

# EAST BETHEL CITY COUNCIL WORK MEETING

January 22, 2024

The East Bethel City Council met on January 22, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. for the regular City Council Work meeting at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kevin Lewis Brian Mundle Bob DeRoche  
Tim Miller Jim Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Matt Look, City Administrator  
Carrie Frost, Administrative Coordinator  
Aaron Berg, Community Development Director

## 1.0 – Call to Order

The January 22, 2024, City Council Work Session meeting was called to order by Mayor Lewis at 6:00 p.m.

## 2.0 – Adopt Agenda

**Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adopt tonight's agenda. DeRoche stated I'll second.** Lewis asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Lewis asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

## 3.0 – Paid-on-Call Firefighters Serving on Committees

Look read aloud from the City's current policy regarding 'employees' serving on committees and noted that firefighters were not technically considered an employee of the City.

The Council asked questions on what would determine and constitute a City employee.

The Council reached consensus that it was acceptable to allow a paid-on-call firefighter to serve on City committees because they are not officially an 'employee' of the City.

## 4.0 – Newsletter Options

Administrative Coordinator Frost gave an overview of the feedback that she had received from residents about the newsletters simply getting thrown away. She has also found that if people want to know specific information, they tend to just go on-line to search for the information. She outlined her suggestion to give people an option in the next newsletter, via a QR code, to be able to opt out of receiving a hard copy of the newsletter. She noted that this would also add those individuals to the City's newsflash e-mail list which will give the access to the newsletter in that manner.

Lewis asked about the cost per issue to print and mail the newsletters.

Frost stated that the newsletter is usually 8 or 12 pages, but in election years, it is usually around 16 pages and run in 4 page increments. She stated that for printing of a 12 page newsletter, she would estimate the printing costs to be around \$800-\$900 and postage costs are usually between \$1,100-\$1,300.

DeRoche noted that the City still has an older population that like to read the print copy of the newsletter.

Look clarified that anyone who wants to continue receiving a hard copy of the newsletter will still receive it and this approach being suggested by Administrative Coordinator Frost was just give people the option to opt out of receiving the hard copy and give them the option to receive it electronically.

Lewis suggested that they consider trying to keep the articles more focused on East Bethel and not include as many extraneous articles because they may help them keep the total pages down to 8 rather than 12 or 16.

The Council discussed other content and ways to more fully utilize the Newsflash feature on the website to publish individual articles more quickly than with a newsletter.

The Council reached consensus to include the option for residents to opt out of receiving the hard copy of the newsletter within the next newsletter.

### **5.0 – Greg Austin Compost Discussion**

Look distributed a photo of the corner of 221st and Highway 65 and explained that the property owner had approached the City with a proposal to build an indoor, state of the art, composting facility. He asked if the Council was interested in having Mr. Austin come in and present more details of his proposal to the City.

Berg explained that half of this property is zoned B-2 and the other half is Light Industrial and noted that it is just beyond the MUSA area.

Lewis stated that he would be interested in getting more details on this because he doesn't understand how someone can make a business out of this and noted that there were already free County landfills for leaves.

Look explained that Greg Austin's company runs the County landfill facilities.

DeRoche stated that some immediate questions come to his mind related to things like noise, truck traffic, and what happens on windy days. He stated that the City had looked at something like this up on 237<sup>th</sup>.

Look explained that he had brought this forward because while this will most likely be a very professionally run enterprise, the location is front and center on Highway 65, so it will be visible.

Mundle agreed and noted that he would rather have some other type of business operate in one of the prominent sections of the City.

Berg read aloud the two sentences within the City Code that refers to composting.

The Council reached consensus that they were interested in having a presentation by Greg Austin to give more details about the proposed indoor compost facility.

### **6.0 – Business Licensing**

Look stated that a Councilmember had come to him with the idea of a ribbon cutting type ceremony for a business that was opening. He noted that this led to the thought that the City has no idea of what businesses are opening up without a Chamber of Commerce type entity. He reviewed what other cities have done with business licensing which would allow the City to know who was coming and going and also would allow the Fire Department to inspect the businesses.

DeRoche expressed concern about what this kind of licensing would do to home based businesses.

Look stated the Council could decide to limit licensing to commercial based businesses and reiterated that it would allow the City to better track what is in the City, what is coming, and what may be leaving. He explained he was proposing that, at a minimum, they would have businesses fill out paperwork for a business license in the City, and could determine if they would charge a fee or not.

Berg shared an example of a company that had sold a portion of their property to another entity who then subleased the building out to someone else who was operating a business of car recycling without the City's knowledge and that use did not match the zoning ordinance. He explained that if the City had a general business license in place, they may have known about this business before someone from the County reported it to them.

Frost explained that staff was still working on a survey of the surrounding communities and what they are doing with business licensing.

The Council reached consensus that they would like to staff to begin working on a possible business licensing process in the City.

### **7.0 – Dog Licensing**

Look noted that many communities are getting out of the dog licensing business and asked if the Council saw any value in continuing with the current dog licensing practices.

Frost explained that in 2023 the City had 88 people get dog licenses and most of those get the license so they can supply it to their landlord. She stated that if a dog gets picked up and is found not to have a license with the City, they are not fined in any way.

Look stated those numbers shows that the lion's share of people who own dogs are not getting a dog license from the City.

Lewis stated that he personally didn't care one way or the other, but feels it may be a good question to ask City Attorney Larson.

The Council reached consensus to consult with City Attorney Larson regarding any possibility liability issues that may arise by eliminating the City's dog licensing practices and if not, to look into an ordinance amendment to make that change.

### **8.0 – Architectural Standards**

Miller explained that this was brought about to either help businesses start up or expand out of the normal brick and mortar type structure but now feels that it has gotten complicated and he didn't think it needed to be. He felt the City was limited some businesses from coming into the City because they just cannot afford to build the buildings with what has been outlined within the architectural standards. He noted that he was unaware that this was on the agenda tonight or he would have brought some of the information he had found and reiterated that the original version was very simple.

Look stated that this item can be placed on a future Work Session agenda for additional discussion

Lewis stated that, as a general point to staff, he would also like the Council to know what will be on the agenda for the Work Sessions, prior to the Council arriving, so they can be prepared for discussion. He noted that one thing he would like the Council to discuss are barndominiums.

The Council reached consensus to bring Architectural Standards back for further discussion at a future Work Session.

### **9.0 – Rezoning of Hunters Inn**

Berg explained that the City has had a request to rezone the Hunters Inn property. He reminded the Council that he last time it was functional was in 2018 as a restaurant operating in a residential zone. He reviewed ordinance language for rezoning that is inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. He noted that the individual who purchased the property through a real estate auction believed that he

would have a business site to put back on the market, but, according to City Code and State Statute, it cannot be reopened as a restaurant because it has reverted back to the underlying zoning, which is R-2 because of the discontinued use. He stated that the current owners want to sell it as a commercial property for a potential restaurant.

The Council discussed the history of this property and details of its past zoning.

Look noted that the first question that came to his mind was whether this zoning for property along Highway 65 was the highest and best use for the property and outlined possible rezoning scenarios.

Berg noted that rezoning this area for commercial use is possible but would need Met Council approval.

Lewis stated he thinks it is time for the City to take a closer look at the Comprehensive Plan to determine if it really fits where the City wants to go in terms of the balance between residential and commercial especially along the Highway 65 corridor.

Look stated that the Council would need to wrap up their discussion because the Regular Council meeting recording would be starting.

#### **10.0 – Retail Sales in Light Industrial (not constructed on site)**

#### **11.0 – Legislative Priorities**

##### **11.0A. ESST Time Relating to Paid-on-Call Firefighters**

##### **11.0B. State Allocation for Hwy 65/Co Rd 22 Study Dollars**

##### **11.0C. Formula Change for Road Dollars**

#### **12.0 – Mobile Home Park Expansion & Utilities Connections, Waste Water Decommissioning**

##### **12.0A. Verification and Certification of System**

These items were not discussed.

#### **13.0 – Adjourn**

**Lewis adjourned the Council Work Session by general consensus.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Submitted by:

Kayla Rokosz

*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*