



MINUTES

Monday, April 8, 2019

Work Session

Council Chambers, City Hall

Approved: June 12, 2019

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Sharon Konopa called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Mayor Sharon Konopa and Councilors Bill Coburn, Rich Kellum, Bessie Johnson, Alex Johnson II, Dick Olsen, and Mike Sykes

Councilors absent: None.

NATIONAL LIBRARY WEEK

4:01 p.m.

Library Director Ed Gallagher presented information about National Library Week and the tenth anniversary of the 14th Avenue Library location. Gallagher invited the council to visit the Library between to participate in events. Gallagher shared some statistics about the resident patronage of the libraries. Councilor Rich Kellum asked if the Library is working with the Boys and Girls club reading program. Gallagher answered they are not involved in this particular endeavor.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

4:04 p.m.

Daniel Deitz, 2818 NW Orchard Heights, and Nancy Robb, 2930 Cedarwood Court introduced themselves to the council. Deitz shared a PowerPoint presentation about the chemical toilet at First Christian Church (see agenda file). The cost for the toilet is split between the United Presbyterian Church of Albany and the First Christian Church.

Konopa said internal City departments can investigate solutions. Councilor Bill Coburn said he supports the restroom. Councilor Alex Johnson II said he supports the toilet and thinks it is important that toilets are available to the public. Johnson II commented that he would like to see a permanent toilet built inside the church. Konopa said staff will need to bring back a report before council can make a decision. Staff will need to evaluate how this will affect policy.

Kellum said the chemical toilet is only a temporary solution. He would like to wait for staff to gather information before making a decision. Councilor Bessie Johnson said it is not a permanent solution, but it is the humane thing to do. It seems the toilet has been used appropriately and not vandalized. Johnson asked if there has been a permit request for the toilet. Deitz said there was never a permit granted. Deitz said they have reached out to City staff for permission but were told the code will not allow it. That is why they are addressing council to find a solution. Johnson said she can empathize with those who need access to a restroom. She added that she would like to hear opinions from people other than City staff. Johnson said a toilet should be available.

Coburn noted the church should be allowed to keep the toilet until a more permanent solution can be found. If there is a committee formed to develop a policy for portable toilets, members of the public should be allowed to participate. Coburn added that he does not think more chemical toilets will appear elsewhere.

Councilor Dick Olsen said the church should be allowed to keep their portable toilet until the City can come up with an alternative.

Councilor Mike Sykes said he understood the problem the church is facing, but he believes they must be granted a permit. Sykes added that sanitary sewer is available at the church. The rules cannot be broken to allow this chemical toilet. Sykes said he is concerned other businesses might start to provide chemical toilets and not follow the necessary permit requirements. He noted that the chemicals in the toilets can be harmful. Sykes said the toilet is not solving a homelessness problem.

Konopa said she had spoken to a church parishioner said they found someone sleeping overnight in the church stairwell. The toilet is a convenience that invites people to linger overnight. Konopa said the City is being asked to change policy when the policy could be handled at the church's level.

Deitz asked if construction sites have a process for portable toilet extensions. Konopa answered yes, for construction purposes a portable toilet can be provided for a certain period of time. Deitz said a system to grant requests for portable toilets is in place and we are asking for similar standards.

Konopa said if First Christian Church is allowed to have a chemical toilet, no one else can be denied a request for a chemical toilet. Many other businesses may want to provide one. Johnson said she has noticed two other businesses that have chemical toilets.

Tim Graves, 1939 First Avenue NE, said the issues with people sleeping in the church stairwell predates the chemical toilet. He noted that the motion sensing light is battery operated and does not require a permit. Graves said they have tried to abide by the rules and procedures of the City.

Kellum said instead of creating a precedent they should move the toilet to the Presbyterian church before the 90-day limit expires. Any changes to the Albany Municipal Code will apply to everyone.

Deitz said the code allows a portable toilet for up to 90 days without a permit. The church asked for permission to extend that period before the 90 days had passed. Deitz said they have considered moving the toilet to the Presbyterian church, but they are not trying to circumvent the code. Deitz added that he interpreted the code as allowing a chemical toilet for up to 90 days or longer if an extension is granted. It is important to the church that they honor the law. Discussion about the code followed.

Konopa asked if the toilet has been a concern for parents of children who attend the preschool at the church. Deitz answered that they have not had any complaints.

City Attorney Sean Kidd read from the municipal code. Konopa asked that staff prepare a report on portable toilets to get direction of council. Deputy City Manager Jorge Salinas noted that City Manager Peter Troedsson made a recommendation to allow staff to prepare information for council to consider before making a decision. Kidd noted they could move the toilet to a different location to avoid being out of compliance.

Carol Davies, 224 Sherman Street, said that Albany is not very walkable because there are not many restrooms available to the public. She said she would like to see a public toilet installed in the downtown area.

Christine Webb, 1150 Park Place, said there are not restrooms available during a women's rally event. In the past they have had to partner with First Christian Church to use their restrooms. Webb noted she cannot walk for very long downtown because there are no restrooms available. There should be restrooms available to the public downtown.

Konopa agreed restrooms should be available, but public restrooms at Monteith Riverpark have had to be shut down due to misuse. Konopa noted that Portland, Seattle, and San Diego have shut down public restrooms due to a rise in crime. Webb responded that some cities hire security guards to patrol public restrooms. Monteith Riverpark is not very accessible to downtown. Konopa asked Police Lieutenant Casey Dorland if he had all the information he needs to bring a report back to council. Dorland said yes.

Jay Burcham, 1635 27th Avenue, shared a story about a school in a large city having an issue with attendance. Burcham noted that he supports strong law enforcement. Burcham encouraged the council to seek input from City staff about the budget.

BUSINESS FROM THE COUNCIL

5:05 p.m.

Kellum said a budget shortfall can be viewed as an opportunity to seek input from others. Sykes said that Central Albany Revitalization Area spending could be temporarily suspended to allow that money to go back to the general fund.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

5:07 p.m.

Deputy City Manager Jorge Salinas reported that two unions have expressed their demands to bargain. Salinas cautioned council in their interactions with the unions at this time due to their demand to bargain. Discussion followed about union bargaining. Salinas noted that the City's emergency preparedness team is meeting to assess flooding conditions. Salinas commented on a link Troedsson shared with the council.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Allison Grove
Administrative Assistant I (Confidential)

Peter Troedsson
City Manager

Note: Staff handouts referred to in the minutes as (see agenda file) are available on the website in the "Staff Handouts" column.