

**CITY OF LIBERTY COUNCIL  
SPECIAL CALLED MEETING  
JANUARY 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009 6:00 P.M.  
MINUTES**

This special called meeting was called to order by Mayor Deese. Present were Council Members: Michael Sheriff, Brian Petersen, Dwight Yates, Josh Harrison, Rick Clark and Mayor Deese.

Absent: CM Walt McJunkin

**DISCUSSION: CDBG GRANT FOR EXPANSION OF LIBERTY FIRE DEPARTMENT**

CM Clark stated the following: On November 26, 2008, the city was awarded a CDBG grant in the amount of \$192,000.00. The CDBG grant is a community enrichment grant and is to be used for the expansion of the fire department. This is something we have been talking about in our last few meetings. We would like to use the grant to add two new bays to our fire department. The city's match would be approximately \$50,350.00. Our current fire department was built in 1974 and is not adequate to house our vehicles or equipment any more and the bays are too short for the ladder truck we bought. The ladder truck is sitting out in the weather. We bought the ladder truck for \$15,000.00 and talked about putting \$15,000.00 into it. Leaving the truck exposed to the weather is just accelerating the deterioration of it. One of the key issues is the ISO concern. ISO has sent a map to Chief Sargent to upgrade. We have not been audited since April of 1996. Usually after the map is sent an audit is not far behind. Due to the ladder truck, service truck and squad 6 being outside, our ISO rating could be changed from a class 5 to a class 10. According to the Farm Bureau Insurance, we pay about \$399.00 for insurance now as class 5. If we are raised to a class 10, our insurance would be \$951.00. Nationwide Insurance is \$268.00 for class 5 and class 10 would be \$1,059.00. These are some of the things we are looking at. The ladder truck, service truck, squad 6 and a brush truck are all outside at this time. Engine 2 is housed at the shed, so that if we needed it, someone would have to go and get it and bring it to the fire. I talked to Richard Ricken, who is going to talk with Chief Sargent about putting Engine 5, 2 and the new brush truck at the new station. That would still leave the bays full here and the ladder truck outside. We need to house the ladder truck which is for the city and not the rural district. This is for the City of Liberty not for the rural fire district. For me, if we do not do this project, in the next 5 or 10 years, we will be saying we should have done that. I don't want to be that type of council. It seems that at every meeting we talk about some project from the sixties or seventies that we should have been done then. This is a unique time when every thing has come together to complete this project. Every grant or avenue we have tried in the past has failed or came apart, this time it all came together and we need to move forward now. There are several ways to accomplish getting the matching funds. We invested \$50,000.00 several years ago in property down by the credit union that I don't know of any plans we have for or that we have a need for. We could take that property and turn it into a tax yielding property. We have someone retiring from the city in June. That opens up that salary if we froze that position for a year. In the past we talked about raising taxes to pay back a loan for this project. With this grant we do not have to borrow any money. This project is a golden opportunity that would take care of our city needs for years. We have a three year cycle on this grant and this is the second year. We have to go door to door conducting an income survey and getting statistics. If we do not take this grant this year, I do not see us getting another grant. We are going to apply for sewer grants in the spring and I think we may be shunned if we don't take this grant now. Our grant cycle runs out next year and we only have one more time to apply. CM

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Sheriff asked what he meant by the grant money runs out? CM Clark explained that we had to qualify for Low and Middle Income. We had to actually go knock on about 1300 to 1500 doors to get us qualified. The qualification that last for three years then you would have to re-qualify. The first year was the water grant, this year is the fire department and next year is the sewer grant.

- *CM Petersen made a motion that the agenda be amended and council go into Executive Session and come out and vote accordingly.*
- *CM Dwight Yates seconded the motion to go into Executive Session.*
- **Discussion:** *CM Clark stated his understanding was to go into Executive Session was for personnel issues and contractual matters. He stated this grant is nowhere near the contract stage yet. CM Petersen stated he believed signing the acceptance of this grant was a contractual matter. Council entered into a discussion over this being a matter for Executive Session or not.*
- *Vote: 3 in favor; 3 opposed*

CM Sheriff stated one of his concerns was that we were in keeping with our 5 and 10 year plan. He stated he still did not understand why we did not go with building the new fire station. He stated his concern was losing all of the parking in the back. CM Clark stated they could turn Church Street into parallel parking for city hall employees. Mayor Deese stated building the new fire station at Flat Rock and keeping our fire station here in the middle of town would be the better solution due to the train tracks. He stated we would have a station on either side of the tracks which is what we were trying to accomplish. Mayor Deese relayed a discussion with Richard Ricken on what personnel and vehicles he will be taking to the new fire station. He could not give an answer yet. Questions were put to Chief Sargent regarding how many vehicles would be left on site. Council asked if anything was documented where the train track interfered with the department's response to a fire. Chief Sargent stated there was not that he knew of. Questions were asked of Chief Sargent regarding the amount of funds spent on repairs to the ladder truck. Council continued to discuss if this grant was the best avenue to take at this time, if two bays would be sufficient for the future, location and parking matters, and matching funds. CM Petersen asked Chief Sargent how many trucks were housed during our last ISO inspection and how many were outside. CM Petersen raised several questions regarding the fire department's ISO rating being increased from 5 to 10 in light of all the improvements that have been made. CM Clark responded to these questions by referring to the ISO insurance minimal guidelines and reading that unless all vehicles were housed the ISO rating could be changed from a 5 to a 10. He read several other passages from the manual regarding requirements on having vehicles housed. Chief Sargent stated that was minimum criteria and it is saying if that is not met Council discussed whether the ISO rating would or would not increase to 10 if vehicles were outside. Mayor Deese reminded council that the ladder truck would not fit in any bay that we have now and that any fire truck we may buy in the future would not fit in our bays. Mayor Deese stated we need to decide if we are going to agree to accept this grant or not, if not, it is a dead issue. CM Clark stated either we accept the grant or we don't. He stated ISO was just a part of the reasons and he asked for someone to give him the next best alternative. CM Petersen stated all the other alternatives have not been discussed yet. CM Clark stated we have been discussing alternatives for seven years now. CM Yates stated we were

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already grading land for the new fire station at Liberty Boulevard when I came on and the discussion was that we also needed it there so the county would put a road in to the industrial park and all of a sudden it disappeared and we were on our way up to Cornell Dublier. CM Sheriff stated for council's information that piece of property is for sale now. Council discussed the reasons for not building the fire station at Liberty Blvd. such as not receiving the funding we requested. Each time we requested the funding, we were dropped at the last minute and that is what changed the course there. CM Clark stated his position was fire protection for the downtown district. He explained that is what this particular grant is for. CM Clark stated right now we are the only ones in the State to get this grant because of our commitment to Commerce Street and our downtown district. CM Petersen stated the point was we already had a definitive way we were going to go. We already had a USDA loan in place and we got shot down by the veto of the Governor that particular year due to budget cuts for our particular \$200,000 plus. CM Petersen stated after that, to his knowledge, nothing else was done to keep pursuing that avenue it was just, now we are going to Cornell Dublier. Mayor Deese stated that grant went over into the next year and was blocked again; in fact, it was blocked for three years. We asked for \$300,000 and that was blocked, so, it was not just blocked the first year, but every year after that. Mayor Deese asked if we had taken the route for the fire station at Liberty Blvd., is the city in the position to invest \$800,000 at this stage. CM Petersen stated we were then, why wouldn't we be now. Mayor Deese stated we could borrow that money but I can't see us putting ourselves in that much debt. Mayor Deese stated the scenario changed due to the fire district building another fire station down the road. CM Petersen asked why was all of council not informed of all of this in the beginning so that we could have made all of these decisions and we would not have had to have this special called meeting. Mayor Deese stated he thought everyone was on board with all of this since we have applied for this grant before. CM Clark stated that was all his fault and he would take the full blame for that. He stated when he saw the grant in the ACOG newsletter; it was late so I started working on it. He stated when he got everything together for the grant was when he came to council. CM Clark stated he thought that what we are doing is using that, whether it is due to hurt feelings or whatever, to not move forward with this grant. He stated do not use that to compromise the future of our fire department and try to move forward and solve our problems. CM Petersen stated the best way to solve our problems is to have everyone involved so that we can have a unified resolution. CM Petersen asked each councilman to respond to the questions, how much information we have and enough detail on this to even be at this meeting tonight and to come comfortably to a decision. Mayor Deese replied that we have been talking about this fire station for a year or two and now this grant became available and we've been awarded these funds and now I am hearing what we are going to do with it. CM Yates stated we are at the point now where we have to sign the papers for this grant and we (council) did not get to discuss it. I feel that we are landlocked. I am concerned about the parking and the overcrowding at city hall. CM Clark asked the clerk was it September or October when this grant was on the agenda. The clerk replied she would have to look it up. CM Clark stated if it was in October, there is October, November, December and now it is January 19<sup>th</sup>, and if any of you had questions, I have not heard any. We have had this going on for several months and I would have been glad to answer anything. CM Harrison stated at that time the application was already started. The questions should have been cleared up before the application was stated. He stated he found out about the application about ten minutes before the council meeting. CM Harrison stated the problem was the

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application was already in so if they give us the money, then we are stuck with what do we do with it. If we had gotten all the questions answered before we applied and the grant was written to the specifications all council agreed to, then this would not be necessary. CM Clark stated we have had three months to answer questions. CM Harrison stated the grant was already applied for so now if we do not approve the funds we look like the bad guys when that is not the point at all. He stated he agreed totally with the need but that council should have been informed before the grant was applied for. CM Clark stated that was his fault but he was in the middle of a training class when he saw the grant and his time to apply was short so he had to get started on it. Mayor Deese stated we need to decide if we are going to move forward or not. He stated we need to decide by what is best for Liberty. Council discussed the long term affects of expanding the fire department. Chief Sargent gave his opinion on why this grant should be accepted and the fire department expanded.

- *CM Sheriff stated due to CM McJunkin being absent, he would make a motion that council schedule another meeting to decide this issue.*
- *The special called meeting was scheduled for Monday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2009, at 5:30 pm*
- *CM Yates seconded the motion.*
- *Vote: All in favor*
  
- *CM Yates made motion to go into Executive Session*
- *CM Harrison seconded the motion*
- *Vote: All in favor*
  
- *CM Clark made motion to come out of Executive Session*
- *CM Petersen seconded the motion*
- *Vote: Al in favor*

Mayor Deese stated he would entertain a motion to vote on the discussion which took place in Executive Session on acquiring three easements.

- *CM Sheriff made motion for the city to proceed with acquiring the easements discussed in Executive Session.*
- *CM Petersen seconded the motion*
- *Vote: All in favor*

Chief Miller asked if they could get an answer on the patrol cars. Mayor Deese stated he was going to bring this up at the next session. He stated we have had discussions this past year on acquiring two more vehicles for the police department. In purchasing those our first payment on the note would not be until this time next year so it would have to be in next year's budget. Council had some specific questions on these vehicles and asked that that information be provided to them for the next meeting.

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**Adjourn**

- CM Clark made motion to adjourn.
- CM Yates seconded the motion.
- Vote: All in favor.

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Approval Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Verification/Mayor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sue Woods, City Clerk