

Cloquet City Council Work Session

Tuesday, February 7, 2016

Present: A. Bailey, D. Bjerkness, K. Kolodge, S. Langley, R. Maki, J. Rock, Mayor Hallback

Absent: R. Maki

Staff: J. Barclay, N. Klassen, C. Peterson

Other: J. Peterson, Pine Journal

Personnel Policy Handbook Discussion

Mr. Barclay reviewed the revisions made to the handbook that are based on employee feedback and through meetings with union representatives. The handbook was sent to the Council prior to tonight for review. Mr. Barclay asked for discussion to make final edits. Highlights of discussion are as follows:

- Mayor Hallback questioned page 4 and why the termination section under 1.1 was removed. Mr. Fritsinger responded that it is also addressed in section 6.9 however, after discussion, Council agreed to relocate that statement to the end of chapter 2 as a new section, 2.4.8.
- Mr. Langley asked for an explanation of “shortly thereafter” on page 48 under section C. Mr. Barclay explained that narrowing down an exact time may be difficult to do and needs to be within our ability to gather information. Mr. Bailey commented that he would like it to be a more specific time frame. Mr. Stracek added that there may also be a difference between suspension and administrative leave due to the circumstances, i.e. the internal/external investigation.
- Mr. Langley questioned if the section on Use of City Property on page 58 also relates to contractors using City property. Mr. Fritsinger responded only if they are doing work on behalf of the City, but it will be operated by a City employee. This was an item clarified with the union several years ago.
- Mayor Hallback questioned the section on use of city vehicles on page 57. He would like to add it needs to be approved by City Council as he doesn't feel there's a benefit to taking a vehicle when the employee may live outside of the 12 mile limit. Mr. Rock added he can understand how it may be a liability to the City. Staff indicated it would amend this section of the policy.
- Council questioned how many times officers actually respond from home. Mr. Stracek replied that they are called in on every major incident. There is also other usage outside of regular hours such as meetings or the possibility of encountering calls for assistance while on their way somewhere. They are also monitoring activities via their computers in their cars as soon as they turn the key. Mr. Stracek pointed out that cars parked at the PD during inclement weather can cause a delay to the crime scene or incident because the vehicles need to warm up or be dug out. Mr. Bailey asked if there is a way to offset the cost such as a taxable fringe benefit? Possibly build another garage at the PD was suggested.
- Mr. Kolodge voiced his concern regarding the picking up and dropping off practice, stating that this is a large source of lost time incurred as well as what the cost is to taxpayers. Mr. Bailey stated taking home a vehicle may lead to personal benefit as well.
- It was noted that the take home vehicle could be considered part of the employee's salary package and how taking it away would affect the total package.
- Mr. Kolodge stated that it is common practice country wide for officers to take vehicles home. Mayor Hallback stated there is information sharing between the officers during the pick- up/drop off time and is beneficial to the officers.
- Mr. Peterson voiced his opinion on his Public Works take home vehicle, saying it is more realistic that he will check on his crew in the event they are working after hours or on the weekend if he has his work vehicle instead of using his personal vehicle.
- Council members requested information on the number of calls the officers have responded to from home over the last 2 years. Mr. Rock also requested the numbers for all the City take home vehicles using comparisons with cities of similar size.
- Conversation took place in regards to non-City employees as passengers in a company vehicle. It was noted that passengers are allowed in the example of going to conferences, etc.
- No further discussion on the talking papers provided to Council. No other areas of the manual were discussed. Mr. Barclay will make changes as noted above that not related to the use of City vehicles.

Community Sign Discussion

- Review of previous discussion with the National Guard and CAHA on how to make the people more aware of Pine Valley. The National Guard had stated it would help with operation and maintenance of a digital sign. Mr. Barclay has been researching options for a sign and indicated that a sign of reasonable size will be approximately \$35-\$40k. He asked for feedback from the Council on whether to pursue the project.
- Mr. Bailey stated he feels that with today's technology, people can get information without a sign.
- Mr. Fritsinger noted that one clear benefit of a digital sign will be the elimination of non-profit organizations hanging signs on the City owned fences.
- Mr. Barclay stated the life a digital sign is approximately 15 years with limited maintenance.
- Mr. Bjerkness noted this comes from an image enhancement exercise to change the impression of Cloquet as people drive through town. The consensus as that time was that it would help with marketing and a central place to communicate to the community. This is also a good way to partner with the National Guard.
- Overall consensus is to pursue the project.

Other Discussion

Mr. Fritsinger asked if the Council is willing to have SKB come to a Work Session for more discussion on the information being presented to allow time for questions. Council agreed to not address it further in a Work Session but go directly to the Regular Meeting for a vote on the variance request.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brian Fritsinger
City Administrator