

MINUTES  
MOUNT VERNON CITY COUNCIL  
JUNE 23, 2014

The Mount Vernon City Council met June 23, 2014 at Mount Vernon City Hall Chambers with the following members present: Roudabush, Taylor, Thompson, Niemi, and Hampton.

1. Call to Order. At 6:28 p.m. Mayor James Moore called the meeting to order.
2. Approval of Agenda. City Administrator Mike Beimer stated there were no changes to the agenda.
3. Brief statement from Mayor Moore concerning the events of last week regarding installation of temporary traffic signals. Council member Niemi read the following statement on behalf of the Mayor: "On Monday, June 16, the City Council decided that the intersection at 1<sup>st</sup> and 1<sup>st</sup> uptown needed to have temporary traffic lights until the permanent ones can be installed. The Council also made the decision to provide a trained crossing guard from 7 am until 6 pm or until the temporary lights were in operation.

The plan that was agreed to during the June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting was not carried out. Instead, a different plan, a contingency plan, was put into place where a City employee would be put on the job rather than having the police department do it. This was done without the knowledge of the Mayor or Council. Later during the morning the City responded to a request for assistance from a citizen who was in imminent danger of being flooded. The City employee who was assisting pedestrians was pulled off the job by the Mayor and for a limited period of time our City's temporary summer employees were assisting the pedestrians until the City employee who had been assisting returned.

This topic has already been the subject of a one hour meeting that included all the City employees and officials involved, members of the public, and the publisher of the local newspaper. During the meeting, the Mayor accepted full responsibility for what transpired in this matter. An audio CD of that meeting was distributed to members of the Council and it provides a clear picture of what happened at the meeting.

Despite the lack of communication within and between city departments the City DID provide continuous crossing assistance to pedestrians until the stoplights were turned on at 2 pm. Nobody was injured and there were no traffic accidents.

This incident has exposed some problems in our communications, individual roles, and chain of command. These are internal problems to the City organization and will be handled internally as they involve personnel issues. The Mayor and City Administrator are working closely to ensure that future instructions from Council will be followed as written.

With that, we consider this matter closed and will move on to taking steps to improve communications and clarify roles within our organization.” End of statement.

4. Discussion concerning Council’s decision at the start of present calendar year to delay for 6 months implementing and possible filling of the Public Works Director position; other possible options to consider. Discussion and possible action on all of the above mentioned agenda items. Beimer explained that he met with two council members and discussed the possibility of looking at the position of the currently vacant public works director. Beimer continued saying that the six month hiatus will expire soon and he is looking for Council input; do they want to hire a PW director, not hire a director, or just discuss the position. Mayor Moore asked Council for their input. Roudabush said that he would be “open to it” but wanted to be sure the work (job description) was outlined. Continuing he explained that creating this \$65k job will be taking work away from Beimer. He wants this person to line up the work but also be able to “get dirty with the guys”. Beimer said there is already a job description for this position and it is a working superintendent position. Taylor said that the position was left vacant because it seemed it may be premature to bring someone into a situation where it wasn’t clear how things were going to settle in with a new administration. It is a very important and vital position to the City. Taylor read a summary of the position which can be found on the City website ([cityofmtvernon-ia.gov](http://cityofmtvernon-ia.gov)). From the description read it is clear that this is a very significant position within the City hierarchy; it is something that had been missing previously. Taylor said that the role should be filled but before that is done Council has to be sure they are not putting a person in a situation where their role is not clear and who they are to report to. Taylor said she was very in favor of hiring a PW director and the position may take some time for the individual to realize the various areas of the position. She is looking for a person who has a vision in this role, who wants to make this a better place and values the employees. She would like to see the roles of the city administrator, mayor and the PW director clearly defined because until it’s clarified there will be more of the same. Her recommendation to Council was to start looking for a PW director but “clean up a little bit of business of our own first”. Thompson said she thinks Beimer is an able administrator and can direct the public works employees well but now is the time to look at this position. The City already has a good job description and knows what is needed for the job. There is a well thought out chain of command that needs to be adhered to. Niemi said that there is evidence that the PW department has not been running as smoothly as it should be and thinks now is the time to hire a PW director. He agreed with all that was said by Taylor and Thompson as did Hampton. Hampton asked the question that if someone was hired who would he get his orders from to which Beimer referred him to the chain of command chart. He then asked if it would make sense to draft an ordinance on mayoral duties. Robert Hatala, City attorney said that there is already some of this in the Code and he had written memo on the lines of communication that had been distributed to Council. Taylor said that in Chapter 21, City Adm. #8 says the “Authority to direct employees as to the time and manner of carrying out work, including coordination of effort” and the flow chart supports that. The role of the mayor is different as CEO. As the Code states: “Act as the CEO of the City and presiding officer of the Council, supervise all departments of the City, except for the supervisory duties delegated to the City Administrator . . .” Taylor repeated; “except for the supervisory duties delegated to the City Administrator, give direction to department heads

concerning the functions of the departments, and have the power to examine all functions of the municipal departments, their records and to call for special reports from department heads at any time”. She continued saying the key word here is “executive”, that is the important distinction. Hampton said he is reluctant to hire someone at this time but he doesn’t want to “hold up the process”. He said the City already has some guidelines, they just have to be followed. Taylor made a motion to advertise for the position of PW director and in the meantime create a statement of clarity as to what the expectations of the mayor’s role is, seconded by Niemi. Roll call vote. Carried all. Beimer asked the Council to consider on the motion that the verbiage in the ad be open until position is filled to which Taylor amended her motion to include a change from a deadline to open until position is filled, seconded by Niemi. Roll call vote. Carried all.

As there was no further business to attend to the meeting adjourned the time being 6:55 p.m., June 23, 2014

Respectfully submitted,  
Sue Ripke  
City Clerk

Reviewed and approved,  
Michael R. Beimer  
City Administrator