

City of Hays
City Commission
Work Session Notes
January 19, 2012

Present: Barbara Wasinger, Troy Hickman, Kent Steward, Ron Mellick, John Bird, Toby Dougherty

Absent: Henry Schwaller IV

North Central Kansas Technical College Annual Report

Don Benjamin, dean of the Hays campus of the North Central Kansas Technical College, presented the annual report of activities at the Big Creek Technical Center housed at 101 Main. Reporting is a requirement of the lease agreement with the City.

Students at NCKTC were utilized to construct the Police Shooting Range House in 2011. 2011-2012 city projects include repairing two picnic shelters in city parks and remodeling work in the Parks Department office building.

2012 Funding Request by Ellis County Coalition for Economic Development

Aaron White, executive director of the Ellis County Coalition for Economic Development, appeared before the Commission to request the disbursement of 2012 budgeted funds in the amount of \$87,550 for economic development purposes.

Mr. White reported on recent economic development activities within the organization that encourage retention and growth of firms already in the community as well the recruitment of new businesses.

Equipment Purchase – Street Sweeper

At the January 26, 2012 Commission meeting, the Commissioners will be requested to approve the purchase of a 2012 Elgin Crosswind Sweeper from the

Missouri Department of Transportation bid list in the amount of \$195,885 and authorize and direct the sale of the 2005 Elgin sweeper for not less than \$25,000 upon delivery of the new sweeper for a net cost of \$170,885.

Water Conservation Specialist Position

Assistant City Manager Paul Briseno reviewed the measures the City has taken since 1992 when the Water Conservation Plan was implemented. Water use restrictions were put in place, incentives given for water saving devices, education, and better water management has resulted in the City using less water than it did 30-35 years ago. In 2010, Hays used 95 gallons per capita daily, which is the lowest per capita in the state.

City Manager Toby Dougherty stated the City's conservation efforts have allowed the City to stretch our water resources, which were inadequate in the early 1990's, out to a 20-50 life span. Conservation is part of our culture in Hays; however, the City Manager feels it is time to move to the next level by targeting new areas to incentivize and focus conservation efforts on. He feels the first step to further our conservation efforts would be to create a position that would focus solely on water conservation. This person would devote full-time attention towards continual conservation efforts. It will be cheaper to find new ways to conserve our water resources than to develop new water resources. Current estimates for bringing water to Hays from the R-9 Ranch are \$31,000 an acre foot to develop.

Commissioner Mellick stated that even though he is not excited about adding another staff member, he does see the value in hiring a specialist that concentrates solely on water conservation issues. There are more things the City can do to conserve the water we have, which, in turn, would push back the need to spend taxpayer's money on bringing new water sources to our city. This would also show the state that the City has exhausted every avenue of conservation when the time comes to bring additional water supplies on line.

Commissioner Steward stated he felt this would be a good thing to do, but he is concerned about the timing of it. He has received many negative

comments from citizens about hiring another person. He suggested that a hard look be taken at existing staff to see if a position or two could be eliminated through attrition; he feels this would be more acceptable to the public.

City Manager Dougherty stated that if there was someone on staff that had the expertise and could perform the duties of Water Conservation Specialist, he would not have brought the issue before the Commission. It is going to be very expensive to pursue a long-range water option. The longer the City can stretch out our current water resources the better it will be economically.

John Heinrichs, chair of the Ellis County Wellhead Protection Committee, stated the Committee supports this position and offered any assistance that may be needed in the selection process.

Discussion on Ellis County Sales Tax Proposal

Ellis County is exploring the possibility of asking voters to approve a one-half cent sales tax in order to fund several capital improvements. Under state law, the City of Hays would receive approximately 48% of the sales tax collected. This amounts to \$1.5 million per year. The County would like input from the City on what it would do with their share of the revenues if the sales tax measure is approved.

City Manager Dougherty stated that it is staff's recommendation, that if the County's sales tax issue is approved, 60% of any monies received be used for street reconstruction, 20% for economic development, and 20% for quality of life expenditures. If the County wanted to implement a county tax when the Sports Complex sales tax expires on April 1, 2013, it would have to be on the November 2012 ballot for voter approval.

It was felt that more information was needed from the County before the Commissioners could provide input.

Billboards Regarding Gas Prices

Commissioner Steward has received emails from out-of-town travelers concerning the high price of gas paid at Quest Fuel north of I-70. Complaints

about this establishment have been on-going for several years and he feels that this has given Hays a bad reputation. He requested discussion on this topic to see if there were any steps the City could take to make out-of-town travelers aware of the high prices at this gas station.

City Attorney John Bird stated the city of Orlando, Florida passed an ordinance that requires gas stations to display the price of their fuel on signs that can be seen from the road. This has withstood a court challenge. With that in mind, it is possible for the City to do the same thing. There are no federal, state or local mandates that require signage. However, the Commissioners need to be aware of “the law of unintended consequences”. If the Commissioners pass such an ordinance for gas stations, it could be questioned why the law does not apply to furniture stores and other similar businesses.

Chairperson Wasinger questioned whether it is the City’s business to get involved in disputes of this nature because an out-of-towner is negligent in checking the prices on the pump.

Commissioner Steward commented that the Commissioners have a responsibility to at least explore what can be done when the name of Hays is being besmirched by an unethical practice.

It was the consensus of the Commissioners to not pursue any additional action on this issue.

Other Items for Discussion

Wilmer Kellogg and Chuck Wilhelm appeared before the Commissioners requesting support of their project of a Dodge City type display with live actors at the Ellis County Historical Society.

The work session adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Submitted by: _____

City Clerk

