

City of Harrington
MINUTES
City Council Workshop
October 1, 2012

A workshop with the Harrington City Council was held on October 1, 2012 and was attended by the following: Mayor Robert E. Price, Jr.; Vice Mayor Cheryl Lahman; Council Member Duane E. Bivans; Council Member Fonda Coleman; Council Member Amy Minner; Council Member Wayne Porter; Council Member Kenneth Stubbs; Norman Barlow, Chief of Police; William Pepper, City Solicitor; Teresa Tieman, City Manager; and Kelly Blanchies, Clerk of Council.

Also in attendance: Alan Moore, Public Works Supervisor; Jason Dean; and Gerry Bloodsworth.

Mayor Price called the meeting to order.

The Pledge of Allegiance was given.

Budget & Finance Committee

Water meter installation project

The City Manager stated that 1,008 meters have been installed and 133 meters remain to be installed. The number of existing Master meters was overestimated; there are 195 including two inch commercial ones. The Master meters will have to be keyed into the Neptune hand held device. Neptune will give credits for any meters returned. All the Neptune meters will be able to be read in about two hours, while the Master meters will take about two days.

Council Member Stubbs stated that RIO Supply had stated that their equipment can read Master meters. The City Manager stated that they can be read with their equipment, just not by radio read.

The City Manager stated that the original bid was reduced to \$343,698.24 when the Council decided to keep the Master meters. In the end the price will probably be less than \$300,000.

Council Member Porter asked if the City overestimated the project. The City Manager stated yes, because the billing system has more accounts than meters. The number of overall meters and the number of Master meters were both overestimated. The meter inventory was practically nonexistent. Vice Mayor Lahman stated that some buildings have one meter for a business and residence, so at some point, it will need two

meters. The City Manager stated that would be up to the owner, but they would start receiving one bill once billing is done by usage.

Council Member Stubbs asked if all the meters can be replaced with Neptune meters for around \$300,000. The City Manager stated that she will get a better number. It would make the operation more efficient and consistent. The Public Works Supervisor stated that when the manual readings are done now for commercial accounts, it is time consuming and sometimes a second person has to go back to check the reading.

Council Member Minner asked how the meters that are inside the residences in Clarks Corner are being handled. The City Manager stated that Neptune will be used in those residences so that they can be read remotely.

Council Member Bivans stated that the purpose of the remote reads was to be more accurate. The City Manager stated that new meters are always more accurate than old ones because they are mechanical.

Council Member Minner asked why the Master meters were being kept. The City Manager stated that those meters were about 7 years old and still under warranty.

Council Member Stubbs asked how many meters were delivered. The Public Works Supervisor stated that they have delivered more than they have billed for. The City Manager stated that an incorrect number of two inch meters were delivered and is being corrected.

Council Member Minner asked what the warranty is on the meters. The City Manager stated that Neptune is lifetime. The Public Works Supervisor stated twenty years for Master meters.

Council Member Bivans stated that manually reading the Master meters means less accuracy. Council Member Stubbs stated that RIO indicated that there would be no extra cost to the City to read the Master meters. There is extra cost in manpower. Vice Mayor Lahman stated that the man hours are overall reduced greatly.

Council Member Porter asked if the new meters are being read yet. The Public Works Supervisor stated that a couple test readings have been done.

Council Member Porter asked if two readings would be conducted before billing begins. The City Manager stated that for the next quarterly bill there will be readings for everyone, and hopefully Edmunds will allow the readings to go on the bills without a charge for usage, so people can see

their consumption. With better information, the rate can be developed and approved with the budget next year. Council Member Porter stated that he is concerned about the rate because there are many citizens on a fixed income. The City Manager stated that it is difficult to determine what the rate will be until readings are done.

Mayor Price stated that the City Manager will bring back additional information about cost.

Council Member Stubbs stated that he is not concerned about the brand of meter. What the City tried to do in 2007 or 2008 by selecting a radio read meter was for nothing. The bid was written as equal to or better than the bid specs; they showed us that the Master meters out produced the Neptunes.

Ordinance Review Committee

Proposed changes to Chapter 120, Business Licenses

The City Manager read through the proposed changes. The City Solicitor suggested removing meals from the definition of Hotel. The City Manager stated that she would like to be collecting the business licenses in July and rental licenses in January. The Code Enforcement Officer has to conduct inspections with rental licenses, and around July is his busy season. State business licenses are also issued in January, so it gives businesses more time to get their license before they apply with the City. The City Manager stated that exemptions were added for charitable organizations, those under 18 that mow lawns, and residents conducting yard sales.

Council Member Porter asked about yard sales. The City Manager stated that what is proposed is a yard sale over three consecutive days is considered one event, and the limit is two yard sales a year. Council Member Bivans suggested four yard sales a year. Vice Mayor Lahman stated that it is hard to police. The City Manager stated that it is a guideline to use in case there is an issue. Council Member Bivans stated that charitable organizations are not currently accepting donations, so people need something to do with their unwanted items.

Mayor Price stated that the dates for business licenses and rental licenses should be switch because the State business licenses are never received by the time the City's is due.

The City Manager stated that the auditor told her that the rental inspection fees are paid in June and technically cannot be booked until the inspection is completed. For accounting it is also better to have the rental licenses in

the middle of the fiscal year. To implement it, business licenses will be billed in January for half of the fee then in July again for a full year. Rental inspection fees will not be billed until January.

Proposed changes to Chapter 314, Rental Properties

The City Manager read through the proposed changes. It is best to have the owner or property manager present when inspections are conducted. Inspections must be scheduled within ninety days of applying for a rental license. Some landlords do not want the inspection.

Mayor Price asked if landlords are given a timeline as to when the inspection must be done. The City Manager stated that the Administrative Assistant is giving landlords the days that are available for inspections. Mayor Price stated that the State requires more time to coordinate all the people that need to attend the inspections of their housing units.

Mayor Price asked if the Code Enforcement Officer is finding problems with the rental properties. The City Manager stated that the City requires smoke detectors in every bedroom, and that has been an issue. Inspecting in January would also allow the Code Enforcement Officer to be sure that the heating system works.

Council Member Bivans asked when the reinspection fee would be charged. The City Manager stated that if there were multiple items that failed inspection and a new inspection had to be completed, a fee would be charged for that. Council Member Bivans asked if a tenant damaged a property before moving out, would a new inspection be required. The City Manager stated that the inspection is once a year unless there is a tenant complaint. The inspection is to make sure the property is maintained to a basic level.

Council Member Porter asked about the Attorney General's landlord training class. The Chief of Police stated that it is help landlords screen for better tenants. Council Member Porter suggested making the Attorney General's class be mandatory after the first of the year. The City Solicitor stated that it is unclear if the Attorney General's Office will keep offering the class. The City Manager stated that it is better to have landlords voluntarily take the class so that it is a positive experience. There was a class in June, and there should be another one in the winter. Council Member Porter stated that many landlords do not live in the City. The City Manager stated that the inspection helps to identify any issues that can arise from neglectful landlords. Council Member Porter stated that Harrington is becoming a transient town.

Council Member Minner asked what the City's liability is if something like a fire happens at a residence that has been inspected. Council Member Bivans stated that everything is verified to be in good working order on the day the inspection is complete, the City cannot vouch for what happens after that.

The City Manager stated that the biggest concern was that the fee was being collected, and the inspections were not being completed.

Council Member Minner asked if the fee is appropriate to cover costs without overcharging. The City Manager stated that it does take time to conduct the inspection. Council Member Minner asked if the Code Enforcement Officer is certified to conduct the inspections. The City Manager stated that a certification is not required for that level of inspection.

There being no further business, the Council Workshop adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Blanchies
Clerk of Council