

CITY COMMISSION AGENDA REVIEW MINUTES

June 8, 2017

The Newton City Commission met for an agenda review on June 8, 2017. Present were Mayor Hague, Vice Mayor Nygaard, Commissioners Davis, Koehn, and City staff (Myers, Loomis, Towle) and Holiday Inn Express owner and staff (Tim Johnson and Tyler Stephens). Commissioner Valentine was absent.

Mayor Hague called the agenda review to order at 7:30 a.m. The Mayor asked the visitors if there was something they wished to bring to the Commission since the purpose of the meeting is to spend approximately 30 minutes going over the upcoming City Commission agenda. Mr. Johnson noted he has previously spoken with various of the Commissioners about concerns he has regarding operations of the Meridian Center, and he is wanting to know the status of the consideration of his concerns. He voiced concerns about lack of collaboration with the hotels and what he regards as inadequate production by the Meridian Center. Commissioner Koehn asked him to briefly describe what it is he is proposing. Mr. Johnson stated he wants to have the opportunity to provide the same service Kemper is doing via contract with the city. He stated he wants the hotels to have the ability to directly book events at the Meridian Center, and thinks there should be other operational changes such as opening up the food service to all local businesses, with understanding the Meridian Center would still need to keep a chef on staff. He has discussed his concerns with the Comfort Inn, who indicate they would be comfortable with him taking over Meridian Center operations. Commissioners asked if he has discussed this with the other hotels, and he acknowledged he has not done so to date. Commissioners discussed the issue briefly and the Mayor stated he would like to see all players come together and figure out what changes might be beneficial to all parties concerned, discussions should include hoteliers, chamber, and city staff. Bob Myers, City Manager, stated the primary problem which has been relayed to him and is behind these concerns is the Holiday Inn's room nights are down. However, he noted that this problem is not due to any operational issues with the Meridian Center, where use of the facility has continued to increase, but rather hotels stays are down all throughout the region, as well as statewide and nationally. He said he would assume one of the bigger impacts on local hotels has to do with changes in how MAYB are conducting their tournament events locally. Mr. Johnson agreed that MAYB changes did have an impact, but he stated that the downturn in agricultural industries, and with Agco specifically, is the biggest factor for them. Their business activities producing hotel stays are down, but are starting to come back up. He stated they want to leverage the brand of Holiday Inn Express for Meridian Center operations and stays. He repeatedly wanted to know what the commission was going to do. Commissioners stated they will continue on course of having Mr. Myers bring all parties together for a meeting to discuss any issues. Mayor Hague stated that he is personally reluctant to consider making a number of structural changes to address an issue which appears to be one more having to do with personalities than anything. He stated that Mr. Myers is currently

developing a plan to address these issues, and the Commission will be reviewing this further once Mr. Myers's suggestions are presented.

Following this discussion, the Commission quickly reviewed the upcoming agenda items.

Following the agenda review, an executive session was conducted.

MOTION: Commissioner Koehn moved and Commissioner Davis seconded to go into executive session to discuss matters pertaining to non-elected personnel for 5 minutes, to touch on next steps in the City Manager performance review process, and then to return to open session at 8:10 a.m. Motion carried.

The Commission went into executive session at 8:05 a.m. and reconvened at 8:10 a.m.

The agenda review concluded at 8:10 a.m.



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk