

June 19, 2013

Task Force Members

Kelly Allen – Present
Marilyn Coffey – Present
Pastor Michael Cole – Not Present
Jim Marshall – Present
Jack Schrauth – Present
Tom Shaw – Present
Bill Wadsworth – Present

Also Present

Special Assistant to the City Council – Danny Langloss, Jr.

Call to Order by Marilyn Coffey

Approval of Minutes

Approval of 06/12/2013 Minutes: Tom Shaw moved to accept minutes seconded by Jim Marshall. Unanimously approved.

Discussion with Scott Schumard, City Manager, Sterling, IL

Overview of City Manager System

1 Mayor and 6 Aldermen serve four-year terms. Four aldermen are elected by ward and the other two aldermen are elected at large.

The mayor and the aldermen interact as policy makers. The aldermen take complaints that are reported to the City Manager and is then given to the department head.

The mayor is more of a ceremonial role. The position leads the council meetings and liquor commissioner.

The City Manager gives consistency to staff and city. With the mayor and alderman being replaced every four year, there is a potential for all new council members. The City Manager creates stability during the time of change. It takes about two years to learn an organization.

Q: How do you keep politics out of decision-making? From an aldermen standpoint, how do they wrestle with the lack of power?

A: The City Manager is a buffer between the Aldermen and the city. City Manager makes sure that there is consistency in decision-making on a day-to-day basis.

Q: What are the advantages are of the Aldermanic form of government with a City Manager?

A: The staff likes the consistency that having a City Manager provides – there is someone that knows the inner working of the city. If the citizens were to elect all new officials at the next election, there would still be leadership that has a working knowledge of the city. Also, the staff doesn't have to worry about what the council is going to do.

Q: How involved are the mayor and the aldermen in the budgetary process?

A: The budget is driven by the staff (department heads). The department heads submit a personal budget. As the City Manager, I try to predict what income the city will be receiving based on the economic forecast for the year. We go through a process of prioritizing projects that are submitted. The aldermen and mayor play a limited role in the budget process.

Q: Do the elected officials participate in the negotiation process?

A: Elected officials do not sit in the negotiation process. There are only two union groups: police and fire. Public works is not unionized.

Q: Are the City Clerk and the Treasurer elected?

A: No. Both are appointed.

Q: How engaged are the aldermen in the day-to-day operations?

A: Not very involved. The aldermen do not direct the day-to-day activity within the city.

Q: Do you feel that your form of government has any more leeway with economic development?

A: No. Still held under the same mandates of the state when it comes to cost containment on capital projects and minimum wage vs. prevailing wage.

Q: What are the checks and balances on the City Manager position? Who oversees your spending and approves financial decisions?

A: The alderman and mayor oversee the position. The expectations come from them. I communicate with them via email. I also try to send out a weekly memo that is expected. The mayor is included on development projects.

The finance director has a degree of independence with the finances, while I have limited access.

After the Dixon theft became public, the finance director and I sat down and went through scenarios of how this could happen in Sterling. The ultimate goal was to see if that type of theft could happen and how it would be caught with our checks and balances.

Q: Do you have a performance evaluation?

A: Yes. Annually.

Q: What expectations has the council set?

A: Communication.

Q: Has Sterling been through Strategic Planning recently?

A: We have not engaged in formal strategic planning in quite some time.

Generally, I will meet with the department heads in one on one interviews to discuss individual department goals. The council will go on retreat to discuss which goals to focus on within the parameters of the budget. The budget drives everything in the city. We also have community surveys from time to time.

Our long-term planning is living within the budget.

Q: How do you handle transparency?

A: The budget sets the goals. The budget is available to the public.

Q: How do you communicate news from the City?

A: Reactive with some release of news. Having meetings after some events. Other news releases have been proactive (i.e. with the vision for the riverfront and the theatre).

Q: Are there certain items that are not subjected to FOIA under your form of government?

A: FOIA is the same for every form of government.

Q: Is your form of government subject to the Open Meeting Act?

A: Open Meeting Act is the same for every form of government. There are ways to circulate information with some umbrella of privacy.

Q: Where do most of the issues for the City come up?

A: Most of the issues surface during the budgetary meeting.

Q: Is the Aldermanic form of government more cohesive to economic development? More expeditious?

A: The only time there are problems are when people try to work around the system.

Sterling does have a non-profit group that works on Economic Development. Greater Sterling Development Corporation works closely with the City of Sterling as a resource for information. GSDC works closely with the City Manager; the council is not part of the negotiation of the business.

Q: Do you have an HR director?

A: City Manager is titled with Personnel Director. There is an Employee Benefits Director.

Q: Where do employees go with personnel issues?

A: City Manager

Q: Once an employee is hired, are they required to sign-off on a code of ethics?

A: We have a personnel manual that is given to each employee that is hired. The employee is required to sign that they have read the manual and agree to follow the standards.

Environment of the business is key.

Q: Is there an expectation for continuing education for the City Manager?

A: Yes. It is written in my contract and funds are allocated in my budget for continuing education. I go to at least one conference a year. Currently, I'm in the process of taking Certified Manager Courses.

Q: What is the advantage of the City Manager form of government?

A: There's one person giving direction to the department heads. If the Aldermen were to get involved at the City Manager level, there would be too many cooks in the kitchen. The City Manager's authority is given through the law. The Aldermen's authority is to create policy.

End of Discussion

Public Comment:

Jordan Bowman:

Take a look at the Portland, Oregon government. They are a Commission Form.

Would like for the GTF to review the strong mayor form of government.

Jill Polivka:

Checks and Balances are important.

Plans for next meeting:

Meeting for June 26, 2013: Discussion be with Tom Ganiere, Chair of the Ottawa Committee at 9AM followed by a discussion with David Plyman, City Manager from Rochelle.

Would like to speak with the Mayor and Commissioners from our own government. Will try to schedule that for July 3, 2013

Adjournment:

Jim Marshall moved to adjourn with a second from Tom Shaw. Unanimously approved.