



CITY COUNCIL

Strategic Planning Committee

Monday, December 1, 2014
Meeting Report

Attending: J. Waltman & C. Daubert (Co Chairs), D. Reed, M. Goodman-Hinnershitz, D. Sterner, S. Marmarou, F. Acosta

Others Attending: L. Kelleher, C. Younger, V. Spencer

The meeting was called to order by Mr. Waltman and Mr. Daubert at approximately 5:10 pm.

1. Parking Authority re setting meter rates

Mr. Lloyd stated that the Reading Parking Authority (RPA) would like to have the ability to set the parking meter rates based on parking demand and location. He noted that parking needs differ on various blocks of Penn Street. The needs in the 500 block are much different than the needs in the 300 block. He stated that the RPA believes that they should be permitted to define the rates based on the varying demands on specific times or days of the week. He stated that the use of the kiosks permit easy changes in rate applications.

Mr. Lloyd distributed an article about a parking study in Pittsburgh by Carnegie Mellon which found that allowing rate changes increases revenue and decreases parking costs. He suggested a trial run in the 400-500 blocks of Penn Street for a six month period. He stated that City Council would approve the lowest and highest rates that could be charged and the RPA can determine a rate falling within that range.

Parking needs in the downtown were discussed.

Mr. Waltman inquired if changing the rate application would help or hurt downtown businesses.

Ms. Reed and Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz expressed concern with allowing the RPA to define rates and rate changes.

Mr. Waltman suggested adding additional check points, parameters and review periods.

2. Ordinance re Independent Legal Counsel

Mr. Waltman questioned why the ordinance was drafted. Ms. Kelleher stated that several months ago Ms. Goodman-Hinnershitz and others requested work to clarify the use and selection of outside legal counsel.

Mr. Waltman questioned the progress on the Charter Board's mediation policy. Ms. Kelleher stated that the Charter Board is currently working on the policy and will be ready to meet with Council in early 2015. She noted that the mediation will apply only to Charter Board complaints not to all matters. She also noted that there are some issues that cannot be mediated.

Mr. Waltman suggested adding a mediation requirement prior to the retention of outside legal counsel.

Ms. Kelleher explained that there are two (2) ordinances to clarify the use of outside legal counsel. The first amends City Code Chapter 5, Part 213 and 302. The current language is

“In the event either the Mayor/Administration or City Council require legal representation in an area of conflict City Council and the Mayor or the Administration, each party shall have the ability to select their own legal counsel independent of the City.”

Ms. Kelleher stated that the language could mean several different things. To provide clarity the draft ordinance allows the Solicitor to determine if a conflict exists and adds a reference to the Purchasing Policies, as the RFP process must be followed. The new draft language in the proposed ordinance is:

“The Solicitor, as chief legal advisor to the City of Reading, has authority to determine whether a conflict exists between the Mayor/Administration and City Council. In the event a conflict does exist, the Mayor/Administration and City Council shall each have the right to seek and retain independent legal counsel, separate and apart from the advice of the Office of the Solicitor. Section 8 of the Purchasing Policies shall apply.”

Mr. Waltman and Ms. Reed questioned using the Solicitor as the party that decides if a conflict exists. They suggested having another uninvolved elected official to determine if a conflict exists, such as the City Auditor.

Mr. Waltman again stressed the need for mediation between the parties prior to the retention of outside legal counsel.

Ms. Kelleher stated that in addition to the amendment to Administrative Code sections 213 and 302, the Purchasing Policies should be amended to reflect the process to award a contract to outside legal counsel and to provide an estimate and allocation of funds to pay the legal charges for the matter.

Mr. Waltman suggested adding the mediation requirement or conflict resolution meeting requirement to this process.

3. Amendment to the Amusement/Admissions Tax

Ms. Kelleher reminded the group when this issue was last considered, the Managing Director suggested applying this tax only to venues that have ticketed events for 400-500 people.

Mr. Waltman requested a pro forma on the expansion of the tax.

4. Recovery Plan Implementation

Mr. Lloyd stated that the Managing Director is building a spreadsheet that assigns the Recovery Plan initiatives and defines completion timelines for 2015.

5. Impact of Ballot Questions

Mr. Acosta questioned the legality of Question #7 which requires referendum approval for the sale of City assets valued at \$10M or more. He stated that the question was poorly worded and was very vague.

Mr. Younger stated that just because the question was approved does not make it legal. He stated that at some point in time the court system will rule on the validity of the question through a legal challenge.

6. Policy Changes

Ms. Snyder arrived at this time.

Mr. Waltman suggested forming subcommittees to address the many policy changes that are needed to improve the City's viability such as pension reform, untaxed benefits and income, and assessment exemptions.

Ms. Kelleher noted that while 3rd Class Cities have the ability to take on the functions of the County Assessment Board, cities cannot address only property tax exemptions.

Ms. Snyder stated that most 3rd Class Cities have roughly the same percentage of non-profits within their boundaries.

The pros/cons of non-profits and social service agencies were discussed.

Mr. Spencer and Mr. Lloyd expressed the belief that the growth of non-profits and social service agencies can be curtailed through zoning.

Ms. Kelleher noted that the PaMPC requires zoning ordinances to allow each type of use within a municipality without exclusions.

Mr. Waltman noted that the 3rd class sized cities are overstressed with centralization of the poor and the various social service not-for-profit organizations that are required for this population.

Mr. Acosta noted the need to improve the process for up-start businesses. He stated that the processes applied in other municipalities are much more streamlined. He expressed the belief that components such as the One Stop Shop work well however, other areas require improvement. He also noted the need to correct the language barrier that at times exists.

Mr. Spencer and Mr. Lloyd agreed to work on improvements to the process for start-up businesses.

The Strategic Planning Committee meeting concluded at approximately 7:30 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by Linda A. Kelleher CMC, City Clerk

Follow Up Topics

Finance Committee

- *Act 111 Review – in progress*
- *RAWA Audit Review – assigned to Auditor*
- *Recovery Plan Amendment - completed*

Standards of Living

- *BPRC Acquisition & Demolition – completed*
- *Capital Improvements re streets and street lights*

Strategic Planning or COW

- *CDC Manager - completed*
- *Library Tax – completed*
- *Firefighters Museum – completed*
- *Pagoda Foundation – completed*
- *Main Street initiative*
- *UGI Gas Meters – in progress*
- *Egelman's Park*