

Special Meeting of the Town Council
August 11, 2021
6:15 pm in the Civic Center
Minutes & General Account

Council Members Present: Mayor Montgomery, Council Members Wolfe, Rayborn, Capes, & Straughn

Staff Members Present: Dave Treme, Matthew Johnson, & Katie Weiner

Visitors Present: Carol Brooks

Call to Order- Mayor Montgomery called the meeting to order.

Weiner took roll call as follows:

Council Member Wolfe- Present
Council Member Capes- Present
Mayor Montgomery- Present
Council Member Straughn- Present
Council Member Rayborn- Present

Weiner stated that a quorum was present.

Discussion about Town Council meeting venue- Treme stated that Council had briefly discussed whether or not they needed to officially change their meeting space over the past few months. He added that Council had been meeting in the Civic Center instead of the Council Chambers since the Coronavirus pandemic began. He noted that there had been money included in the budget to evaluate the space utilization at Town Hall. He added that this information could be used to determine possible options that Council would have if additional office or meeting space needed to be created.

Treme requested that Council give him direction on ways in which they wanted to utilize the Civic Center going forward. He added that he was aware that there were different civic organizations that had used the Civic Center as a meeting facility in the past. He stated that he did not believe it was a compatible space for different groups to provide dinners for their members at their regular meetings. Treme said that he had met with the leaders of the Rotary and Civitans Club. He noted that he had offered to allow them to meet at the Jamestown Park & Golf Course Clubhouse for the same rate they had been paying. Treme stated that he did not have an issue with the Veterans and the exercise group using the Civic Center as a meeting place because they were smaller groups that did not serve meals.

Treme stated that he had made recommendations on the use of the Civic Center, but it had not been received well by everyone. He noted that the Town's insurance provider had also suggested that any groups using the facility have a liability insurance plan that would cover any accidents that may occur. He added that the Town may also have to hire additional help to set up and break down the room if it was going to be used for several different events throughout the month. He requested that Council provide staff with guidance on the various aspects of the issue.

Council Member Wolfe stated that she was not in favor of moving the Council's Chambers from Town Hall to the Civic Center. She added that Council had decided to meet in the Civic Center because of the

Coronavirus and the additional space that the Civic Center provided which allowed everyone to spread out. She said she believed that the civic organizations should have been able to resume meeting in the Civic Center as soon as Town Hall had reopened to the public. She stated that she had received various complaints from the members of the different clubs about not being able to resume meeting in the Civic Center as they had done before the pandemic. She did not think that it was a problem for the groups to serve food as long as they were responsible for cleaning up their mess. Council Member Wolfe thought it was premature to plan for providing additional office space before the staff was required to expand.

Treme asked if there was consensus amongst the board about where the Council meetings should be held.

Council Member Capes said that he thought the Council would continue to meet in the Civic Center for the foreseeable future. He added that there was standing room only in the previous meeting space when a Boy Scout troop would attend a Council meeting to lead the Pledge of Allegiance. He stated that there needed to be a plan in place for growth of Town Hall staff and the use of space in Town Hall. Council Member Capes said that he believed that there could also be a higher level of attendance at Council meetings as the Town grew.

Council Member Wolfe stated that she felt that the Council would be taking a meeting and an event space away from the citizens if they continued to use the Civic Center as a Council Chambers. She did not see an issue with returning to the former meeting space.

Council Member Rayborn said that she was in favor of meeting in the Civic Center in order to allow for social distancing during the ongoing pandemic. However, she still wanted it to be a multi-purpose space. She was fine with using the Civic Center as a Council Chambers, but she thought that other community groups should still be able to use the building as well. Council Member Rayborn added that she did not think that staff should have to arrange and rearrange the space for all the different events. She noted that those that wanted to rent the room could be responsible for returning it to its original set up. She stated that the Clubhouse at the golf course was nice, but it was not comparable to the Civic Center.

Council Member Wolfe asked Treme if the public services or parks staff could help with the room breakdown and setup. Treme stated that Town staff were not able to take on additional tasks. He added that he would have to hire someone to setup/breakdown the room and ensure that the space was clean after events.

Council Member Straughn stated that he did not think there was anything that should prevent the Civic Center from continuing to be a multi-use space. He said that the Town could invest in some chairs and tables that were easier to rearrange. He noted that the Council could still use the room as its Council Chambers while offering the same amenities to the public that they have had in the past. He stated that he loved the Clubhouse, but did not think that the civic groups should be encouraged to meet at the golf course.

Council Member Capes reiterated that he did not think that the former space was adequate for a Council Chambers. He said that he believed that the Civic Center could still be used by other groups while providing a larger space to hold Council meetings.

Mayor Montgomery said that the first decision that Council needed to make was where they wanted to hold their future meetings.

Council Member Capes stated that he felt very strongly that the Council’s meeting space should accommodate a decent sized audience. He added that the Civic Center also provided better acoustics and allowed staff to stream the meetings.

Mayor Montgomery said that the Civic Center was a more professional meeting space. She highlighted that it was much easier for her to run the meeting because she could actually see everyone in attendance.

Council Member Wolfe stated that Council would need to formally change the name of the Ragsdale Civic Center if they wanted to use it as a Council Chambers for the foreseeable future. Mayor Montgomery, Council Member Capes, and Council Member Rayborn disagreed because the Civic Center could still be used as a multi-use space.

Council Member Rayborn reiterated that Council could use the Civic Center as a meeting space without excluding other groups from the facility.

Council Member Straughn and Wolfe stated that they were both in favor of paying for additional help to arrange the room.

Treme stated that he believed that there was a consensus amongst Council that they would continue to hold their meetings in the Civic Center. He added that he did not believe that former space would be effective for a Council meeting.

Council Member Wolfe disagreed.

Council Member Rayborn said that she felt more comfortable meeting in the Civic Center for the time being and did not foresee Council returning to meet in the former space because it was too small.

Council Members agreed that they would continue to hold their meetings in the Civic Center for the time being. Council Member Wolfe was in opposition.

Treme stated that he would present a recommendation regarding the setup and breakdown of the room at a later date.

Adjournment- Council Member Straughn made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Capes made a second to the motion. The motion passed by unanimous vote.

The meeting ended at 7:02 pm.

Mayor

Town Clerk