

WILLMAR CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
COUNCIL CHAMBERS
WILLMAR MUNICIPAL UTILITIES BUILDING
WILLMAR, MINNESOTA

June 24, 2013
4:45 p.m.

The special meeting of the Willmar City Council was called to order by the Honorable Mayor Frank Yanish. Members present on a roll call were Mayor Yanish, Council Members Denis Anderson, Ron Christianson, Audrey Nelsen, Jim Dokken, Rick Fagerlie and Bruce DeBlieck; Present 7, Absent 2 – Steve Ahmann was excused from the meeting, and Council Member Tim Johnson arrived at 4:48 p.m.

Also present were City Administrator Charlene Stevens, Police Chief David Wyffels, Finance Director Steve Okins, Planning and Development Services Director Bruce Peterson, Fire Chief Gary Hendrickson, and City Clerk Kevin Halliday.

Consultant Richard Fursman of Brimeyer Fursman presented the final report on the City's organizational study. In mid-May, the Council received and reviewed the preliminary draft that recommended a reorganizational option dealing primarily with external services. External services are defined as services consistently delivered by City employees to most of Willmar's population. Services include Public Works, Wastewater Treatment, Police, Fire, Engineering and Planning. The Council has not acted on the recommendation.

In his final report, Mr. Fursman recommended an option for dealing with internal services. He defined internal services as services primarily delivered by City employees to augment the efforts of services delivered to the public. The services include Information Technology, Finance and Clerk's duties. Currently, those three areas have been relatively stable compared with changes being experienced with external services. Mr. Fursman recommended the City establish a "three-department" model, which would involve creating a Human Resources department, eliminating the City Clerk-Treasurer department, and making permanent the current information technology reporting structure in which the IT department reports directly to the City Administrator. The model does not predict adding employees with the acknowledgement that additional staff may need to be added to the Finance Department to handle the City Clerk-Treasurer workload. The new Human Resources Director would be in charge of hiring and employee maintenance. The Finance Director would absorb many of the functions of the City Clerk-Treasurer while relinquishing human resources duties, and would be responsible for financial management, accounting, treasury and clerk functions. The new position of Communications Director would be responsible for computer and technology services, the website, WRAC public access television and official City records.

Mr. Fursman said he first addressed the need for hiring a City Engineer in his preliminary report in May because the absence of an Engineer is "causing so much pain in the City right now." The position has been held open for months until a decision is reached on the organizational study. Mr. Fursman said the City desperately needs a City Engineer and Engineering Technician. The Engineer would not be in charge of Public Works, as the position is now, but would become part of a six-member team that includes Planning and Zoning, Wastewater Treatment, Public Works, and Facilities Maintenance, all reporting to a Community Services Director. Council Member Christianson stated he supports the hiring of an Engineer and Assistant Engineer but was of the opinion the City Engineer should continue to be in charge of Public Works as the system has worked in the past. Mr. Fursman recommended funneling human resources duties from among the various departments into one HR position, stating he saw no benefit to HR collaboration with other governmental entities because many of the functions were not compatible. Council Member Johnson questioned why there's always a reason why collaboration was not possible and suggested a long-term goal should be looking at ways to standardize some functions or make them more compatible and eliminate some duplicate services.

The report said HR functions are at capacity with Rice Hospital, Willmar School District, and the County. None of the three has the capacity to contract with the City, and the only viable HR partner is the Municipal Utilities. Also, the types of benefit packages and the policies governing employees would require the County to re-tool and hire additional staff. The City would not realize the full benefit of the HR position if the person was housed at the County, the report said. The costs to contract with the County would be just as high to the City as hiring its own HR director.

The report says human resources management is currently shared by all departments, but mostly divided among the Administrator, Finance Director and Clerk-Treasurer. The current system is confusing and time-consuming for any employee needing information for HR-related questions. Mr. Fursman highly recommends that all "shrinkage" in employee numbers occur through attrition (including early retirement) or reassignment; otherwise, a negative impact on employee morale would be likely.

Council Member DeBlieck asked if the final report on the organizational review would be referred to a committee or lay on the table. City Administrator Stevens stated the Council can decide how to move forward with the report. Council Members Nelsen and Anderson said the issue was big enough to involve the entire Council and the Council should schedule another work session and come to some conclusions. Council Member Nelsen offered a motion to hold another Council work session on the organizational report. Council Member DeBlieck seconded the motion, which carried.

There being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 6:01 p.m. upon motion by Council Member Christianson, seconded by Council Member Johnson, and carried.

Attest:

MAYOR

SECRETARY TO THE COUNCIL