

**CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

DATE: August 25, 2020

NAME OF COMMITTEE: Committee of the Whole

MEMBERS PRESENT: Council President Claire Kemp,
Councilors Bielski, Pogachar, Mitchell,
Pruitt and West

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

NOTE TAKER: Cynthia Fleming, Deputy Clerk

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Brad Mohn, Hamilton Volunteer Fire Department,
Fire Chief and Dominic Farrenkopf, Mayor

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes from August 11, 2020

Councilor Mitchell pointed out that in paragraph 3 on page 2 his last name is spelled incorrectly. The correction was noted. Councilor Mitchell moved to approve the minutes with the correction. Councilor Pruitt seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

• **Discussion of Fire Department Needs**

Brad Mohn, Fire Chief of the Hamilton Volunteer Fire Department has been working the last few years with Mayor Farrenkopf and he feels that it is time to share the needs of the Fire Department with the Council. The Fire Department needs to replace one of their trucks. The new truck will cost somewhere between \$700,000 to \$900,000. In the Capital Improvement Fund we currently have \$430,000 to which Craig Shepherd the City's Finance Administrator tentatively added \$300,000. Depending on what we decide there will be some money available.

Mr. Mohn continued saying the current fire station doesn't meet our needs. The building is 110 years old, fire trucks don't fit in it and structurally, the building is starting to decay. We may be looking at making some costly repairs. He said that a new fire station will cost three million dollars. We are considering and working on getting information about a five acre lot that is just to the north of the lot the City was considering for a new fire station. City Planner, Matthew Rohrbach is trying to find out who owns the lot. Chief Mohn feels it would be a better location and would give the Department room to grow. These two things are our initial needs. Chief Mohn said that he would like to get Council on board.

Mayor Farrenkopf stated that we have looked at six good ways of funding. Number one is a naming donor. Someone who makes a large donation and the Fire Department is named after them. Number two would be a grass roots effort utilizing different fundraising mechanisms. Number 3 is to use savings and grants. Number 4 would be an Intercap Loan such as was used to build the Justice Center. Number 5 would be to take it to the voters with a General Obligation, (GO) Bond. Number six is a combination of fundraising efforts. The Mayor added that another reason for looking at the larger lot is to allow for changes and other requirements that may happen. He feels it something that we should look at.

Councilor Bielski commented that it may be worth purchasing the lot even if it is not used for the Fire Department. Councilor Kemp feels that a combination of fund raising mechanisms will need to be used and added that real estate is really expensive right now. As a realtor she may be able to help find out who owns the vacant lot.

Mr. Shepherd, the Finance Director received \$140,000 for reimbursement for Covid Care stated Mayor Farrenkopf. We are putting it aside for now in case something changes and we would need to pay it back. There could be multiple payments and each quarter we may be able to draw on that money. I think it is going to have to be a combination of a lot of these things.

Councilor Kemp inquired what time frame is being suggested. Chief Mohn replied that he would like Council's support in order to be able to get it on the November 2021 ballot. This would give us time to raise public awareness and support. Councilor Pogachar suggested that some money received from the Cares Act could be used to pay off the loan for the Justice Center and get a new loan for building a fire hall. Chief Mohn commented that he is all for paying off the Justice Center with Cares funds. Another thing that the City needs to consider is that Skeels Avenue will need to be punched through to Fairgrounds Road. The North Hamilton Urban Renewal District, (NHURD) funds are to support community growth and could possibly be earmarked for this project. Councilor Kemp stated that she is in support of the new fire hall project. Councilor West commented that we have been dying for a building for a long time and she asked if the new truck will fit in the old fire hall. Chief Mohn replied that it would. He said another potential issue to deal with if Marcus Daly will provide EMS services to the valley. If they stop it will go to other emergency services to pick up that piece.

Councilor Bielski is definitely in favor of a new fire hall, but she said she is concerned about how the community will view it. Councilor Pruitt feels the community is pretty interested in the idea of a new fire hall. By involving the community she could see support building and is interested to see what we can do going forward.

As far as what would happen with the old fire hall, Councilor Kemp said that she and City Planner, Matthew Rohrbach, started working with State's Historic Preservation committee last year. She feels that we need to be thoughtful about what is done with the building. The building is already on the historic registry and she believes it is an incredible asset to our history.

Chief Mohn was asked what is more pressing the new fire truck or the new building. He responded that both are a high priority. We have to have quality equipment to protect fire fighters and the community. I can't really say which is more important. In a perfect world we would breaking ground and buying a new fire truck. Listening to the members tonight he feels that he has Council support. We have a meeting on September 3 to look at estimated costs and the size of the building. Mayor Farrenkopf said that he would like to do a Committee of the Whole meeting at the fire hall and do a walk through to get a better idea of why we need a new building. If Covid is not going away we could do a video to show people the fire hall and why a new one is needed. Councilor West said that it is pretty impressive how the fire fighters manage working in that space. Chief Mohn stated another concern is the health of our fire fighters. Cancer in fire fighters is skyrocketing because of the exhaust from trucks. There are a lot of things like that we could put out there for the public, to explain why we need a new fire hall.

Mayor Farrenkopf asked Councilors to email or contact him if they have ideas or thoughts about this effort.

Recommendation

Keep in Committee and keep talking about and moving forward.

• Covid 19 Issues

Mayor Farrenkopf offered that everyone is still making an effort with the mask directive. He hasn't observed any major concerns. We seem to be doing fine and Ravalli County Public Health is doing fine. He doesn't believe that a lot has changed and the City is doing business as normal. We haven't had people complain. There is a lot of ways for people to do business.

Councilor Pruitt commented that school will be starting up. Councilor Bielski stated that Cross Country has started. She feels the school is doing the best it can.

Recommendations:

None.

Non-Agenda Items

Councilor Mitchell said that the "No Parking" signs have still not been replaced at the end of Geneva Ave. He thinks they may be County signs. The neighbor said he was going to put up his own.

Councilor West would like to coordinate with the High School Art Department to paint the signal boxes with Covid friendly protocols in place. It would fun for the kids and uplifting to have a project.

Councilor Bielski would like to know if Junk Days was delayed or not scheduled. Mayor Farrenkopf stated he would check with Donny Ramer.

Topics for Consideration for a Future Meeting

Speeding on Adirondac Street

Adjourn

Councilor West moved to adjourn. Councilor Pogachar seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:43pm.