

The Special Meeting of the Ishpeming City Council was held on Wednesday, January 22, 2020, in the Ishpeming City Hall Council Chambers. Mayor Mike Tonkin called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

Present: Mayor Mike Tonkin, Councilmembers, Lindsay Bean, Jason Chapman, Stuart Skauge, and Pat Scanlon (5). Also present was Interim City Manager Steven Snowaert and City Attorney Bonnie Hoff.

AGENDA COMMENT

PJ Stevens, 821 Juniper Street, supported Attorney Bonnie Hoff and urged Council to retain her as the City Attorney. She briefly summarized some of the previous public comment and asked Council to determine what attorney services were needed for the City. She felt Attorney Hoff was dedicated to the City and strongly felt Council should not terminate her agreement.

Robyn Baird, Mather Inn, urged Council to determine what attorney services were needed and then evaluate how the cost of the services fit into the City's budget. Council must determine what is the best interest for the City.

A citizen residing at 648 Elliott Street, felt a contracted employee should not be receiving full benefits and the attorney's wages should be negotiated with the employment contract. He felt there were other needs of the City for the dollars to spent on the attorney.

DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY ATTORNEY

Councilmembers Bean and Chapman advised they requested a meeting to bring this issue to the table for discussion. The intent was not to terminate the contract with the City Attorney. It was to discuss the multiple issues and concerns that have been brought up at previous meetings, to define what the City Attorney should be working on, and what hours should be worked. They felt City Attorney Hoff was a good attorney and did a great job for the community. There should be discussion on what would need to be done to make the relationship between Council and the City Attorney be effective and productive.

Mayor Tonkin felt with all the issues that have been discussed recently, he felt the best way to move forward would be to start with a clean slate.

Councilmember Scanlon felt Attorney Hoff was a very good attorney but expressed concerns over several issues that recently arose, one of which was the exit interviews conducted with the ex-city employees. He felt the attorney was leading Council and Council should be directing the attorney. He noted the City Attorney and the City Manager contracts are negotiated directly with Council.

Councilmember Skauge felt the committee that was established to review the City Attorney contract should meet to discuss the contract before a decision was made.

A motion was made by Mayor Tonkin and supported by Councilmember Scanlon to terminate the City Attorney contract effective 1/22/2020 and begin the search for new attorney services. Ayes: Mayor Mike Tonkin and Councilmember Bean (2). Nays: Councilmembers Jason Chapman, Pat Scanlon, and Stuart Skauge (3). Motion failed.

A motion was made by Councilmember Skauge, supported by Councilmember Chapman to table the main motion until the Committee to review the City Attorney's contract met. Ayes: Councilmember Jason Chapman and Stuart Skauge (2). Nays: Mayor Mike Tonkin, Councilmembers Lindsay Bean and Pat Scanlon (3). Motion failed.

Mayor Tonkin questioned the City Attorney's process in conducting the exit interviews and further questioned who directed her to conduct the exit interviews. He had requested information related to the exit interviews several times and the information was never provided to him from Attorney Hoff. He felt this was insubordination as the attorney worked for Council.

Councilmember Bean felt if a solution could not be found due to irreconcilable differences between Council and the attorney, then Council would need to start with a clean slate in order to be productive and move forward.

A motion was made by Councilmember Pat Scanlon and supported by Mayor Mike Tonkin to terminate the agreement with the City Attorney for insubordination effective immediately. Ayes: Mayor Mike Tonkin, Councilmembers Lindsay Bean, Pat Scanlon, and Stuart Skaug (4). Nays: Councilmember Jason Chapman (1). Motion passed.

Council agreed to allow City Attorney Hoff to comment.

Attorney Hoff provided her explanation of the process she used for conducting the exit interviews, who directed her to conduct the interviews, who should be given the results of the exit interviews, and further explained why she felt the information could not be released to Council.

ADJOURNMENT

At 12:25 p.m., a motion was made by Councilmember Chapman, supported by Councilmember Bean and carried unanimously to adjourn.

Respectfully Submitted,



Cathy Smith
City Clerk