

**LABOR RELATIONS COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

The Labor Relations Committee of the Willmar City Council met on Wednesday, July 11, 2012, in Conference Room #1 at the City Office Building. The meeting was called to order by Chair Steve Ahmann.

Present:	Steve Ahmann	.....	Chair
	Denis Anderson	.....	Member
	Doug Reese	.....	Member
	Tim Johnson	.....	Member
	Charlene Stevens	.....	City Administrator

Others present included Council Members Ron Christianson, Jim Dokken and Mayor Frank Yanish; Steve Okins, Finance Director; Kevin Halliday, City Clerk; Holly Wilson, Public Works Director; Marv Calvin, Fire Chief; Dave Wyffels, Police Chief; Colleen Thompson, WWTP Superintendent; Pat Erickson, Appraiser and David Little of the “West Central Tribune.”

**Item No. 1 Public Comment (Information Only)**

Mr. David Herzer, citizen, expressed his opinions and concerns regarding the City of Willmar’s contract negotiations and labor agreements. Mr. Herzer encouraged greater City Council participation in the process. Mr. Herzer then left the meeting.

Mr. John Sullivan, citizen, provided his opinions on the definitions of collective bargaining and how they pertain to the bargaining units for the City of Willmar. Mr. Sullivan also encouraged greater council participation in the process.

**Item No 2. Consideration of Vacant Positions (Motion)**

Ms. Stevens presented information on three vacant positions: one Appraiser, one Wastewater Treatment Operator and one Engineering Technician position. Ms. Stevens stated one position was vacant due to retirement and two vacancies due to resignation.

Council Member Anderson stated his concern that it appeared that younger employees were leaving the organization after only short tenures. Council Member Reese expressed the same concern.

In response to a question from Council Member Anderson, Ms. Stevens stated that the turnover of employees is becoming a concern.

In response to a question from Mayor Yanish, Ms. Stevens stated that one employee took a job with Kandiyohi County and another with Crow Wing County.

Mayor Yanish stated that he would not support filling all three positions. Ms. Stevens stated that the three positions were not interchangeable and duties could not be combined among three positions as each position is a separate skill set.

Council Members asked if it would be possible to consider consolidation with the County's appraisal department. Ms. Stevens stated that she had spoken with Mr. Kleindl, County Administrator, and it was not feasible at this time.

In response to a question by the Mayor asking for the County reason, Ms. Stevens stated that Mr. Kleindl had stated the County had more pressing priorities at this time.

Ms. Stevens stated that even if the departments were consolidated, the position of appraiser would be necessary and any process of consolidation would take from a year to 18 months and the City would still need to conduct appraisals during that time.

In response to a question regarding outsourcing the activities of the Engineering Technician, Ms. Stevens and Ms. Wilson stated the option had been considered in 2009 when the position was vacant and again with this vacancy. Staff did not believe there would be any cost savings.

Council Member Johnson asked if the three positions were in the 2013 budget. Ms. Stevens stated they were included in the 2013 budget.

Council Member Reese made a motion, seconded by Council Member Anderson, to authorize filling the vacancy of Wastewater Treatment Operator. The motion carried unanimously.

The committee members asked Ms. Stevens to once again contact Kandiyohi County to discuss consolidation of the appraising departments and to gather additional information regarding privatizing the services of the Engineering Technician position.

**Item No. 3 Consideration of Organizational Assessment by Springsted, Inc. (Motion)**

Ms. Stevens stated that she had obtained a proposal from Dave Unmacht of Springsted, Inc. to conduct an organizational assessment for the City of Willmar. Ms. Stevens stated she obtained the proposal based upon a request from the Labor Relations Committee at their last meeting and based upon the work Springsted had done with the Willmar Municipal Utilities and Kandiyohi County.

Ms. Stevens stated the study would have five deliverables:

- Recommendations of the Organizational Structure

- As assessment of the workplace culture
- Observations and opportunities for intergovernmental relations
- An assessment of the City's customer service
- Recommendations on the business practices and process in place.

Ms. Stevens stated the fees would be \$17,500, plus expenses of \$1,250. Ms. Stevens stated the costs of the study were not included in the 2012 budget, but funds could be reallocated to cover the costs.

Council Member Johnson asked if the study would evaluate each individual job. Ms. Stevens stated that the study was not to that detail, but would evaluate the overall operations and structure of the City.

Chair Ahmann asked if other proposals had been sought. Ms. Stevens stated that it had been the direction of the committee to contact Springsted.

Council Member Anderson stated that he did not feel other proposals were necessary and that Springsted would bring some synergy to the study based upon their knowledge of the community and other two organizations.

Mayor Yanish questioned the funding for the study if the City was not able to fund flowers for downtown.

Council Member Johnson stated he felt there was value in obtaining an outside perspective.

Council Member Anderson made a motion, seconded by Council Member Johnson, to accept the proposal from Springsted Inc. to perform an Organizational Study for the City of Willmar in the amount of \$17,500 plus expenses of \$1,250. The motion carried unanimously.

**Item No. 4 Review Current Overtime Pay for Special Events (Information Only)**

Chair Ahmann expressed his concerns regarding overtime pay and its impact on the City's operating budget. Ms. Stevens described the way in which overtime is normally managed and incurred.

The Committee asked Ms. Stevens to provide additional information at future date.

**Item No. 5 Full Council Involved in Labor Contract Negotiations (Information Only)**

Chair Ahmann stated that Council Member Christianson had asked to review the manner in which the City of Willmar conducts labor contract negotiations.

Ms. Stevens stated that the City Council holds a workshop to establish overall parameters and then the Labor Relations Committee provides oversight and guidance to the City Administrator and Labor Attorney, currently Frank Madden, to conduct the actual negotiations. Ms. Stevens stated that all proposed settlements are reviewed by the Labor Relations Committee and recommended for approval to the City Council. All labor agreements require action by the full Council and this has been the practice prior to her tenure with the City.

Ms. Stevens also provided information from approximately ten other regional centers, only one of which involved Council Members in the negotiating team.

Council Member Reese questioned why the discussion was being held again, when the City Council had discussed and voted on this same issue in October of 2011.

Council Member Anderson stated that he did not know what the City would gain by changing the process and he had no concerns regarding the objectivity of the City Administrator to conduct negotiations.

Council Member Johnson stated that he did not envision full Council participation in the process, but he could see value in some Council participation.

Council Member Ahmann stated that it could be an option to have participation.

Ms. Stevens expressed her concerns regarding a consistent negotiating team and adding another layer in the process, stating that if a change is made, her preference would be to have someone participate from the Labor Relations Committee.

The Committee decided to have further discussion with the full council at a future meeting in late August or September when all members could be present.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 p.m. on a motion by Council Member Anderson, seconded by Council Member Johnson, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene Stevens,  
City Administrator