

CITY OF NORTON SHORES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
January 28, 2014

A regular work session of the Norton Shores City Council was held on Tuesday, January 28, 2014 at 5:30 p.m. at the Norton Shores City Hall, 4814 Henry Street.

Present: Mayor Nelund, Council Members Beecham, Dolack, Jurkas, Kinney, Martines, Moulatsiotis and Ostrom; also Mark Meyers, Carrie Larks, Mike Huston, Jerry Bartoszek, Dan Shaw, Bob Gagnon, Lynne Fuller and Doug Hughes

1. Brew House Quota Liquor License Request

City Administrator Mark Meyers presented an application from Korina L. Young, owner of Brew House LLC at 255 Seminole Road for a new Quota Class C Liquor License. Ms. Young's application substantially meets the City's policy for issuance of a license with regard to location, financial stability, minimum investment and menu. Mr. Meyers recommended that approval be conditional upon completed construction of a proposed bar and outdoor patio and Ms. Young's execution of the agreement for issuance of a quota license. Council members agreed that the proposal meets the City's criteria and the business will provide a unique opportunity in the community. The request will be presented to Council for final approval at the next City Council meeting.

2. Deer Population Discussion

Director of Administrative Services Carrie Larks gave an update on the deer population issue in the city. Since 2009 there have been several complaints of deer destroying landscaping and other property. Also, a review of deer related traffic accidents dating back to 2008 shows an average of 51.3 accidents per year but a decrease from 64 accidents in 2008 to 30 in 2013. Council discussed the option of harvesting deer from Lake Harbor Park. According to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) 18 deer have been harvested from Hoffmaster State Park since 2010 in comparison to 160 deer that were taken between 2005 and 2009. There was no harvest in 2013 due to the low numbers from the previous two years. Although the population has decreased an option to address the problem includes working with the MDNR to obtain a permit for sharp shooters to harvest deer on City property, specifically Lake Harbor Park. Council Member Martines suggested asking Mr. Bob Chandonnet for permission to harvest deer from Nugent Sand property as well. It was noted that the City allows bow hunting of deer within city limits in accordance with State law. The law requires a hunter to obtain written permission from any person occupying a dwelling within 150 yards of where they wish to hunt. That information has been provided to residents but there has been no interest in that remedy. Staff was directed to contact the MDNR with regard to a harvest.

3. Draft Citizen Survey

Ms. Larks presented a draft of a survey for residents to complete with regard to City services. Previous surveys were completed in 2005 and 2007 with 5% and 19% response rates respectively. This survey would be conducted through an online survey tool, Survey Monkey. The City already has an account with Survey Monkey so the process would be very cost effective. Staff proposes to mail a postcard to all households informing them of the survey, providing them with a password to participate and providing an option to receive a hard copy as an alternative to doing the survey online. Council Member Martines asked if the question regarding a single trash hauler could be expanded to provide more information. Mr. Meyers explained it is important that the questions not be leading and he reminded Council that an FAQ was mailed to residents specifically about the trash collection issue. Mayor Nelund suggested that perhaps the question could contain a hyperlink to the FAQ. Council Member Ostrom asked the purpose of conducting the survey. Mr. Meyers stated it is a good idea to conduct this type of survey every five years or so but the 2005 and 2007 surveys were developed as part of millage campaigns. Council Member Martines asked if the survey could be combined with questions regarding the school system. Ms. Larks explained that it may appear that the City is responsible for the school system. It was also mentioned that there are actually three school districts represented in Norton Shores. The question was also raised about gathering e-mail addresses from residents to develop a list for sending other information to residents via e-mail. Staff will provide a final draft for Council in the near future.

4. Proposal to Light Ross Park Ball Fields

Finance Director Mike Huston discussed a proposal to light ball fields #1 and #2 at Ross Park to allow an opportunity for teams to play later in the evening. Two applications to the MDNR for a grant to provide funding for a larger project have been denied. The total cost of the project is approximately \$95,000 and could be appropriated in the Fiscal Year 2015 Capital Improvement budget. Council was very supportive of the project and Mr. Meyers stated it would be considered during the FY 2105 budget process.

5. Pension Funding

Mr. Huston provided information about the City's unfunded pension liability. He stated that factors to be considered in understanding the increased liability are the 2008 decline in the stock market as well as the method used by actuaries with the Municipal Employees' Retirement System (MERS) to make assumptions with regard to funding levels. For example, an interest rate of 4% will be used until 2018 but actual investment gains are averaging 9.4%. This positive performance is not reflected in the unfunded liability. Liability has also increased due to a recent court ruling which resulted in 35

former and present employees receiving service credit for part time employment at a cost of \$183,712. Going forward additional funds will be allocated for pension. Staff will try to increase the amount significantly in Fiscal Year 2015. Council Member Ostrom asked how it was possible for the City of Muskegon to be 100% funded. Council Member Martines presented information that shows Muskegon has chosen to fund pensions while bonding for other projects. The City of Muskegon paid approximately \$900,000 in interest last year while the City of Norton Shores is debt free. Mayor Nelund also pointed out that the State allows municipalities to bond for pension liabilities. Mr. Meyers said Norton Shores' priorities are different than Muskegon and that a decision in the early 90's to not fund pensions for a period of three years has greatly impacted today's funding levels.

Comments

Council Member Ostrom asked how the Public Works Department is faring with the recent snow events. Public Works Director Jerry Bartoszek reported that a mid-year budget adjustment will be necessary for personnel costs and 97% of the planned allocation of salt has been used. Fortunately, milder winters in recent years have allowed for additions to fund balance in the street budget and leftover salt supply. Council members agreed that street personnel are doing an excellent job maintaining the roads.

Mayor Nelund reported that two residents have expressed interest in the Ward I vacancy. He and City Attorney Doug Hughes will conduct interviews with the candidates the week of February 11th and prepare a recommendation for the February 18th City Council meeting. Council members are reminded they may submit specific questions if they so desire.

Mr. Meyers provided an update on the water/sewer bill for Crestview Mobile Home Community. The property was previously acquired by the Land Bank and sold on land contract. There have been leaks in the water system resulting in extremely high bills. Most recently a payment arrangement was agreed to but not followed. This week a donation from the Muskegon Area Catholic Churches paid the remainder of the November 2013 bill. The property owner has indicated there is no plan to pay the current balance due or to keep the property. The City has agreed to keep the water on until the end of March, allowing residents more time to obtain alternate housing.

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.


Lynne A. Fuller, City Clerk