

**CITY OF HAMILTON
COMMITTEE MINUTES**

DATE: September 8, 2020

NAME OF COMMITTEE: Committee of the Whole

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Councilor Bielski

NOTE TAKER: Cynthia Fleming, Deputy Clerk

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Donny Ramer, Public Works Director, Matthew
Rohrbach, City Planner, Karl Bauer, City Planner I,
Dominic Farrenkopf, Mayor

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes from August 25, 2020

Councilor West motioned to approve the minutes. Motion was seconded by Councilor Pogachar. The minutes were approved unanimously.

• **Update on Skalkaho Bend Park**

Public Works Director, Donny Ramer, told the Committee that they have been spraying for weeds in the park. Currently Stephen Lassiter, Parks Department, has been working with the Bitter Root Land Trust to figure out where trails are going to go. Public Works' staff is working on creating new signs for all the city parks in an effort to update information and have the signage match newer signs more closely. He and City Planner, Matthew Rohrbach are working on setting up a device to count the number of vehicles using the parking lot in order to understand how much Skalkaho Bend parking is being utilized. He talked to a neighbor of the park and asked them to call police when they saw illegal activity occurring so something could be done. He said that lately City Police have been kicking people out who are camping in the parks. There have been a lot of homeless people. The hours for the parks are complicated. The city's information used to say the parks are open dawn to dusk. Chief Oster has requested the specific hours as stated in city ordinance be used instead. Mr. Ramer explained that there are different open hours depending on what time of year it is. It makes it more complicated, however, it is easier to enforce a specific time. He feels that sticking with the solid hours is good. If we continue to have problems we may need to look at the calendar dates the hour changes occur on and possibly make modifications.

Councilor Kemp asked if a response to the email from the park neighbors with concerns had been sent. Mayor Farrenkopf responded that staff are working on the response, but he wanted to wait to hear from the Councilors. He feels that it is premature to redo the park plan when we haven't even seen how the plan will work. Councilor Pogachar feels that the Mayor needs to respond to the email and that he should reinforce the need to call police when they see illegal activity. Director Ramer commented that we are going to get signage up in the next couple of weeks and will soon be getting wayfinding signs purchased and installed and will be monitoring the park for usage. He feels the signage will make a big difference. Councilor Mitchell stated that he thinks that park use will go down as the weather turns colder. Councilor West agrees and would like to see how things go through the winter. She commented that she is not sure what our long range plans are for the park and it might be worthwhile to do some community outreach and think about having a master plan created for the park.

Councilor West also reported that there is a patch of houndstongue northwest of the new bridge. Director Ramer replied that we are at our maximum allotment of weed spraying. The Councilor suggested organizing a weed pull.

Recommendation

The Committee would like to wait and see how things are going. No recommendations at this time.

• People Speak Demonstration

Matthew Rohrbach, City Planner and Karl Bauer, City Planner I, introduced a new online engagement tool they are hoping to incorporate into City meetings. The tool, People Speak, is designed to democratize public hearings. Mr. Rohrbach feels that Committee members provide a good audience to introduce the online software. He gave the Councilors a condensed explanation of the software including highlighting meeting packet preparation and publishing and how it will help to optimize Zoom meetings to allow for greater public participation as well as meet the demand for greater transparency in public meetings and legislative processes and reduce conflict that arise from decisions.

Councilor West asked if this will take the place of the website. Mr. Rohrbach replied that no it will compliment it. Links to the live meetings can be uploaded to the website just like meeting information is currently published. This will all be public record. There is a level of accountability for comments. Public comments will not be censored, however, comments with unacceptable language will not be allowed. We will need to create a policy regarding acceptable public comment. He told the Councilors that other City's using the product have seen that there is very little need for comment moderating. He consulted with City Attorney, Karen Mahar, regarding comment moderation and she cautioned against limiting people's 1st amendment rights. Councilor Mitchell asked who will moderate comments. Mr. Rohrbach responded that when a member of the public makes a comment, Mr. Bauer will get an email and be able to look at the comment.

Current electronic media will be used to get the word out. We will get the link out there and on the website in order to integrate people into using the tool. The roll out date is November 2nd. We are going to try bringing it to a Council meeting prior to that date allowing us time to fine tune the process.

The People Speak software costs \$400 a month and will be used for all boards, councils and committees. The price varies depending on the size of the municipality. Mr. Rohrbach added that this is in the approved budget. The “Open Meeting” software is free for any government serving less than 5000. A camera was also budgeted for. Total equipment costs are under \$1000.

Councilor Pogachar would like an information sheet on the program and information on how to access the site.

Recommendations:

No recommendation.

• **Covid 19**

Councilor Mitchell commented that Ravalli County currently has only 3 active cases, which puts us under the required 4 cases in the Governor’s mask mandate.

Mayor Farrenkopf introduced an idea to the members that he said would allow us to meet in person. Council members could meet in the community room and with the new technology we are introducing, the public can participate via zoom. All members of the Council will participate as a single participant. Mayor Farrenkopf asked if the Councilors want to consider pursuing this. Councilor Pruitt responded that she would love to start meeting in person. All other Councilors were in agreement. The Mayor will see how and when that can happen.

Recommendations:

Committee members to meet in person and public to participate through Zoom.

Non-Agenda Items

Councilor West asked if there was any news on the website update.

Adjourn

Councilor West moved to adjourn. Councilor Pogachar seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.