

## **Minutes of the October 7, 2024, Hampton City Council Workshop**

The Hampton City Council Workshop was called to order at the Hampton City Council Chambers by Mayor Steve Birdsall at 6:00 p.m. The workshop was also offered electronically through Zoom and YouTube. Council members in attendance were Kevin Blanford, James Davies, Jerre Grefe, Bill Hodge, Barry Lamos, and Patrick Palmer. Also present were City Manager Ron Dunt, Police Chief Mark Morrison, and Public Works Director Doug Tarr. Mayor Birdsall invited those present to join in the Pledge of Allegiance to the U.S. flag.

Mayor Birdsall offered time for public comment. Bill Hittle, Franklin County Chamber director, thanked the council for the use of the Cushman to water flowers. He said he is working with FFA to grow next year's flowers locally. Council member Patrick Palmer arrived during public comment.

Public Works Director Tarr and Police Chief Morrison updated the council on nuisance properties and answered various questions from the council. Chief Morrison reported they had received 2 court orders last week that the property owners have 7 days to abate, if not done the city can enter the property and abate based on the original notice issued. Public Works Director Tarr informed the council of his upcoming court cases and a notice he issued for a permanent garage sale that has been going on for months.

Chief Morrison gave an update on speeding concerns on 6<sup>th</sup> St SW. The speed trailer has moved to the area and is collecting data for review.

City Manager Dunt informed the council that Habitat for Humanity has offered to sell their lot at 521 1<sup>st</sup> St NE to the city for \$1 plus closing costs. This is a lot that Soyland Homes has expressed interest in if the city ever acquired the lot. Dunt said the last communication he had with Soyland Homes they expressed that Hampton is still on their priority list of towns to build in. After council discussion, the council asked Dunt to reach out to Soyland Homes to see if there was still interest in the lot.

City Manager Dunt informed the council that Council Member Grefe had been contacted by a member of the Hampton soccer board asking for an update on a rec complex after hearing Sheffield may be getting one. Dunt provided a recap that in 2020 the city got an estimate of \$8 million for a rec complex. In 2023 Dunt asked an engineer for a scaled-back plan that included only a few soccer fields and a gravel parking lot and that was estimated between \$500,000-\$600,000. Dunt reminded the council that last spring the Iowa Legislature focused on property tax reform and now they have warned they will be focusing on *meaningful* property tax reform. The state legislature frowns upon public quality of life projects such as rec complexes and community centers etc, as they deem them as a waste of taxpayer funds. With the State focused on reducing cities' property tax revenues and our rising costs of operations and maintenance of infrastructure, we must pause before committing to new quality of life projects such as a rec complex. Dunt also cautioned that the city will likely be faced with hundreds of thousands of dollars related to the old pharmacy properties.

Council member Grefe added she asked the soccer board member to attend this meeting to be a part of the discussion, but no one attended. Grefe thinks that maybe all Hampton Youth Sports should get together and form a board to apply for grants. She would hate to see Hampton miss out on the opportunity but a project this size also needs community support and interest. Council member Davies also encouraged the local youth sports commissions to consider fundraising for a future rec complex.

City Manager Dunt provided the council with a map of the proposed location for the skatepark pad placement on 1<sup>st</sup> St NE just north of the bike trail. The placement was favorable to the council. The pad is scheduled to be placed in the Spring of 2025.

City Manager Dunt informed the council that the Iowa Rural Housing Readiness Assessment Grant he applied for has been awarded to the city. This will be used to fulfill the process of the Iowa Housing Workshop done by the Iowa State Extension. The council consensus was to place the grant agreement on Thursday's regular session agenda.

Mayor Birdsall adjourned the workshop at 6:42 p.m.