

City Council Minutes: January 4, 2010

CITY OF FULTON

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 4, 2010

5:30PM

Mayor Russell called the meeting to order and directed the clerk to call the roll. On roll call, Mayor Larry Russell, Aldermen Charles Dykstra, Gene Field, Merle Sterenberg, Charlie Letcher, Warren Juist, Wes Letcher, Bill Loerop and Ron Roels answered present. Also in attendance were Bill Shirk - City Attorney, Randy Balk - City Administrator, Dan Clark - Public Works Director, Heather Bennett - Tourism Director and Jim Rhoades - Chief of Police.

The pledge of allegiance was recited. Pastor Edie Lenz of First Reformed Church in Fulton gave the invocation.

There was no communication from visitors.

Heather Bennett, Nancy Kolk and Heidi Kolk, representing the Tourism Committee presented to the council a summary of the committee's 2010 goals. Heather asked the council to consider hosting a volunteer appreciation event to show volunteers how much they are appreciated. They would like to have the event prior to Dutch Days, which kicks off the tourist season. Heather said she would be glad to organize the event, asking the city to supply funding. Randy Balk thought it would be a good idea to have the event every year.

Heather Bennett, representing the city on the committee, said they would like to recruit more volunteers and will do so through newsletters and local media. The Early America Crafters are considering hosting open mic nights at Heritage Canyon. There will be a KROS trivia night fundraiser for the Windmill Cultural Center on February 26, 2010 at the Odeon in Clinton. The successful Summer Night series will continue this summer with 4 nights rather than 6 and the location will be moved to the street in front of the windmill. This will provide a more scenic and shady location with access to public restrooms at Den Besten Park.

Nancy Kolk, representing historic downtown, told the council that 2010 is the 175th anniversary of the founding of Fulton. In 1835, the 1st settler, John Baker, claimed ground near the current location of Harbor Crest Home. Baker lived in a small 3 room cabin and often opened his door to travelers, giving them a good supper, a place to spend the night and breakfast in the morning. Forty travelers who were going to Galena by steamboat were stranded in Rock Island when the boat froze into the river. They traveled by land and stopped in Fulton at Baker's cabin. He offered them food, lodging and drink in a tin cup to the travelers. He took 20 inside the cabin and arranged for the other 20 to spend the night outside around a campfire in the nearby woods.

The committee would like to continue the tradition of Fulton hospitality, putting our best foot forward in 2010, welcoming thousands of visitors. The committee hopes to work with Public Works and the Police Department in sprucing up and presenting a clean and friendly community to visitors. They are considering how to use the tin cup during the 2010 celebration, either as an art form or some type of giveaway.

Nancy said the Windmill Cultural Center grand opening will be held the last weekend prior to Dutch Days. Friday night will be for the donors and Saturday will be the public

grand opening. The committee is working on their budget needs for this event and will be getting back to the council on that.

Heidi Kolk, who represents the volunteer millers, presented 3 items to the council. The volunteer millers will be hosting 3 presenters this summer. The first is a professor from the University of Iowa who will speak about the influence that mills had on the lives of French women in the 11th and 12th centuries. The second presentation will be given by the head miller of the Danish windmill in Elkhorn, Iowa. The final presenter will speak on her experience of traveling by bicycle with

grandchildren through the Netherlands.

Heidi told the council about a "Suite Retreat" package the committee has put together for February 19th and 20th. It includes an overnight stay at the Fulton Comfort Inn and Suites, dinner at Golden Wok, chair massages, mini manicures, continental breakfast, shopping opportunities including extended store hours and a reusable goody bag, and a Victorian tea/light luncheon. This promotion is an effort to increase the number of visitors to Fulton during the winter months when many attractions are closed, increase hotel/motel tax and sales tax revenue for the city, and provide economic benefit to local businesses.

Heidi also reported to the council for FACE (Fulton Association for Community Enrichment) about their project on Fulton's philanthropic legacy. Their goal is to put together a display that will outline the individuals, families or corporations who have left a monetary legacy or tangible asset to enhance the quality of life in Fulton. This may be a traveling and changing display that can be used in different areas of Fulton.

Ald. Field moved, seconded by Ald. C. Letcher to approve the December 21, 2009 regular council meeting minutes. Roll call vote/all yes/motion carried.

The next item discussed was municipal utility tax. Randy Balk reminded the council of the vote taken to prepare an ordinance adding a 5% tax to one utility at a November 14, 2009 budget meeting. The vote was 4/4 and the Mayor broke the tie with a yes vote. No ordinance has been prepared. Balk handed out a new budget overview with 3 options for consideration. Option one would impose a 5% utility tax on just one utility which would generate approximately \$100,000 to \$125,000 a year. The second option would impose a 2½ % tax on two utilities, which would generate about the same amount of revenue but would be spread over two utility bills. Option 3 was to do one of the first two options and review the economic growth over the next 6 months. If at that time the economic conditions are not improved revenue could be increased with an increase in sales tax of ½% or 1%. A sales tax change would require a tax referendum vote.

Ald. Roels said he felt that the utility tax would be too much of a burden on businesses with large freezers and motors and that now is not the time to impose a tax. He said he would not be opposed to a sales tax increase. Ald. Loerop said he is concerned about the revenue shortfall and does not feel comfortable spending down the reserves.

Ald. Letcher said he could not vote for a 5% utility tax, but thinks the sale tax increase is a fair idea. He said the purpose of building reserves is to cover times like these when expenses exceed revenues. Letcher said if the situation is worse in April he might be then be in favor of a tax.

Ald. Dykstra moved, seconded by Ald. Loerop to prepare an ordinance for a 5% utility tax on one utility. After a short discussion, the motion was withdrawn.

Ald. Dykstra moved, seconded by Ald. Loerop to prepare an ordinance for the January 18, 2010 council meeting to implement a 2½% utility tax on the gas and electric bills. Roll call vote/Ald. Sterenberg, Roels, C. Letcher and Juist voted no/Ald. Loerop, W. Letcher,

Field and Dykstra voted yes/Mayor Russell voted yes breaking the tie/motion carried.

Mayor Russell told the council the senior survey will be published in the Fulton Journal. He will be attending a TCEDA meeting tomorrow.

Ald. Juist moved, seconded by Ald. W. Letcher to adjourn. Voice vote/all yes/motion carried.

Sincerely,

Linda Hollis

City Clerk