

Minutes
EMPLOYEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE
Special Meeting
June 17th, 2014
Public Meeting Room #1
2:00 P.M.

The meeting was called to order by Cindy Porter at 2:00 pm.

1. *ROLL CALL*

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Cindy Porter-Engineering
Cynthia Williams-Environmental Services
Britt Hubbard-Sewer System Tech.
Jackie Somerlott-Public Works Admin.
Raymond Brown II-Emergency Communications
Albert Ozuna-Streets
Jeremy Russell-Stormwater
Eugene Ross-Landfill

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Jorg Stefan Kidd-Building Maintenance*

*Excused

**Unexcused

OTHERS PRESENT: Sherry Anderson-Acting Human Resources Director

Tiffani Burk-Human Resources
Bryan Long-City Manager
Jim Russell-Assistant City Manager

3. *OLD BUSINESS*

None

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. Discuss FY 2014-2015 Budget with City Manager:

B. Discuss 2015 Sales Tax Proposal:

C. Discuss Setting up quarterly meetings with the City Manager:

Cindy Porter explained why this special meeting was called. The EAC had wanted to discuss some things with the Manager and he has some things he wants to discuss with the EAC members. She said there is no "Old Business" and there is nothing that needs to be voted on, we are just here to discuss a few things.

Discuss Setting up quarterly meetings with the City Manager: Bryan Long said he considers this as a meeting amongst friends. He said Jim has an idea and he will let him share it. Jim Russell said they first talked about having a town hall type of meeting. In an effort to make it less formal and more conversational and have an open line of communication, we have opted to do a quarterly luncheon with all employees. We are going to provide the food down in the Banquet hall. We are going to have it from 11:00 to 1:00. Regardless of what your lunch time is, you will still be able to make it. We will have the Directors there. We may have the Mayor there. You will be able to ask us questions and we will be able to answer them right there on the spot. We can put out some information that we need you guys to be aware of. Once your lunch time is up then you can leave and another group of employees can come in during their lunch time so it could be a rotation thing. Bryan said they came up with this idea after reading the last meeting's minutes. He asked the EAC members what you would prefer to do as a group. Would you prefer a formalized session or would you prefer a luncheon like we are talking about. Cindy said she believes that the employees will believe the information if they hear it from the Manager and/or the Directors instead of the EAC members. She still is hearing a lot of negativity from employees. Bryan said he does believe that he needs to have an open forum with the employees. Bryan said the question is how many people you think will attend. Cindy said she believes there won't be very many employees that will come to the first one. Bryan said we need to have more people there and how do we get them there. Jim said they are looking at having it on June 30th. Jackie said Public Works is a big division and typically end their shifts at 2:30 or 3:30. We want them to be able to come and listen. Bryan said the reason we are making it from 11 to 1 is to give the Supervisors the time to make an offset. He said he had already talked to the Directors about this. He thought each of them liked it. You shouldn't receive a lot of opposition to getting scheduled for a luncheon. Cindy said we need to make transportation arrangements because there is going to be some employees to ask why they have to drive to City Hall. Jim said maybe we rotate it each quarter. Then maybe one of the quarters they will have the opportunity to have the luncheon come to them. Bryan and Jim both said they are unable to accommodate each and every employee. He is going to ask for flexibility from the employees. Bryan made a statement that he loves the City of Lawton and this organization. Ray said opening the doors to the employees with a warm, friendly, informal environment is a step in the right direction. He said there will be times that they will request a meeting about formal stuff. They discussed changing the location of these quarterly luncheons and how they want to do it.

Discuss FY 2014-2015 Budget with City Manager and Discuss 2015 Sales Tax Proposal:

Bryan asked if everyone heard his presentation to the council. He said he took funds from other locations in our community and asked for those funds to be transferred to make up for their 2 1/2 % across the city. So you will be eligible as an employee this year for your 2 1/2 % merit increase. Obviously you have had to have earned it. He said he has heard questions about COLA. Why aren't we getting a COLA. He said we have to have the recurring resource to be able to do that. This year we are just breaking even on finding money for pay increases. He said if I add a COLA in this year's budget then it creates a growth in future budgets. He said you probably have been asked what does the budget and the tax proposal have to do with each other. Do they have anything to do with each other? He said they have everything to do with each other. The tax proposal is a sustainable growth over time. It is Public Safety. It is a public safety issue that's being raised as an emphasis. That is not to say that general employees are not an important part of it. This includes all employees. This will help general employees by having a freeing of money to the tune of 2.5 million dollars per year. This money would otherwise be going into public safety components within the general fund that are now freed up to go elsewhere. Whether it is capital outlay, merit increases, COLAs etc. This is an 11 year cycle that we are preparing for. He has chosen specifically to place more emphasis on this sales tax initiative (CIP) because of the importance of where it takes us into the future. He let everyone read a flyer. It is a talking points paper. He is going to ask the council to approve it. We are having about 2500 printed off. They will be available to you to help guide you in your discussions with others about this sales tax proposal. The council has said this is very important to you as citizens and we are going to ask that you vote in favor of it.

Jim said this kind of goes along with the salary schedule that you have been asking for from Human Resources. He said he has a conference call next week with a consultant that we are looking at hiring to do an unbiased overview of our salary structure for the entire city. So we can actually take a look and see where we are short in our salaries but also to help us line up some of our jobs and skills and positions so we can be closely unified in the pay grades themselves. Then take those pay grades and where they are lining up with the rest of the state and other communities similar to us. We are going to hire someone to do that outside of the city of Lawton. So we can get an unbiased third party view of where we are at. He would like to have it done within the next few months so we can get ready for the next fiscal year. Depending on the outcome of the survey, we will have a better determination of whether we will need to adjust our salary schedule. Eugene asked if we can be notified what cities we will be compared to. Jim said he is going to take the consultant's recommendation and it will be based off of the input that I give him. Eugene said some people ask why they go with the big cities for some job comparisons and the smaller cities for other job comparisons. He said why don't we give a COLA this year and not step increases because some people are stepped out and they don't receive merit increases anymore. If we all get a COLA then everyone gets a raise. Jim said that is another thing that needs to be discussed with this consultant. Do we need to expand our salary plan? Are we short changing ourselves by capping it off? They had a lengthy discussion about stepping out and merit increases. There were employee examples given.

Bryan discussed comparisons to other cities. There has been no consistency in that process in the past. He wants to work with the EAC to help the city council to find out what market to compare to. He said he is going to need your help. He said we need to be careful on using some cities because we can't afford to be those cities. It is a complex process and he wants the EAC to help with it.

Cynthia asked is there any answer that we can give those employees that are stepped out, as far as getting raises. Bryan said he can say that we have approximately 62 general employees only that are stepped out. He can't give a 2.5% COLA this year for all employees. We cannot sustain it, it could be another 3 to 5 years before you saw another pay increase if we didn't pass the sales tax proposal. This is something he wants to correct. He is going to attempt to find a solution for this situation. He doesn't like that we have employees who have been stepped out for 10 years. Jeremy said they may complain about not getting raises but most of those employees do get longevity. That discussed longevity. It is a formula based upon years of service. Jim said there has been a rumor going around that longevity is going to be cut. He said that has never been on the table. Longevity is not going to be cut. They have never considered cutting it. Bryan said the EAC can make advisory recommendations to me. He said he is not suggesting ever cutting longevity. Jeremy said this consulting firm can find out what other cities are doing for employees that are stepped out. Jim agreed and said that is something he has on his list for them to find out. Cynthia said it wouldn't be such a big deal for those employees that are stepped out if they were getting a COLA every couple of years at least. She said for those employees that are stepped out and it is not a COLA year maybe they could receive a onetime stipend. It is better than nothing. Bryan said he understands why that would be something that they would want.

Cynthia asked if the consultants are going to compare level of services that we provide. Jim said yes they are going to compare as many aspects as possible. Cynthia asked if they are going to recommend cutting some services. Jim said he is not looking for that. It is just a comparison. Jeremy said he had some questions that some employees asked him to ask. 1. On step increases: are they going to be getting 2 steps because of not getting their increase last year. The answer was no they are not. 2. Health insurances and retirement withholdings: Are they going to remain the same. Bryan said yes. Jim said unless the health fund goes down then we have that automatic 10% increase and it is right on the bubble and has been for the last 6 months. The way it is, if we drop down below \$250,000.00 for 3 months in a row then we trigger that 10%. This is normal at the end of the fiscal year. Typically in July and August it will go back up again. Jim gave example of things that need to be discussed with the Health Committee and changes that need to be made with the health plan. He gave examples of some things that the committee is considering.

Jim said they also need to discuss retiree coverage. The City of Lawton offers retirees the option to continue the city's insurance coverage. They are supposed to be paying 100% of their premium. The city pays a portion for every current employee's premium. The City pays 80% of current employee's premium and the City pays about 60% of your family's premium. The retiree is supposed to be paying 100% but right now they are paying about a 70/30 split. We need to get them back to 100%. They are still getting that group rate and they can't get that rate anywhere else. He gave some information about Medicare. Effective December all retirees that are Medicare eligible are going to be moved to a supplement plan. It is cheaper for them. It is still going to be Blue Cross Blue Shield. The retirees that are not Medicare eligible and are still on our plan, over the next 5 years we are going to increase their premium gradually to get them up to the 100%.

They had a short discussion about Workers Comp and tort claims. Jackie said we have a lot of employees that are not physically fit to do their job and they end up having injuries. What about some kind of help with that. Jim said we have a wellness committee that was put in place to help with that. He said every fire station has a workout room or area. He wants the general employees to have those areas. Jackie said the military is tested periodically to make sure they are still fit to do their job. Jim said the costs of those tests are about \$500.00 per employee. We

need to have a study done to see whether having the tests will be cheaper than paying the workers comp claims. They discussed incentives for wellness.

Jeremy said his 3rd third question is about water line replacements, is that included in the sales tax proposal. He said he pretty much got the answer off of the flyer that Bryan showed them. It says 4,414,000.00 for water and sewer. Bryan said that doesn't include the additional 6 million that we are placing in for water line repair from the 2008 CIP. The idea is that we can make about 10 million dollars worth of repair and that is about a tenth of what we need.

Cynthia asked if the quarterly luncheons are going to take the place of the employee picnic. Bryan said no. Jim said this is more of a communication piece. Bryan said this is for employees and the picnic is for family. Jackie said employees feel when you make your selves available to them, then they feel like you are on their level and are their peer. They appreciate it. Bryan said he went to the Public Works Appreciation day and he really enjoyed it.

Cynthia said she would still like to do an employee directory. So we can put a face with a name. Jim said the upkeep with something like that is going to be nightmare. He said that will be a full time job.

Someone asked the question: when will merit increases take effect. Bryan said on your current anniversary date after the start of the new fiscal year (July 1st). Bryan said he would like to break that up into a quarterly enrollment period. You would go to the nearest date that your anniversary date is. It would help him to prepare the budget.

Bryan said there is only one reason that he is able to present a balanced budget to the council. If it wasn't for the employees and the expenditure savings during the year, we would not have balanced the budget. It was very important that you continued to save money throughout the year. You saved jobs this year and you don't even realize it. Bryan said we have got to pass the Sales Tax Proposal. It will be on the August 26th ballot. Jim said you need to get people to register to vote by August 1st. Jim said Bryan has made the commitment to let every employee have the time to go vote. You are going to have to have your voter registration card to prove that you can vote in order to get that time off. Jeremy said we have the forms to fill out to get registered at the library. Sherry said we have them at HR.

6. *ADJOURNMENT*

A. Motion to adjourn by Jeremy Russell with a second by Cynthia Williams

Ayes: All Nays: None Motion Carried

Meeting Adjourned at 3:23 pm