



CITY OF FREEPORT

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October 22, 2013 – City Council Special Meeting Minutes

A special meeting of the Freeport City Council was convened at 6:00 P.M. by Mayor Matt Worms with Council Members Ken Goebel, Ron Ritter and Carrie Goebel present (Rodney Atkinson arrived after meeting was convened).

Staff in attendance: Mason Schirmer and Attorney Adam Ripple (Rinke Noonan Law Firm).

The Pledge of Allegiance was said by those in attendance.

COUNCIL CONDUCT

Worms said the meeting was called to address Council Conduct and that meeting times had become excessively long and interruptions have become more frequent.

Atkinson calls-in saying he will be late.

Ripple provided Council with a memo addressing Meeting Management Techniques. Ripple said he is providing tools to help with meeting management and decorum. Ripple said an effective meeting is founded on respect for other members, the public and the process; and that should be the guiding principal. Ripple said the focus may be more on decorum.

Ripple said when meetings get out of control, Council should fall back on the techniques mentioned in the memo. Ripple said Robert's Rules of Order should be used as a tool to help stop meetings from dragging-on and stop conversation from being dominated. Ripple said meeting management is every member's responsibility.

Ripple said Freeport does not have a Code of Conduct. Ripple said some cities have adopted a code of conduct which are expectations of how council members should conduct themselves.

Ripple said Schirmer does a great job providing information to council members in the meeting packets. Ripple said it is okay to ask Schirmer for more information, if you need it. Worms said sometimes a council member does not read their packet and it is disrespectful to other council members. Ripple said expectations, such as reading meeting packets, can be put into writing as part of a code of conduct. Ripple said if agenda items are being tabled, that he hoped Council is providing specific direction on what information is needed to make the decision.

Council Member Rodney Atkinson arrives at 6:12 P.M.

Ripple said the Council operates at the will of the majority, so if one council member is not prepared, the rest of Council can still move forward.

Ripple said Council can impose time limits on speakers. Ripple said when council members speak excessively it becomes counterproductive. Ripple said any council member can make a motion to end debate, after it is seconded you can call for the question and more debate would be out of order.

Ripple said another problem is when a council member continues to bring-up past topics. Atkinson asked about a motion to rescind. Ripple said the appropriate method is a motion to reconsider. Atkinson argued the use of each. Ripple said if use of such a motion is occurring often, council members should reconsider how Council is conducting business.

Atkinson asked why some things in Robert's Rules of Order are followed while others are not. Ripple recommended not getting hung-up on perfectly following Robert's Rules of Order. Ripple said the majority of council business can be handled using informal procedures and that consulting Robert's Rules of Order too much can be a sign of bigger issues. Ripple said trying to follow Robert's Rules of Order can take-away from the job of the Council of carrying-out the business of the city.

Worms asked when a roll call vote is used. Ripple said there are no requirements for when; however, it has been seen during difficult issues. Worms asked who can call for a roll call vote. Ripple said anyone may and that he has seen no contest to that yet.

C. Goebel asked about when it is appropriate to abstain. Ripple said any time you feel there is the appearance of impropriety.

Schirmer asked how items are pulled from the consent agenda. Ripple said any council member can request to do so.

Ripple addressed decorum by saying council members should have respect for everyone and that council members are here to carry out the business of the city. Ripple said everyone needs to act as adults and refrain from profanity. Ripple said side conversations are inappropriate as well as using cell phones during a meeting. Ripple said outside of a meeting, council members have very little authority.

Ripple said a code of conduct is valuable if council members are willing to put in the effort and have meaningful discussion. Ripple said if council members are not willing to call-out fellow council members when they act inappropriately, then a code of conduct is useless. Ripple said council members need to be genuinely concerned about meetings and conduct for it to be worthwhile. Ripple said a code of conduct would also help council members better understand how to interact with staff.

Worms asked about how to maintain order when citizens resist. Ripple said the job of the Mayor is to preside over the meeting and that it is the job of each of the council member's to support the mayor and move forward with business.

Atkinson asked about how to get topics on the agenda. Atkinson said when packets come out on Thursday and that only gives him Monday to ask questions. Schirmer said to Atkinson that it is his personal decision not to read the packet until after business hours on Friday.

Ripple said council can table decisions and give Schirmer direction to pull together the information needed to make a decision and that just because an item is on the agenda does not mean you have to struggle through it.

Worms said he would entertain a motion to research a code of conduct. C. Goebel said it would be a good idea to make it a practice to review such a code periodically, once it is approved. Ripple recommended

doing so at the beginning of the year and could be done as part of a workshop. C. Goebel moved and K. Goebel seconded a motion to start the process of creating a code of conduct. Schirmer asked if Council wants Ripple to prepare the document or to just use the template from the League of Minnesota Cities. Atkinson said to use whatever is cheapest. Schirmer said to take this seriously, and if you're just going through the motions, don't bother. C. Goebel asked for examples. Ripple said he can provide examples.

Ripple said the code of conduct would be created by the direction of Council.

Atkinson asked Worms about the use of the gavel to maintain order between council members. Worms said council members need to have respect for each other, not to talk-over each other and or talk endlessly.

Worms asked if Ripple and Schirmer had the direction they needed. Schirmer said yes.

ADJOURNMENT

Worms moved and K. Goebel seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried 5-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:12 P.M.

Mason Schirmer, City Clerk

Matthew H. Worms, Mayor