

Minutes of the General Government and Public Safety Committee meeting of Monday, January 9, 2012.

The meeting was called to order by Alderman Bormann at about 7:40 p.m. Present were Mayor Grenke, Aldermen Wilkins, Angell, Simmons, Orsini, and Sanders. Also attending were Lynn Behrns, Police Sergeant Robert Bias, Police Chief Larry Dudgeon, Darryl Spauldin, Ron Beard, Paul Couture, A. J. Bockelman, Adam Stites and his wife, James Smith and others.

Economic Development

Ginny Zoellers was not present, but had submitted a written report on recent Chamber of Commerce and economic development activities. Behrns reported that sponsors had been identified for at least four of the five signs recognizing the State High School Softball Champions. The School Board was supposed to decide on participation at their meeting this month.

Park Department

The Park Board did not meet in December. Their next meeting is scheduled for January 17.

Cemetery Advisory Committee

There was no report.

Tree Board

There was no report

Library Board

No formal report was made, but minutes and a future agenda were presented in the Committee packet. At the Tuesday meeting, Behrns expects the Library Board to pass resolutions asking the City to place two issues on the April ballot. One will be to increase the Library District's operating tax levy. The other would be to authorize a bond issue to fund improvements and additions to the Library building. The City would have to pass two ordinances at its next Board meeting to put the two ballot issues on the April election ballot to meet the statutory deadline to be considered at the April election.

Finance

Financial statements for December were made available. Behrns had no new concerns or analysis to mention. The Committee had no questions.

Bills over \$1,250

Committee received a preliminary list of bills over \$1,250. Committee members had no immediate questions.

Other General Government

Behrns presented a draft ordinance and petition which would allow the City to annex a strip of land 50' wide by about a quarter mile long adjacent to the north side of the Kansas City Southern Railroad. The petition would be executed when and if Carl Leader also submits a petition to annex the remainder of the land between the railroad and State Highway 22, west of Highway 124. Behrns has talked to Leader and explained the ways in which he could benefit from being in the City and having the property zoned B-2. This would also simplify Leader's ability to divide off the property which could be the new site of Forrest Chevrolet. The ordinance will be on the next regular Board agenda. Smith asked if the property was a part of the City's water service territory. Behrns responded that is, being a

part of an agreement with PWSD No. 10, agreed upon when the property on the north side of Highway 22 was annexed.

Police Department

Bias presented the report of Police Department activities in December.

Behrns asked about the progress of the application for upgrades and replacement of radios. Bias said that the final application was for \$72,000 for work on police, fire, and public works radios. This grant is totally state and federal funded. A decision should not be expected before February. Meanwhile, Behrns will be renewing three radio licenses before they expire in mid-February.

Mayor Grenke gave kudos to the Police Department for their recent and continued success in closing drug cases and other serious crimes.

Fire Department

Rusch presented a report of Fire Department activities in December and for the full calendar year. Rusch said that the calls to Chance had been actual fires. Damage on these occasions was very limited.

Responding to Bormann, Rusch said that the new thermal imaging camera, which was set out in the budget, has been ordered and should arrive soon. The cost is slightly above \$10,000.

Mayor Grenke thanked the Fire Department for their work on Christmas Day. Their annual delivery of Christmas treats and fire prevention materials was a success again. The event is a marvel to Centralia visitors.

Emergency Management

There was no formal report. The LEPC will have a meeting in the coming month.

City Prosecutor

No report.

Protective Inspection

No report

Other

Committee then addressed a request by Orsini to revisit an addition to the City Code to make it a City violation to discriminate in employment practices and public accommodations practices on the basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. Behrns circulated copies of two ordinances which had been previously considered, but not passed. Orsini stated that there is no state or federal legislation with this objective; but that many states have adopted such laws, as have Columbia and several other Missouri cities. She believes that now is the time to recognize the need and join most of country and rest of the world.

Wilkins asked if any local persons had complained about these issues. He was told "no". Orsini said that this is result of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender community being well informed. They know that the City has no such mechanism and would view complaints as futile. Angell asked if the

ordinance was requested by citizens. Orsini said that a few citizens had presented themselves when the ordinances were previously considered.

Committee allowed comment from those in the audience. Beard who lives on Jay-Jay outside the city limits, said he is part of Centralia community. He works and attends church here. He has many friends here. They have conveyed to him their opinions that Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity are personal issues and should not be imposed on others. He urged the Board not to adopt the ordinances.

Paul Couture spoke. He, too, is not a resident but was formerly employed in the City. He suggested that Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity are parts of a "belief system" that is at odds with that of the rest of the local community. Neither system has hard evidence to support its beliefs and is, thus, a religion. He cited history and the Bill of Rights. Passing the ordinances would be the same as endorsing a religion—which is unconstitutional. It would unleash a Pandora's Box of problems. Orsini asked Couture for clarification. Were several existing federal laws unconstitutional? Couture said he thought so. He distributed a written page supporting his testimony.

Grenke said that just because other cities had adopted such ordinances does not mean that they would be correct for Centralia. He said that he had polled citizens and found no one who supported the proposal. (He later was reminded by Smith that at least Smith had told him of his support.) Many had voiced outright opposition to protection of the GLB&T "lifestyle". Orsini stated that laws which protected minority classes based on religion, national origin, race, and sex had been fought before being adopted, and are now generally accepted. The new protected classes are less common, but restrictions such as are included in the ordinance work to protect minorities from the "tyranny of the majority".

Grenke again questioned the basis for needing the ordinances. A. J. Bockelman, of Columbia, said he worked with several GLB&T advocacy groups. His experience is that minorities cannot win equal rights without governmental intervention. Sanders questioned the lack of federal and state laws. Bockelman said the only existing federal or Missouri laws were tangential: the statutes which include Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity as classes that can be considered in charges of "hate crime" violations. There were no other legal protections in place. Bockelman and Grenke indicated disagreement about whether Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity are personal choices or genetic. Bockelman said he was frequently contacted by people who had faced discrimination on basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity, but most did not go public because they feared further discrimination. He cited the number of students who were targeted for bullying at school. He was reminded that laws already require schools to have policies to address all sorts of bullying.

Spauldin asked what Orsini's drivers licenses listed as her sex. If it still said "male" was she not violating the law by using women's restrooms/ Orsini said that her license, birth certificate, and other legal documents all had been changed to indicate she was female. Spauldin said that others might not have made such corrections and would be acting illegally.

Bockelman said that the state had considered similar legislation. Support had been growing over the last few years, but not yet reached the number of legislators necessary to become a legislative priority in a crowded agenda. He thought that almost half of the House members were now on board. Beard said that it does not follow that local values are the same. The Attorney General was collecting stories from Missourians to gauge the size of unreported discrimination. Orsini said that the City is not isolated, but joined to outside society. She would like Centralia to be in the first ranks of those

governments recognizing an important civil right. By adopting the ordinance the City is "moving forward". She argued that passage could also be considered an economic development tool. Most of the Fortune 100 companies and a large majority of Fortune 500 companies have adopted internal policies against discriminating on basis of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity. If they were to consider expanding to a Centralia location, they would look at municipal protections for GLB&T employees who might be asked to relocate. This would be a topic worth noting in pamphlets and on economic development web sites.

Stephen Couture of Moberly asked why business owners and landlords had to lose their rights of association if they were not comfortable with hiring or renting to GLB&T persons. Grenke said that landlords he contacted were strongly opposed to the ordinances. Orsini said that protected classes already exist. Businesses and landlords cannot discriminate against followers of particular religions, etc. Sanders noted that governments also regulate in the direction of discrimination, for instance against smokers. Grenke said that in Missouri, discrimination against other classes can happen. An employer could discriminate against him because he was bald.

Bormann asked what was the pleasure of the Committee. Orsini said she wanted the Board to move forward to an up or down vote. Wilkins said he did not see anything wrong with an opportunity to vote. Orsini then moved that the Committee direct the City Administrator to place the two ordinances on the agenda for the next regular Board meeting. Wilkins seconded the motion. Bormann called the question. Voting in favor were Orsini and Wilkins. Voting against were Angell, Simmons, Sanders, and Bormann. The motion failed and the ordinances will not be placed on the Board agenda. Sanders latter said for the record that he voted no because he felt this was representative of the will of his constituents. Simmons said her vote was also because that was the way her constituents wanted.

As May Arise

Behrns reported that former City Clerk Kathy Colvin has been approved by LAGERS for a disability retirement. She will end her City employment as of January 31. Behrns has not yet learned of how Colvin will deal with her elected position of City Collector.

The Committee then adjourned at about 8:50 p.m.