

BUDGET, FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

January 6, 2009

5:00 P.M.

Councilwoman Berz, Chairman, called the meeting of the Budget, Finance and Personnel Committee to order, with Councilmen Page, Rico, Bennett, Gilbert, Benson, Pierce and Robinson present. City Attorneys Mike McMahan and Phil Noblett and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Dan Johnson, Richard Beeland, Daisy Madison and Donna Kelley.

Chairman Berz announced that we had something very important to go over that was not advertised on the agenda. There was also the issue of the Council Internal Auditor, which we had been talking a lot about and early voting for the 2009 Municipal elections. She mentioned that there was one issue that we had been talking about amending the City Code relative to personnel. She also mentioned the Pre-Budget Meeting that will be held. No vote will be taken on any of these issues.

Chairman Berz stated that she had been requested by Chairman Bennett to research the Council Auditor matter and had spent one to two months researching this. She asked that Councilmembers read through a handout, which she had prepared and which is made a part of this minute material and be ready to vote on this next week. She explained that her data was the result of conversations with all aspects involved, including the Mayor's Auditor, our Management Analyst, Personnel, and the City Attorney. She stated that councilmembers needed this information in order to make a decision. She stated that this was fascinating.

Chairman Berz next handed out a proposed Ordinance amending the City Code in regards to the City's overtime policy. She stated that she did not think that we had specified that this would be discussed at this meeting and everyone needs to read this Ordinance in order to have a full discussion next week. Subsections (i) and (k) are scratched out, and we will just be changing subsection (h). She noted that this would be discussed in her committee meeting next week.

She next noted that we will be having a Pre-Budget meeting on January 22nd from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., and she asked that everyone get this on their calendars. This will be on a Thursday. She stated that everyone would be hearing more about this from her.

Finally, there was the issue that the City Attorney had brought to her as a one-time occurrence to be discussed, and this was not on tonight's agenda. She stated that we needed to approve funds for this and asked Attorney McMahan to explain.

Attorney McMahan stated that we were considering the possibility of having early voting at Northgate and the Brainerd Recreation Center; that the Election Commission was telling him that in 2005 the only place for early voting was the Election Commission office itself; that the cost of the election is \$70,000 plus, and it will go up some; that he had talked to Charlotte Mullis about putting early voting in Northgate and Brainerd, but she does not have the employees to staff this; that she needed to know by tomorrow about having early voting at these satellite places, and it would cost \$15,000 per location. He noted that Northgate was close to the Election Commission, itself.

Councilwoman Robinson confirmed that we were deciding where early voting would go.

Councilman Gilbert stated that he thought it should be in Brainerd because in that area people don't have cars, which makes it impossible to go to Amnicola. He reiterated that it should be in Brainerd—that there might be less people there but there were more registered voters now after the presidential election.

Councilwoman Robinson stated that this was a good point—that there were more registered voters after the presidential election.

Attorney McMahan pointed out that we would have the election in March and there might be a runoff in April; that early voting starts February 11th.

Councilman Pierce suggested having early voting only in the primary and not in the runoff. He also suggested looking at his part of the City where there are senior neighbor homes, noting that in the past there was a downtown precinct. He stated that it was a hardship to take these people to Brainerd or Northgate or Eastgate.

Chairman Berz stated that the Election Commission would be one place for early voting, and clarified if the Council was being asked to talk about choosing between Northgate and Brainerd or having early voting at both places.

Attorney McMahan confirmed this, adding that someone was also saying downtown.

Chairman Berz clarified that this would be \$15,000 a "pop", and the Council needs to decide where we want spend and how much.

Councilman Pierce stated that there had been no problems in the past; that we have to pay for the election, and we will pay it.

Attorney McMahan reminded that for early voting, we will have to hire temporary people.

Councilwoman Robinson stated that she thought this was so important; that we need to encourage people to vote; that we need to make it our business to be more informed, and this is the best money we can spend.

Attorney McMahan stated that the Council just needed to tell him what they wanted.

Councilman Page asked for clarity, if this was the only race? Councilwoman Robinson responded that it was just an election for the Council and Mayor.

Chairman Berz asked Attorney McMahan when he needed to know. He responded that he just needed to get a sense of what the Council wanted.

Councilman Page stated that he understood there would be early voting on Amnicola Highway at the Election Commission; that this is an important race, and the voting at Northgate will be heavy; that he did not want to do anything to keep people from voting. He stated that the biggest precinct would be voting at Northgate.

Attorney McMahan stated that he thought he was hearing three early voting places.

Chairman Berz clarified that the cost would be \$70,000 plus \$15,000 for each additional location. Ms. Madison added that it could be more like \$20,000 for each additional location.

Councilman Pierce stated that the Election Commission would “gouge” us—that it is a profit for them.

Councilman Page stated that there is a history; that people had been going to Northgate to vote all of their life; that the Election Commission is not that far away, but he thought it would be problematic.

Councilman Gilbert agreed that people needed to keep going to the same places; however he felt Councilman Pierce was right about having a voting place downtown.

Attorney McMahan stated that he thought he was hearing that the Council wanted more than two locations.

Councilman Pierce stated that he would appreciate consideration of the inner-city people who supported him; that he did not want to be selfish.

Attorney McMahan stated that he was just asking for suggestions.

Councilwoman Robinson agreed that there were a lot of people downtown, and it was very important.

Chairman Berz clarified that in addition to the Election Commission at Anmicola, we were talking about three additional places.

Councilwoman Bennett stated that she would like to see some figures on people who voted at different locations.

Attorney McMahan stated that he would see what he could do.

Chairman Berz asked that he get these figures to the Council electronically.

Councilman Pierce still asked if there was a chance for the downtown area?

Chairman Berz asked Attorney McMahan if he had what he needed from the Council.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 p.m.