

BUDGET, FINANCE AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

August 19, 2008

4:45 P.M.

Councilwoman Berz, Chairman, called the meeting of the Budget, Finance and Personnel Committee to order, with Councilpersons Robinson, Rico, Bennett, Benson, Page, Pierce and Shockley present. Also present were City Attorney Randall Nelson and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council.

Others present included Donna Kelley, Mayor Littlefield, Chief Rowe, Frank Hamilton, Chip O'Dell, Dan Johnson, Daisy Madison, and Richard Beeland.

PROMOTIONAL TESTING FOR FIREFIGHTERS

Chairman Berz presented a handout, which is made a part of this minute material, stating that this issue was pretty much self-explanatory; that she was asked by Chairman Bennett to review this, and she had reviewed all of the information; that this issue was brought to us by Councilman Benson; that Donna Kelley and Chief Rowe were here at Councilman Benson's request. She referred to Council Minutes of June 17, 2008, where Councilman Benson inquired as to the Resolution for promotional testing and Council Minutes of June 24, 2008, where the Resolution regarding promotional testing was adopted. In these minutes there was no record of any date for the testing. There was also an e-mail to Donna Kelley where Chief Rowe's request was forwarded that Ms. Kelley should cease efforts at getting the promotional test administered as Chief Rowe had a contingency plan in place to handle this matter. This was on June 18th.

Councilman Page stated the thing that struck him was that it was great to have an outside party do some of the evaluation like this. He questioned if there was some kind of matrix, such as reading would be a certain percentage and physical a certain percentage—something that would be understandable. He asked if this could be done.

Councilwoman Robinson asked if we had such a matrix?

Ms. Kelley responded that we have some matrixes in place for exams that we do regularly, but she was not sure of the actual components. She asked if the Council wanted to see more depth of information.

Councilman Page stated that the Council should not be making decisions—that this should be open and transparent.

Chairman Berz asked if a format could be made available?

Councilman Page stated that he thought this would add more objectivity to it and make it less non-objective.

Ms. Kelley asked if the Council had an interest in this. Councilman Page responded that we could just have Ms. Kelley do this.

Ms. Kelley stated that this involves the Chief; that there are procedures that Personnel feeds them as to the test information; that we start with components and procedures and are working on more detailed information; that after every piece of the testing component, the candidate can appeal. This includes the written test and assessment. She stated that she could bring more of this information to the Council.

Chairman Berz stated that a handout she had received might be helpful.

Councilwoman Bennett stated that a question had arisen as to the delay in testing; that there is already a roster of those qualified for promotion. She stated the question was where the delay would put other candidates that might be eligible.

Ms. Kelley responded that the policy is brief; that there are certain exams every even year, and 2008 is an even year, that candidates take before eligibility if all other criteria has been met; that in June a new Fiscal Year started and there were discussions about this and whether we would extend the validity and test this even year. She went on to say that originally she had a full Staff, and the testing would have been in August—that she did not know that this was a “power button”; that she had had two people to do this and now she only had one and had advertised for this replacement; that she was doing this in a timely manner and did not know it was a point of contention.

Councilman Rico noted that she had mentioned that candidates could appeal during testing and asked who they appealed to? Ms. Kelley responded “to the consultant”.

Chief Rowe stated that an Assessment Center is a common procedure.

Ms. Kelley noted that it takes 3-4 days for a due process appeal but that this does work.

Councilman Benson stated that he had raised the question; that he was more satisfied and that Chairman Berz had done a good job; that the first one complaining that got in touch with him had the impression that the testing would be done in April or May, and they would not be giving another test to pick people out; that we were spending \$90,000.00 on this, and he was not “big” on testing because he felt it was cognitive rather than effectiveness. Councilman Benson noted that the testing was not all that late, and he called the person who had complained back, and he said this was all right as long as he would be given a chance to fill a vacancy; that we would be hiring a lot of firefighters because of Enterprise South. He stated that this made him feel better.

Chief Rowe asked if we were still targeting November?

Ms. Kelley responded that they would be doing the testing on weekends in order to utilize the school buildings; that they were trying to be efficient; that \$90,000 was a lot of money, and they had expected it to be one-half. She explained that we have to “house” the assessors. She stated that November was looking good for this.

Councilman Shockley asked if only the promotions of Captain and Lieutenant would require this testing?

Councilman Benson stated that he could live with this—that it was a good job, prompting Councilman Pierce to ask him if he was lifting his freeze?

\$40,000,000 BOND ISSUE

Chairman Berz stated that this was the opportunity for Council to ask Ms. Madison any questions they might have.

Ms. Madison noted that the Mayor was here, as well, to answer questions; that there is a Resolution on tonight’s agenda that will be revised slightly to address county wetlands; that the County had apparently applied for a State Grant and the Feds said this was not okay, and there is a question whether the wetlands will be funded by Federal Grants. This was not anticipated to be part of our cost, and the County wanted us to include this—that it was just a swap; that everything with Enterprise South is 50/50 except for the Firehall—that this includes all of the Volkswagen site; that we spent at least \$10 million dollars each before Volkswagen made their announcement, and we will continue to share the arrangement.

Mayor Littlefield explained that the bond issue is not to exceed \$40 million; that this Ordinance speaks in general terms and what Ms. Madison had talked about was the last minor change; that we had Transportation’s okay to pay for the Bridge, and the Drainage Basin was moved at Enterprise South, and now they are saying the Feds can’t spend this money for this purpose; this would allow us to spend for the Welcome Center; that once we issue bonds, we won’t have to do this over; that every Project will come back to the Council, and we will settle up like a bank account—that there will be plenty of discussion by the Council, but we need to set up this account.

Councilman Benson called Mayor Littlefield “Cool Hand Luke”, stating there had been a failure to communicate; that he had not heard about the Bridge being cancelled. Mayor Littlefield assured him that it was still on the list.

Councilman Page added that this was a Pedestrian Bridge connecting downtown Chattanooga to the Cumberland Plateau, and he wanted no action against this!

Councilman Benson stated that this was a cooperative thing with the County, and we are working on a 50/50 basis—that the City taxpayer is paying both and a lot of people are asking about the \$40 million dollars and the Welcome Center.

Mayor Littlefield explained that it would cost \$6 million dollars to be matched with Volkswagen to build the Welcome Center; that it would not be like the Welcome Center at East Ridge—that this is how we brought Volkswagen here—that other community hosts have large Welcome Centers, mentioning Greenville, South Carolina, where they use the Welcome Center for community gatherings. Councilman Benson stated that there still had been a failure to communicate.

Councilwoman Robinson clarified that it would be more like an Educational Center, where school groups can come.

Mayor Littlefield noted that 55 million people come by this Interchange, and we think that it was this kind of exposure that attracted Volkswagen here—that we need to take advantage of this gateway; that it is an invitation into Chattanooga and has not been designed yet.

Councilwoman Robinson noted that the Welcome Center would be adjacent to a huge Recreation Center and could showcase the park land—that it would be healthy and green.

Councilman Pierce stated that he had said he was not supporting this; that we have not been included in informational sessions to understand what we are paying for; that he did not want to support this because he did not have input; that he wanted to be a teamplayer but asked to be put in the game; that he did not know what to say to his constituents, and he thought the Mayor knew more than he was telling him. Mayor Littlefield responded that it comes down to timing; that we have to get State officials here and the media here—that this is a State issue, as well; that we have to get schedules coordinated; that the meeting today got cancelled, prompting Councilman Pierce to note that three meetings had been cancelled. Mayor Littlefield responded that these were all busy people. He went on to mention Interstate 75 and the exposure that it affords—that Volkswagen likes this, and we do too.

Councilman Pierce stated that he thought he had heard that we are getting ready to visit South Carolina. Mayor Littlefield stated that he and the County Mayor flew to South Carolina and looked at the City and met with their Mayor; that they looked at the downtown area and how it was impacted by BMW; that the Chamber was going to assemble tour busses—that this is interesting stuff—that Greenville even had a downtown super market. Chairman Berz stated that she hoped this answered questions about the \$40 million dollars.

The meeting adjourned at 5:15 P.M.

