

CITY OF BURTON
FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 14, 1999/5:00 P.M., COUNCIL CHAMBERS

The Finance Meeting was called to order by Bob Centilli, Chairman, at 5:00 P.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Brawner, Centilli and Tinnin.

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

OTHERS PRESENT: Mayor Charles Smiley; B. Becker, Treasurer/Controller; and C. Ladd, Deputy Clerk.

PURPOSE OF THE MEETING: DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATIONS
CONCERNING:

1. Computer Tech Position
2. Census Promotion

PRESENTATION:

Computer Tech Position:

Mayor Smiley said he is asking for the Council to consider hiring a full-time Computer Tech position. In the 1990's and with the new Millenium, everything is hi-tech. We have computers, networks, software, web pages and other things going on in the City. We don't have anyone who can maintain them. We need someone who can keep the material current on the web site or keep the network up and running. You are aware of a contract that we had to set everything up, but that contract has expired. What we need to do to utilize the technology that is in place, is to have employees trained. We have to have someone here on staff to do the training. Most municipalities are finding there is a need for this type of training. I am asking for a full time position with a salary of \$35,000, with benefits. I believe it would be in the best interest of the City to have this position.

Census Promotion:

Mayor Smiley said concerning the Census promotion, there is no magical number but he thinks there should be some money available. Mr. Becker said there is a place where we can use money for this purpose. During the budget process we talked a lot about the census, but we didn't talk a lot about purchasing trinkets such as color books, pencils, bumper stickers, etc. However, I think it is very important to get everyone involved and work hard on the census. If the count is not accurate, we can miss out on a great deal of money. He said he predicts there are about 31,000 people in the City.

Mr. Becker said funds from the Public Service budget could be used for special projects. We have used it before for the tree lighting, Veteran's Memorial, etc. We could easily create a line item in that budget.

Mayor Smiley asked if there is a need to transfer possibly \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00. He said he isn't certain if it is too much or not enough money. I just thought we should have some money there to prepare for the census.

Mr. Becker replied there is a need for a transfer of funds.

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AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION:

Computer Tech Position: None.

Census Promotion:

Pauline Dargel, 6119 Hugh, said there should be something that the County, Chamber of Commerce or Metropolitan Alliance could do to help promote the census. Do you have some kind of report from that?

Mr. Centilli replied no they don't.

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION:

Computer Tech Position:

Mr. Brawner said we don't have anyone now, but you had someone working the past two or three months. Has he been paid for his work?

Mayor Smiley said Mr. Thurman has been here, but has volunteered his time. Mayor Smiley said starting this past Monday, he offered Mr. Thurman \$15.00 per hour as a contract employee because we want to be ready for the Y2K. His contract required for a Tuesday, Thursday but it's too hard to deal with a contract employee. We have called him when we need something done or had a problem, because no one here knows how to take care of the problem.

Under the contract we had with his company, he put in all of our PC's, our network, our web page and maintained our software. He also helped create programs for each department. Rather than trying to have another contract, I think it's time to have a full time employee.

Mr. Brawner asked if the position would be advertised.

Mayor Smiley said probably not, because he is comfortable working with Mr. Thurman. We will not get someone of his level at \$35,000. We are fortunate that he will accept this salary, because someone of his caliber could get between \$50,000 to \$60,000 per year.

Mr. Brawner asked under whose umbrella would he fall? Also, how would the position be funded?

Mayor Smiley replied that he would be a non-charter, non-union administrator. Mayor said the funds could be funded several different ways. One would be to charge all budgets. He would have a time-sheet that would have to be filled out and he could keep a log of what he is doing in each department.

Mrs. Tinnin asked Mr. Becker about the \$11,000 left over this year. If Mr. Thurman is working for \$15.00 per hour, will his wages be paid out of this \$11,000 until Council decides what they are going to do with the position?

Mr. Becker replied that she must be referring to City Hall budget for computer improvements. When Council approved the one year contract for the position of a computer person, he was to get us off the System 36 and put us on one computer system. We chose to transfer all of this money to cover this contract to the City Hall Budget because it was easier to charge. We had no idea how much time would be spent in each of the departments, and it was an easy way to do that. Regarding the \$15.00 per hour rate, it would be funded on an as needed basis out of each particular budget that required his services. We have some unfinished business for Treasurer's Office. If I asked him to do something it would be like a typical vendor we would hire. He would give me a price and would be paid out of the Treasurer's when the work was performed. The remaining \$11,000 in the City Hall budget isn't spoken for.

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We have tried to update all of our hardware Citywide. If there were a few minor hardware needs, then we would use this money for that purpose.

Discussion continued on the \$11,000 for computer improvements.

Mrs. Tinnin asked several questions regarding the fulfillment of the contract with Mr. Thurman. She said she thinks this position should be a union position. She asked about the need for a contract employee versus a full-time employee.

Mayor Smiley replied that the computer needs from one department to another are very demanding and we don't have the personnel readily available to take care of the problems.

Mrs. Tinnin said she is concerned about Mr. Thurman being a one man consulting firm. If something happens to him what would we have to fall back on?

Mayor Smiley said he would have other employees to help out, should something happen to Mr. Thurman. Also, we would bring someone else on board. The Mayor said the technology is here to stay and only going to get more advanced. The City is too large to not have a person on board to deal with the problems that arise. Brian is in the process of working with Mr. Lowthian to design a page on the web to allow access to the realtors

Mrs. Tinnin said she is concerned about paying the benefits if this is a non-union, non-charter position. The benefits are almost equal to that of the wage.

A brief discussion was held concerning the retirement plan.

Mrs. Tinnin said she doesn't see an immediate need to have someone and possibly this could be decided during the budget time.

Mayor Smiley said he couldn't get anyone at \$15.00 per hour. We have a lot of equipment that is not being utilized properly.

Mr. Brawner said the purpose of this meeting is to decide if there is a need for a full-time position.

Mayor Smiley said he needs one half of the \$63,000.00 to fund this position until the end of this fiscal year.

Mr. Brawner asked if the full-time position would be requested in the budget for the next fiscal year.

Mayor Smiley advised yes. The salary requested would be \$63,000 to be carried over from July to June.

Mr. Brawner asked what the safeguards would the City have if he doesn't meet the needs of the City.

Mayor Smiley said he would be fire, just like anyone of the other administrators. Mayor Smiley said several of his Administrators have worked with Mr. Thurman and have been satisfied with his work. Some of the things that were not done, were not in his contract with the City. He reiterated again how difficult it is to deal with a contract employee.

Mr. Brawner asked if the sick and personal days and the pension the same as the other administrators.

Mayor Smiley said yes, the benefits would be covered in Ordinance 68-C, just like the other administrators and Council.

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Mrs. Tinnin said right now that group remains uncapped. The other union groups that are currently under contract,

have various allotments they are given by the City. This would make the 14th position that is covered by the ordinance.

Mayor Smiley said the City has no control over the health care and dental costs. We do, however, have control over the optical because we give just so much per family.

Mr. Brawner asked what the next step would be.

Mayor Smiley said if the Finance Committee recommends approval, the position and transfer will be placed on the Council agenda for Monday.

Mr. Centilli said we must decide if the position is justified and do we have the funds available to finance the position.

Mr. Brawner asked Mr. Becker if the funds were available to finance the position.

Mr. Becker said that for six months the amount would be \$31,500.00. Depending on the funding sources, it could come out of General Fund like before, or it could be split four or five ways to ease the burden on any one department.

Mr. Centilli confirmed with Mr. Becker, that we had the funds for the next six months.

Mrs. Tinnin asked if there would be enough money to fund the position without a transfer of funds.

Mayor Smiley said when items haven't been budgeted, a transfer of funds will be necessary. He said based on our experience we can transfer "X" amount of dollars from General Fund and other funds to pay for the \$32,000.

Mr. Centilli stated that if the position is filled, we would have him for six months and go through the Y2K with him on board. I think this would be very important. During budget time we could then make a decision about what we want to do.

Mayor Smiley said during the budget process, he would carry the position through. Normally in April or May, when Council goes over budget, they would make a determination to add to or delete this position.

Mr. Brawner asked if the position is approved for the \$63,000.00, five votes would be needed, correct?

Mayor Smiley replied yes.

Mrs. Tinnin said the Council could also transfer funds for him to be under contract from now to the end of the fiscal year.

Mayor Smiley said the only thing is he is not a contract employee. He is asking to have a full time employee and if Council denies this position, maybe we will bring back a contract and maybe we won't. We would have to put this out for bids and have the attorney involved. There is a process that must be followed and in the meantime, it may be too late for us to worry about the budget process.

Mr. Brawner said he thinks there is a need for a full time person working on the computers.

CENSUS PROMOTION:

Mrs. Tinnin asked the Mayor what were some of the ideas for the census promotion?

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Mayor Smiley replied he would like to work closely with the school districts. We could buy button, make up a slogan, etc. We could give these to the children in the schools, the block clubs, etc. These are my ideas, but I don't know what your ideas may be. There will be a lot of TV promotion and Mr. Lowthian is my Census representative. We have worked close with the federal government in making certain our data and maps are up to date. We are please with the progress we have made with Washington, but we need for the people to understand how important it is to fill out the Census report.

Mr. Brawner asked if the money would be used for the promotional items. He was advised yes.

Mrs. Tinnin said we don't want to duplicate something that the State or Federal Government is using.

Mayor Smiley said if the \$4,000.00 or \$5,000.00 isn't enough money, we could come back and ask for more.

Mr. Brawner asked the Mayor if he had any ideas what the project would cost. He was advised no.

Mayor Smiley said possibly we could design posters and get them out into the various restaurants, etc. where people go in out City.

Mrs. Tinnin suggested allocating a lesser amount and then if we need more we could have another meeting.

Mayor Smiley said this is possible, but if you allocate \$2,000.00 and I need \$2,500.00, then there is a problem. It's better to have a little cushion to have a comfort zone.

Mrs. Tinnin asked what month the Mayor anticipated the census promotion.

Mayor Smiley said people would be receiving their census reports sometime the month of April. The census will start the months of January and February. Any funds that are not used for the promotion would go back to the General Fund. If Council sees anything that might be clever to reach our residents, please let me know.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS:

Brawner moved and Centilli seconded the following motion:

1. Approve and authorize the recommendation to transfer \$31,500 from various funds for a Computer Tech position. Motion carried 2-1 with Mrs. Tinnin voting no.

Tinnin moved for the following motion:

2. Approve and authorize recommendation to allocate \$4,000.00 for the Census promotion.

Brawner moved and Centilli seconded to amend the motion to increase the \$4,000.00 to \$5,000.00 for the Census promotion.

Amended Motion carried 3-0.

Main Motion carried 3-0.

Meeting Adjourned at 5:48 P.M.

Cheryl M. Ladd, CMC/AAE
Deputy City Clerk