johnson, Kellum, and Coburn voting no.

Burris distributed a current profit and loss report (see agenda file). She noted that there is \$21,000 carry over from the previous fiscal year, as they billed in June and weren't paid until July.

LOW-INCOME UTILITY ASSISTANCE REVIEW

Public Works Senior Accountant Jeff Babbitt reviewed the current qualification criteria for the Low Income Assistance Program (LIAP), as outlined in the staff report. He explained that revenues exceed expenses by roughly \$27,000 per year, and there are opportunities available to relax the qualification criteria and expand the program.

Public Works Customer Services Supervisor Patty McInnes agreed that there is definitely room to relax the qualification criteria; there are a number of citizens who are just outside the income threshold, so that is one possible adjustment to be made.

Peggy McGuire, Director of Housing and Energy Services for the Community Services Consortium (CSC), said that Albany's LIAP has been a model for other communities in the area. She apologized that specific figures were not available at the meeting as to how certain changes to the qualification criteria might affect the program's available funds, but CSC staff will do some additional research and bring that information back to Council. Discussion followed.

Collins noted that when LIAP was first established, the idea was to keep it extremely simple. He would propose that instead of using 50% of the median income, that could be adjusted to include 67%; Council could then reevaluate each year and see where they're at with program funding.

Kopczynski questioned whether there was a demonstrable need to expand the program, or perhaps it is appropriate to reduce the surcharge, since the program is more than paying for itself.

Kellum would like more information about current enrollment as well as prospective enrollment if changes were implemented. Babbitt stated that the historical high figure for enrollment is 208, low is 113, and the average enrollment is roughly 150 households per month.

Coburn believes that all low-income persons should be eligible, not just senior citizens and disabled adults, and there are also changes that could be made to the income requirement or age requirement. He is not interested in changing the surcharge amount.

Konopa voiced concern over raising the income level; she sees a greater benefit in reducing the age minimum for seniors.

Robin Johnson, CSC's Energy Assistance Manager, recommended a slight change to the criteria. She believes it would be appropriate to mirror other federal programs so that if the household includes someone with a disability, a child for example, then the household would be eligible.

Collins does not want to change the surcharge amount either. Coburn said he is not in a position to make changes without more information, and he believes that staff is in a better position to determine what changes should be made.

Public Works Engineering & Community Development Director Jeff Blaine suggested that Council direct staff to bring back a resolution with staff's proposed changes; the item can then be incorporated into the annual review and reporting on water rates that Public Works staff already brings to Council. There was general agreement from Council to have staff return with a resolution as well as additional information from CSC.

BUSINESS FROM THE COUNCIL

Kellum shared with the Council an idea to resolve parking issues in the downtown area. He would propose making the City-owned property off Water Street, between the Lyon Street and Ellsworth Street bridges, available to developers at a drastically reduced rate in exchange for the requirement that they double the parking spaces in that area, and then the developer could dictate what is developed above the parking structure. He asked that Councilors think about his suggestion and he will bring it up again later once they've had time to consider the idea.

Kopczynski reviewed the packet for the August 24, 2016, City Council Meeting and doesn't believe the application they're being asked to consider for the Planning Commission has been filled out completely, which is concerning to him for such an important position. He would prefer to see applicants list their contact information. Management Assistant/Public Information Officer Marilyn Smith explained that applicants are given the choice of what contact information is made available to the public, and any Councilor who would like contact information for an applicant should contact the City Manager's Office. Delapoer noted that applicants are given the choice because the thought is that people will be less likely to provide information needed for City business if they fear that it won't be kept private, thinking it might subject them to spam or fraud.

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CITY MANAGER REPORT

Smith provided a list of candidates who have filed to run for 2016 election to City Council. Candidates include Sharon Konopa, Charlie Smith, and Laura Fisher for Mayor; Terence Virnig, Mike Sykes, Michael Thomson, and Zachary Gilliland for Ward I; Bill Coburn, Rebecca Winters, and Sean Bates for Ward II; and Rich Kellum and Trè Mork for Ward III.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Holly Roten
Administrative Assistant I

Wes Hare
City Manager