

City of Green River

460 East Main Street, Green River, Utah

City Council Minutes
Special Meeting
Friday, March 28, 2014

ATTENDING: Mayor Pat Brady, Council Members Kathy Ryan, Michael Silliman, Penney Riches and Philip Engleman; Employees Karen Smith, Loni Meadows, Tim Glenn, Jo Ann Wetherington, Bryan Meadows, Chet Hunt, Roy Pfander

ABSENT: Gary Riches

CONDUCTING: Mayor Pat Brady, the meeting began at 3:05 p.m.

ORDER OF BUSINESS:

1. Discussion on Employee's compensation. Mayor Brady asked Kathy Ryan and Philip Engleman to report on how they came up with the proposed Step and Grade employee compensation plan. Philip Engleman stated that they used Emery County's step and grade system as a model. They then got a list of all employees current wages and how many years they have been employed with the city. Emery County's step and grade system allows an employee to step up on the pay scale every three years. Using the county's system as a model each employee's grade was determined by their current wage. Chet Hunt asked why C.J. Vetere's grade was the same as Roy Pfander and C.J. Vetere has only been employed for one year while Roy Pfander has been employed for 21 years. The answer for that was C.J. Vetere was hired at a higher wage when he started than Roy Pfander was. Kathy Ryan said the City Council feels that some compensation plan needs to be in place so that there isn't any favoritism played and there is something in place to guide the council on pay increases and the starting wage for new hires. Chet Hunt felt that there was something wrong with him only being at a grade 10 when he has worked for the city for twenty five years. Kathy Ryan said this Council cannot speak for other Councils on what was done in the past. She said this Council's intent is that will not happen again. As the city can afford to pay more they will then do so. Right now there is not anything in place to determine how or when a pay increase is given. It wasn't to try and fit people in one way or the other it is just establishing some kind of system. Philip Engleman asked Chet Hunt if he had his Treatment 3 license for the water treatment plant. Chet Hunt said no. Philip Engleman told Chet Hunt that was why he was at a lower grade than Roy Pfander who has his Treatment 3 water treatment plant license. Chet Hunt said that didn't have anything to do with putting C.J. Vetere in at a grade 11 and him at a grade 10 because C.J. Vetere does not have any water treatment licenses either. Chet Hunt said back in the old days there was never a raise given for being licensed to run a water treatment plant. Mayor Brady said that is one of the reasons this City Council is trying to establish a system to make it fairer when an employee gets a raise. Karen Smith said a lot of the employees were not hired at a decent wage. Kathy Ryan said there was not anything this Council can do about what other Council's did in the past. Karen Smith said the proposed system does not take into account any of the employee's skills, experience or any knowledge gained at trainings while employed with the city. Philip Engleman said with his job he is required to do certain things and is not given a pay increase because of the requirements set. If you want a better wage then you have to move onto a better position or a better job. His example was if Bryan Meadows, who is the public works director, retires then Roy Pfander can apply for that position and step into that grade. Karen Smith asked how she could move up. Philip Engleman said when Conae Black retires she could move up into that position. Karen Smith asked if that was the only way she could move up. Philip Engleman said there are not that many good jobs available in Green River. Karen Smith said then it doesn't matter how good her record is or how much training she has had. She has the equivalent of an Associate's degree in Emergency Management. Philip Engleman told Karen Smith that she accepted the job at the wage she was hired at. Karen Smith said when she took the job she was promised a

significant raise. She said let's make sure that when you hire someone they are hired at the proper wage and that has not been decided on what the proper starting wage should be. Philip Engleman said the starting wage will depend on the kind of job they will be doing. Chet Hunt said that the public works department could shut the city down in two hours because there would be sewer plugged and no one would have water. What is more important? Mayor Brady asked Chet Hunt if he thought his job is more important than someone else's. Chet Hunt said certain parts of it are more important. Mayor Brady told Chet Hunt that was not a way to look at his job. He said in his opinion no one employee is more important than any other employee. Penney Riches reinforced what was already said on the council trying to set up a fair system and also stated that getting employee input was important. Roy Pfander didn't like the fact that there were not any more raises after twenty years of employment. He wondered if their benefits could increase if there were not any more raises. Philip Engleman said he would like to see the cap on sick leave taken off and if you don't use your sick leave then you can add that onto your retirement. Mayor Brady said he thought the rest of the City Council agreed with Philip Engleman on changing the sick leave requirements. Bryan Meadows said that right now the employees can only carry over 80 hours of vacation. He said if he wanted to take the month of January off he has three weeks of vacation time he is allowed but he can only use two weeks because of the accrual. He thinks that should be bumped to at least what we are allowed to use in the year. Mayor Brady, Kathy Ryan and Philip Engleman compared with each other on what they are allowed to carry over in their employment. Karen Smith asked about the proposed compensation plan and if that was just based on longevity for any pay increases. The answer was yes. She asked what her incentive was to go to more training, work harder and better. The answer was that would be a personal choice to improve upon your skills and knowledge. If you appreciate your job then you will want to improve. Philip Engleman said you can always make a request to the city council to go up a grade if you have completed some job related trainings. Karen Smith said went to the city council three years ago and got laughed at so she is a little reluctant to ask again. Mayor Brady said with this compensation plan this would eliminate something like that. Karen Smith felt there should be some kind of a raise based upon your merits and not just on the amount of years you have been employed. Penney Riches agreed with that. Kathy Ryan said if that was in place then there would need to be performance plans and evaluations done on each employee. Karen Smith asked if Tim Glenn would fall under the proposed compensation plan. Kathy Ryan said he is different because he is a salaried employee. Karen Smith asked why it is different. Philip Engleman said they did figure up a raise increase plan for Tim Glenn based by figuring out how much he would be making if he were paid by the hour. Karen Smith asked what happens if an employee writes a grant and a portion of that grant is to pay for their wage. How does that get passed on? Philip Engleman said that employee gets the same wage. Mayor Brady said to the employees that they work for the government and he works for the government and we do not get fair game. He has to take many classes and get 200 credits if he wants to renew his license. The only incentive is he gets his license back. He gets to teach. Philip Engleman said he has to keep his licenses up if he wants to keep his job. Karen Smith said when the city was giving a .50 cent an hour raise for taking the CERT class; she was the instructor so she didn't get that raise. Philip Engleman said that was in the past and this proposed plan would eliminate those kind of things happening. Mayor Brady said we are a small community and there is not much room for advancement and that is where a grade change comes in but you have an unknown future. There is an opportunity for our community to grow and bring in more income and jobs. Continue with your training to gain more knowledge because who knows what the future may hold. Penney Riches said if we do grow and get more in taxes then she feels the council should look at pay increases for the employees. There were more comments on what could happen with an increase in revenue. Philip Engleman brought up the fact that the city pays 100% of the health insurance premiums for their employees. Loni Meadows asked if Chet Hunt were to retire right now after 25 years of employment would the city hire the new person at Chet Hunt's current wage. The answer was no. Philip Engleman said if the newly hired person had his treatment 3, distribution 2 and sewer lagoon licenses then he would be hired at grade 11. Loni Meadows said it doesn't say that anywhere. Philip Engleman said we need to start somewhere. Mayor Brady said we need to figure out what requirements are needed for each job and determine which grade that would place them at. Chet Hunt said that years of experience should mean something. That

person knows the history of the systems and where lines, valves and other things are. Mayor Brady said they felt this proposed plan was a good starting point. It has never been done and has needed to be done to make things fairer. He feels that they still need to work on this plan. Mayor Brady brought up the offer from Eagle Air Med on purchasing an insurance plan through them for any medical emergency. Bryan Meadows said he agrees with the plan except for how the council determines which grade the employee is placed in. Chet Hunt brought up how much he has learned from Bryan Meadows on how to run the water treatment plant and some of the dangers they are faced with in their job. He feels their skills are very important. Penney Riches asked if it would work if the employees did a self-evaluation and look over their steps and see if there are any adjustments that need to be made. Tim Glenn asked if there was a chance to go up a grade. Philip Engleman said it depends on what position you move up to. Loni Meadows said if Conae Black retired and Karen Smith was interested in that position she would have to go through the hiring process in order to get that position so there is not any guarantee that you can move up a grade. Loni Meadows stated that all of our current wages are not based off of anything other than whether we were lucky enough to get the raise that we were promised or were we lucky enough to move up. She thinks that even if it was an individual evaluation on if you have earned the wage you are getting or has the employee been pushed aside because he or she does not need the raise. Has that been done? She understands that this council cannot fix what other councils have done in the past but this council can in some sense of appreciation understand that some employees have been pushed aside and give those employees the wage they should be getting. Philip Engleman said he tried to be fair. Penney Riches said that from what she has heard from a couple of employees that if an employee really works hard and pushes to improve themselves then in the future they should be rewarded rather than just the steps. Karen Smith said each grade should include a certain amount of skill, experience and knowledge. Are we at the right grade as well as longevity? Tim Glenn used an example from the park service. He said that one position could be hired at a GS7 through a GS9. So that person will be hired at a certain pay rate but there is also room for a promotion. That also gives the employer the opportunity to limit how high that position would go on the grade system but give the employee the opportunity to promote from what they were hired at. Kathy Ryan gave the example of how UDOT's system is with the Tech 1, 2 and 3. She also stated that the employees need to remember that the city is small and the council wants to do what is best for the employer and the employees. Mayor Brady felt that the proposed compensation plan was a step in the right direction. He said that the vacation and sick leave needs to be looked at and improved upon. He also said that the placement of an employee into a grade needs to be defined. He is sure that somewhere there is a description of what a grade is in a certain job. Penney Riches felt that they should take each job and decide what the minimum skill sets are for those jobs and as the employee receives more training and improves upon their skills have the employees do a self-evaluation and see if there should be any changes. Karen Smith said she sort of did that with the information that she provided to the council. She gave them the scenario that if she were gone tomorrow what wage her replacement would cost the city. Bryan Meadows said the same thing for some other positions. There is a lot more knowledge and skills involved in maintaining a water and sewer system than there is in mowing lawns and repairing the sprinklers but no one wants to apply for a job for \$10 an hour. Penney Riches said the seasonal grounds maintenance position does not receive any benefits. Kathy Ryan gave an example of two different UDOT employees. One employee has worked for UDOT for twelve years and refuses to take any classes while another employee has worked for UDOT for four years and has taken trainings and classes to improve upon his knowledge and skills and makes a better wage than the twelve year employee. Loni Meadows asked who is going to research how a grade is defined and how our jobs fit into a grade. Kathy Ryan suggested each employee do the research for their jobs. Loni Meadows asked where they look. She researched what other rural communities within Utah are paying their employees. She feels that a comparison needs to be made with other similar communities that have the same size of budget as we do. Kathy Ryan felt that was a good point. Loni Meadows said a suggestion has been made to hire a professional to do the research. It took her almost a whole day to do what research she did. She didn't feel that any employee or council member would have the time or expertise to research this out. Philip Engleman said what will happen is we may find that the employees are underpaid and it will go back to the city council

who will be saying that we do not have the budget and no one will be getting anything. It was clarified to Philip Engleman that the employees are asking for a professional to define what the grades are and how it is determined at what grade an employee should be at. Kathy Ryan and Mayor Brady said they asked Conae Black to look into how much it would cost the city to hire a professional to help them with an employee compensation plan. Philip Engleman felt that it was not worth hiring a professional for our size of community. Loni Meadows said hiring a professional to look into this rather than just going with the council's suggestion would help to know that each employee is being paid what they are worth. Mayor Brady said each employee is very important. It is the city employees who keep the city running and no employee is getting paid what they are worth. There was some more discussion on the employee benefits such as sick leave and vacation; benefits for full time employees, part time employees and salaried employees.

2. Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Pat Brady, Mayor

Conae Black, City Recorder

Approved: _____