



City of West Allis

7525 W. Greenfield Ave.
West Allis, WI 53214

Meeting Minutes Public Works Committee

Aldersperson Gary T. Barczak, Chair

Aldersperson Martin J. Weigel, Vice-Chair

Alderspersons: Michael J. Czaplewski, Daniel J. Roadt, James W. Sengstock

Monday, November 2, 2009

6:00 PM

West Allis City Hall Room 210

SPECIAL MEETING

A. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Barczak called the meeting to order.

B. ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Ald. Barczak, Ald. Weigel, Ald. Czaplewski, Ald. Roadt and Ald. Sengstock

Excused: 0

Others Attending:

Alderspersons Kopplin, Lajsic, Narlock, Reinke, and Vitale; Paul M. Ziehler, City Administrative Officer; Mike Lewis, City Engineer; Tom Harmatys, Acting Director of Public Works; Gary Schmid, Manager of Finance; Audrey Key, HR Manager; Jane Barwick, Principal HR Analyst; Brenda Schmid, Principal Secretary; Jeanette Wardinski, Administrative Assistant.

C. NOTICE OF JOINT MEETING WITH THE BOARD OF PUBLIC WORKS AND THE ADMINISTRATION & FINANCE COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS:

1. [2009-0647](#)

Report from City Administrative Officer regarding organizational structure of the City with respect to the Public Works Department and the Engineering Department.

Based on the request at the last joint meeting, Mr. Ziehler passed out copies of several organizational charts, including one each for the current structure of the Engineering Department and the Department of Public Works, and then one for a combined Department of Public Works/Engineering. He also passed out an information sheet on the estimated salary changes, based on past responsibilities, points, and salaries. He noted that the salary should remain the same for the Assistant Director of Engineering.

Ald. Narlock thought the estimated salary was high for the Assistant Director of Public Works. Mr. Ziehler responded that based on our current analysis procedure, taking into account what type of job requirements and education/college degree may be required for the position, the calculation would result in this type of salary range. Ald. Vitale questioned why we would want to go to the outside for the Assistant position or look for someone with a college degree. He feels we have people with years of experience within the Department that could fill the position, and he does not agree that someone with a college degree needs to be in that position. Mr. Ziehler responded to the issue of requiring a college degree and what benefits that can bring to a position/job; however, it's not an absolute and we may recruit asking for a college degree and/or combination of degree and experience. Ultimately, it comes down to how the job description is prepared and what we recruit for. Ald. Vitale asked if the Council feels there is someone within that we feel is qualified, why do we even have to post/recruit for the job? Mr. Ziehler responded that under current policy, the Mayor recommends to the Council the hiring of the Director of the Department, and the Director then has the authority to appoint the Assistant level positions. Ald. Czaplewski said isn't it the Council's job to make the decision on how the structure should be set? He realizes that everyone's goal is to save

money, but how can we discuss positions without a decision on the organizational structure. Discussion ensued.

Ald. Reinke wondered about when the Engineering and Public Works Departments were previously combined, what transpired that we supported changing the structure to two separate departments? Ald. Lajsic explained the structure during the tenure of Mr. Ray Hahn, Director of Public Works/Engineering, and upon his retirement, Mr. Leroy Krafcheck's role as the Director of the combined department with a City Engineer and Assistant Director of Public Works. It was becoming obvious that the two departments were pretty much running on their own, and when Mr. Krafcheck retired, his position was eliminated and the two areas became separate, stand-alone departments.

Ald. Barczak stated his opinion that he believes a combined position would be overwhelming for a person to assume. He thinks Public Works operates just fine on its own, and he feels the two departments should remain separated. It's working and there are no problems. Everything has run so well for such a long time, why are we trying to change it, and it's obvious the cost savings are not there. He feels that long-term, it would probably cost more in the end. Ald. Lajsic said he agrees that the departments are operating well, but he feels the position of an Assistant Director of Public Works would bring value to the Department. He thinks it would lend to the streamlining of operations, and he sees the position as looking to find ways for the Department to be less labor intensive, looking to reduce supervisory staff and combine divisions. The position would help find efficiencies in the Department that the Director does not have the time to do. He thinks there is a lot of potential to be gained through better technology, restructuring, etc. and he feels this will happen quicker with an Assistant position.

Ald. Sengstock agrees that having someone overseeing both departments can be very productive. He talked about the economic climate and the potential for reduced salaries, and long-term benefits with someone new coming in to look at these things. He thinks a change would do us good. Ald. Barczak said he thinks just the opposite about who is going to be looking for efficiencies. Sometimes change is not good, and he feels this is the case here. The Director is the one to make changes, review the budget, etc. The Assistant is overseeing the Yard and doesn't have the time to do this. Ald. Lajsic said he is looking at the potential to combine some of the Yard Divisions, and he thinks an Assistant will have the time to look at these things and find the possibilities to do it. When asked for his input, Mr. Lewis said he gives his staff lots of latitude to do their jobs, and they, in turn, come to him with cost-saving suggestions.

Ald. Czaplewski mentioned another idea to consider is a combined department with only one assistant rather than two. Mr. Ziehler said there is just too much work to have only one assistant; something will suffer. Ald. Roadt said he believes the structure should remain as it is now. He said if we were to substitute the Police Department for Engineering and the Fire Department for Public Works, we would not even be talking about this. Ald. Weigel said if we are thinking of making a change based on when someone retires, then we are looking at personnel and not the structure. However, because of the current economy, now would be a good time to find someone from outside. A new person brings a fresh set of eyes and new ideas. Further discussion ensued.

Ald. Barczak said we are at the point, again, to see where we are at. He asked for a hand vote on the two options that are apparent at this time:

- 1.) Status quo - 5 in favor [1-A&F (Kopplin); 4-PW (Barczak, Czaplewski, Roadt, Weigel)]
- 2.) Combined w/Assistant - 5 in favor [4-A&F (Lajsic, Narlock, Reinke, Vitale); 1-PW (Sengstock)]

Ald. Barczak said, with approval of both Committees, he would like Mr. Ziehler to write up both recommendations for the next Council meeting. A vote will then be taken and if a tie again is the result, it will be up to the Mayor to make the final determination. Both Committees agreed to move forward in this manner, and staff was directed to submit the two reports.

Held

D. NEW AND PREVIOUS MATTERS

1. [2009-0509](#) Communication from Mike Pertmer, Director of Public Works, announcing his retirement in October.

No Action

E. OTHER MATTERS TO COME BEFORE THE COMMITTEE FOR DISCUSSION/ACTION

None.

F. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting at 6:50 p.m. The motion carried.