

MINUTES OF THE MINNEOTA CITY COUNCIL MEETING

PURSUANT TO CALL AND DUE NOTICE THEREOF, THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MINNEOTA, COUNTY OF LYON, STATE OF MINNESOTA, MET IN SPECIAL SESSION IN THE CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS ON MONDAY, AUGUST 6, 2018 AT 6:30 P.M.

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor John Rolbiecki
Council Member Travis Gillund
Council Member Tim Koppien
Council Member Amber Rodas
Council Member Jerry Teigland

STAFF PRESENT: Bill Bolt, Alexis Ramirez, Shirley Teigland

OTHERS PRESENT: Katie Boettger, Matt Boettger, Melinda Boettger, Ben Bossuyt, Rick Bot, Eric Buysse, Jenny Buysse, Jodi Buysse, Tom Buysse, Emily Coequyt, Matt Coequyt, Michael Coequyt, Clark Corbin, Cory Crowley, Dan DeSmet, Doug DeSmet, Dan Diette, Joyce Downing, John Engels, Brooke Hennen, Pam Hennen, Trent Hennen, Byron Higgin, Jen Johnson, Darlene Josephson, Rebecca Jurrens, Corey Kack, Bruce Laleman, Bruce Laleman, Ellen Longtin, Jordan Longtin, Cody Meyer, Brad Minnehan, Robin Minnehan, Sandy Minnehan, Grant Moorse, Jason Myhre, Bob Nelson, Lynette Nelson, Jim Pesch, Justin Pesch, Bob Polejewski, Brian Rodas, Jim Rolbiecki, Jeanette Sharp, Jeff Sussner, Lydia Sussner, Nacole Sussner, Ronald Sussner, Josh Swedzinski, Kevin Swedzinski, Laura Swedzinski, Joe Thostenson, Harry Traen, Tammy VanOverbeke, Dale Vershelde, Janelle Vershelde, Ben Vlaminck, Dawn Vlaminck, Stephanie Vlaminck, Rick Wagner, Jean Wambeke, Deb Winter, Terry Winter, Deann Winters, John Winters

ITEM 1: CALL TO ORDER

Mayor John Rolbiecki called the regular monthly meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ITEM 2: ADOPT AGENDA

Koppien motioned, seconded by Rodas to adopt the agenda as presented. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

ITEM 3: AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mayor John Rolbiecki opened the meeting by reading the following statement: I would like to thank everyone for coming to the meeting. Your attendance shows the community's interest in a very important topic. The purpose of the meeting is two-fold, the first being to update the public about the current situation with the ambulance service in Minneota and secondly, to solicit feedback from you in the audience. The City has been involved in on-going negotiations with North and we welcome and are open to any and all suggestions as we move forward with additional discussions. During the course of negotiations North sent notice to the City of their intent to terminate the current ambulance contract and cease operating the ambulance service in Minneota effective August 31, 2018. North's reason for termination was an inability to provide appropriate staffing. Through additional communication with North they have amended the cancellation to a notice of their intent to not renew the current contract.

The contract is set to expire January 8, 2019 so in essence this buys us additional time to negotiate. North has increased their efforts to recruit additional staff for the Minneota location and anyone interested in going through North's application process can apply online via a link that is also posted on the City's website and Facebook page. The City has also posted a notice asking that those interested in being trained as an EMT or are already an EMT and are interested in becoming part of the ambulance staff to please contact the City office for additional information. I am happy to say that we have already had 12 individuals contact the office expressing interest. I can also say that we have been in contact with other providers and have also looked into what training resources are available. The City will continue to explore all other options that may be available to us, including any ideas that may be brought up tonight. This concludes my update as to where we are with negotiations and I'd like to move to the second portion which is to entertain public feedback, suggestions and comments. You are welcome to come forward and speak. If you wish to speak please state your name clearly for the record.

Rick Wagner, North Memorial Outstate Operations Director asked to add additional comments to clarify how the license and management of the ambulance service is run under the current contract. Mr. Wagner stated that the City of Minneota owns the ambulance PSA license and North Memorial contracts with the City to manage and operate the license. North has been managing the ambulance service for 20+ years, staffing the service with what is classified as volunteer and pays \$4 per hour on-call time with actual calls being paid at a higher hourly rate. Staff needs to be available to cover 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. The reason North has given notice to terminate is because it's becoming harder and harder to find people who will dedicate their lives to being available for this kind of coverage. There are many times we are not able to cover shifts nor are we able to guarantee staffing at the current hourly rates. Mr. Wagner also stated that this is not an issue only here. All over the United States small rural communities are finding the ambulance service a far more difficult issue due to lack of volunteerism. If North Memorial wanted to be involved with keeping an ambulance in Minneota, North would have to look at a substantial increase in the subsidy and they can no longer honor the current contract and continue to operate the service on an automatic renewal basis.

Mr. Wagner reviewed 4 options available to the City to consider: 1) North operate a 24-hour coverage service, 2) The City & North operate a 12-hour on and 12-hour off-premise service, 3) The City manage & operate the service or 4) The City give up the license and the EMSR Board would then divide the current Primary Service Area between all area ambulance services. The question was asked if the City was to give up the license would North Memorial keep an ambulance in Minneota? Mr. Wagner said they would have to evaluate but probably not.

The question was asked whether patients were being charged for the 2nd ambulance on scene and why the Minneota ambulance doesn't transfer patients and always waits on-site for the ambulance to arrive from Marshall to transport the patient. Mr. Wagner explained that North is open to doing it differently but has been using a dual response system and though there is additional cost to North, the cost is not passed on to the City in the contract.

Concerns were expressed by a number of people that the additional time needed to get an ambulance to Minneota from Marshall would jeopardize patient care and felt that money should be spent on training so that there would be the option of staff being on-site prior to an ambulance arriving from Marshall.

Mayor Rolbiecki clarified that this meeting is being held in an effort to be transparent and open with the public and I believe that we always have been. Individuals questioned why the public was being notified now and not earlier. The Mayor explained that at this time there are 4 options on the table as Rick read to you and there has been no secrecy or fault by the City or North. The options were given and none of the options have been explored further because North's termination was received by the City. There are options, yes, but with no cost breakdown and we have not gotten to the point of exploring the options in greater detail. Now that the termination date has been extended to the end of the year, the City feels that we can invigorate the discussions with North and get substantial information about the options. At this point we still don't know all the costs associated with the various options and what the actual impact will be to the taxpayers, but we do know that it will be substantially more than

the current stipend of approximately \$18,000 per year. When asked what the cost would be if North did continue to manage & operate the ambulance service, Mr. Wagner said it would be difficult to say without running the numbers but estimated that it would cost in the area of \$400,000 per year.

Mayor Rolbiecki confirmed that the current contract will expire January 8, 2019. He also acknowledged that within any contract there is a cancellation clause and if either party feels that they can no longer meet the requirements of the contract they can terminate. North recognized that they cannot fulfill the current contract and as a business they have decided that they will not put themselves in jeopardy by not being able to fulfill the obligations of the contract.

There was additional discussion about pay rates for ambulance staff and whether it is even reasonable to expect volunteers to be paid \$4 per hour, what the potential tax impact will be on taxpayers and who would be responsible for the EMT training costs which are estimated to be \$1,500 per volunteer. Mayor Rolbiecki acknowledged that nothing will be resolved tonight but also stated that I think that everyone can understand and see what the challenges are moving forward for both sides. We appreciate all of you for taking the time to come to this meeting to voice your opinions and give us suggestions. Please do not hesitate to contact any of us on the Council with other ideas that you may think of. Representatives from each City, Township and Fire Departments in the PSA will be included in future negotiation sessions and the Administrator will reach out to each entity for the name and contact information for who will be attending the upcoming meetings. With that I will entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Koppien motioned, seconded by Rodas, to adjourn the meeting at 8:20 p.m. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The next scheduled Regular Council Meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2018 at 6:30 p.m.

ATTEST:

Shirley Teigland, City Administrator

John Rolbiecki, Mayor

Council Approved October 8, 2018