



City Commission Fact Finding Subcommittee Minutes

12/20/2023 - Minutes

Call to Order

Commissioner Cleary called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM on December 20, 2023. Members present included Commissioner Cleary, Commissioner Connelly, and Gordy Smith. Also present were Jason Tomanek and Leanne Schmidt with the City of Bismarck and Attorney Amy Oster with Crowley Fleck.

1. Determine performance issues of Charlie Jeske, Event Center Director, and recommendations regarding the appropriate actions to take to address any necessary employee discipline and changes to Event Center operations.

Mr. Smith started the discussion by addressing issues he had experienced when trying to conduct interviews with Event Center employees. HR Director Leanne Schmidt will speak with Event Center employees, letting them know that Mr. Smith will be conducting interviews, and they will have several opportunities to speak with him if they want to.

Commissioner Connelly informed the group that he met with Director Jeske and received a tour of the facility. Commissioner Connelly noted that he and Director Jeske discussed the concepts behind an enterprise fund, the lodging liquor and restaurant tax, and general financial operations of the Event Center.

The group discussed the philosophy behind events at the Event Center and noted a conference event generally will have a larger impact on the community due to guests to the community staying in hotels, dining in restaurants, and shopping when compared to a one-time event like a concert which may bring in more people but for a limited amount of time. The group also discussed developing sales packages for events like conferences or weddings which have a tendency to reoccur; sales packages could benefit staff due to their simplicity and would limit the need for full negotiation authority for the Director. Subcommittee members shared their concerns about the lack of justification relating to changes in executed contracts. Mr. Smith noted the lack of justification leaves the subject open to allegations and inconsistencies.

The general consensus of the group is to place all Bismarck Event Center items relating to contracts or negotiations on the regular agenda for future City Commission meetings.

Mr. Smith requested a list of the successful and unsuccessful vendors, the contact persons, and their contact information for the last eight years. Mr. Smith noted any irregularities between the similar contracts should be considered or explored for more information.

The group discussed the current method for alcoholic beverage sales at the Event Center.

Concerns were expressed given the cash-only nature of sales and the limited sophistication used to validate sales.

Commissioners Cleary and Connelly agreed to discuss whether Commissioner Zenker should remain as the portfolio holder during the time the subcommittee is conducting their investigation. The Commissioners will discuss the matter at the December 26, 2023, City commission meeting,

Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 10:15 AM.

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