

UNION GAP CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MEETING
Council Chambers, City Hall
Union Gap, Washington
August 13, 2007

Call to Order Mayor Reeves called the Study Session Meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Council Members Present Council Members Jim Lemon, David Butler, Dan Olson (6:07 p.m.), Toni Webb, and Glenn Bateman.

Staff Present Robert Noe, City Attorney; William Rathbone, Development Coordinator; Tom Kehm, Fire Chief; Dennis Henne, Public Works Director; Karen Clifton, City Treasurer; and Kathryn Thompson, City Clerk were present.

Audience Present Tom Denlea, Dixie Van Tassel, Dave & Debbie Matson, Tony Reise, Jo Collier, Phil Salzman, Kirsten Danielson, Larry Lane, and others were present.

Presentation from Lodging Tax Advisory Committee Regarding Creating a Tourism Promotion Manager Position Tom Denlea, Lodging Tax Advisory Committee member, informed the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee has discussed the creation of a tourism promotion manager position several times and is recommending the Council create this new position. He informed there are many events that happen in the surrounding area that could be held in the City limits, which would generate overnight stays and people shopping, eating in our restaurants, etc. He stated the hotel and restaurant business people have their hands full so it would be beneficial to have someone coordinating tourism efforts for all the businesses. He stated funds for the majority of the position are available from the hotel/motel taxes.

Council Member Butler questioned if the committee still has a person in mind for the position.

Mr. Denlea stated there is an individual the committee has in mind, but the position is needed regardless of what person is chosen to fill the position. He then explained the hotel/motel taxes and how the money is generated.

Council Member Webb stated there are changes she would like to see in the qualifications of the position.

Mayor Reeves stated this job description was developed out of a combination of positions in different cities, but the Council has the option of changing the job description.

Mr. Denlea stated this is a skeleton description and is open for changes. He then reviewed an example of a cribbage event that could be held in Union Gap. He stated these are not huge events, but there are three tournaments with attendance of approximately 100 people, and one third of those are anticipated to need hotel rooms. He informed these kinds of events could easily be held at the Ahtanum Youth Park.

Council Member Lemon questioned if the other towns Mr. Denlea has hotels in have these types of positions.

Mr. Denlea stated no, he has hotels in Sunnyside and Prosser and they both have a Chamber of Commerce that does this type of work, but not very effectively. He also pointed out that neither of those towns have the potential of Union Gap.

Council Member Butler questioned if the Council is deciding on the person or the position.

Mayor Reeves stated this discussion is about the position.

Council Member Olson commented the City pays quite a bit to the Visitors &

Convention Bureau (V&C) and questioned if they should be providing this service to Union Gap as well as Yakima, and questioned if Mr. Denlea thinks Union Gap is getting its monies worth from the V&C.

Mr. Denlea informed the V&C is responsible for the entire region and in so doing it is difficult for them to focus on one community over another. He stated the V&C promotes at a global level and generate leads, and this position would chase those leads down and promote Union Gap. He explained that the two would compliment each other, as this position is meant to work in conjunction with the V&C.

Council Member Lemon questioned if there would be enough work for a full time job or if this would be part time with the position doing other city work.

Mr. Denlea stated he believes this would be full time.

Council Member Lemon questioned why the committee is not willing to step up and pay for the entire position out of hotel/motel funds, and why they are recommending 17 percent come out of the General Fund.

Mayor Reeves informed splitting the position was his thought because he wanted to eliminate gray areas that might not pertain to overnight stays. However, he spoke with an auditor at the budget workshop and she said splitting the position would create a lot of paperwork to keep track of exactly how the position is divided and advised the position should be funded from one source.

Council Member Lemon commented that splitting the funding of the position has been his concern all along, and stated this should be funded from only hotel/motel tax money.

Mr. Denlea stated there are questions to be answered such as where will the office be and who supervises the position.

Mayor Reeves stated if this is an employee the Council has no control over the person, supervision will be by the Mayor.

Council Member Olson commented if the position is contracted, the Council would oversee the work.

Mr. Denlea recommended the position be created with the broadest scope possible.

Council Member Olson stated if this is an employee the costs to set up an office, provide a vehicle, pay for out of town expenses, etc. can start snowballing.

Council Member Lemon commented all the costs related to this position should be paid by hotel/motel tax money and not the General Fund. He stated he wishes the Mayor would have made that clear to the committee, because he stated at the last meeting that he would vote no if any of the money came out of the General Fund.

Council Member Webb questioned who determines how much money will come out of the hotel/motel fund.

Mr. Denlea informed the Lodging Tax Advisory Committee makes recommendations, but the City Council has the final say. He stated he believes \$40,000 was discussed for this position and then if there is a balance the City picks up the benefits and anything extra.

Kirsten Danielson, V&C Marketing Director, informed she recalls a discussion

of \$48,000 for a salaried position plus benefits. She stated the V&C supports this position, but think a contracted position would work as well. Mayor Reeves questioned if the V&C contracts or hires employees.

Ms Danielson stated the V&C does both and explained that sometimes it is easier to control the budget if the position is contracted.

Council Member Olson commented a contracted person could be working out of their home with their own computer and supplies.

Council Member Webb stated an employee would work just for Union Gap and a contracted person would probably work for others also.

Dave Matson questioned if the hotel/motel tax money is in place now and not being used.

Mayor Reeves informed some of the money is being used, but the City has Sun Dome bonds that are about to be paid off so that money will also be available.

Mr. Matson stated it is a lot harder to ditch an employee than a contracted person if they are not fulfilling their commitment.

Mayor Reeves stated employees are on one-year probation.

Mr. Matson questioned if the City can get rid of an employee if they pass probation and then drop the ball.

Mayor Reeves stated there is a process to go through, but employees can still be removed. He also commented if the person is doing a good job, this position would benefit from consistency because of the contacts they will make.

Adjournment

After discussion, Mayor Reeves adjourned the Study Session meeting at 6:39 p.m.

These minutes dated August 13, 2007 were approved at the Regular Council Meeting of August 27, 2007.

ATTEST:

Aubrey C. Reeves, Jr.
Mayor

Kathryn Thompson, CMC
City Clerk