

Minutes

The City Council of the City of Leawood, Kansas, met for a Special Call Meeting at City Hall, 4800 Town Center Drive, at 6:00 P.M., on Monday, February 18, 2013. Mayor Peggy Dunn presided.

Councilmembers present: Debra Filla, Gary Bussing, Lou Rasmussen, Andrew Osman, Jim Rawlings, Julie Cain and James Azeltine

Councilmembers absent: Carrie Rezac

Staff present: Scott Lambers, City Administrator	Patty Bennett, City Attorney
Chief John Meier, Police Dept.	Lovina Freeman, HR Director
Mark Andrasik, Info Systems Director	Chris Claxton, P&R Director
Richard Coleman, Comm Dev. Director	Kim Curran, Recreation Superintendent
Joe Johnson, PW Director	Pam Gregory, Assistant City Clerk

Others Present: Amy Vlastic, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Doug Stevens, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
Lorrie Hamilton, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board
David Harwood, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board

Discussion of Proposed Utilization of Social Media

Mayor Dunn called the meeting to order at 6:10 P.M. Introductions were made by those present.

Opening Comments – City Attorney Patty Bennett

The request for use of social media originated from the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board. The City wants residents to have access to as much information as possible; however, people on social media can use an anonymous name for posting things they may not otherwise say. It has also become more common to provide links to spam that could cause a virus. This discussion should include deleting certain posts, such as bad or hurtful language, as they arise. This gives rise to potential First Amendment rights. They need to determine if the benefits outweigh the risks. To her knowledge, there has not been a claim in this area for violation of the First Amendment against other cities for monitoring posts on their websites. Consideration should be given to monitor outgoing posts and who would be responsible for monitoring responses.

Presentation – Information Systems Director Mark Andrasik

After much research on social media, there are some pros and cons to be considered. By creating a Facebook unpublished account, City staff has been able to configure some of the things they can and cannot do as it relates to government. The nature of social media is a two-way modern-day communication that can engage the community. Staff is considering a Social Media Usage Policy in comparison to what other cities are doing.

They need to consider both positive and negative feedback. They can provide a profanity filter to block some inappropriate language. Social media has been a rising factor for instant communication. Good uses include reminders to the public regarding upcoming events, sports registration dates, etc. Citizens could communicate information to the City regarding accidents, disasters, etc. There are several issues to managing social media. Censorship concerns need to be considered and whether they have the right to delete posts. Several municipalities in Johnson County currently have Facebook and Twitter accounts. The “Likes” and “Follows” can loosely be considered “subscribing” to their news feed or stream of information. Generally, once a social media account is established more and more people will begin to subscribe. Overland Park has had Facebook and Twitter accounts for the past 2-3 years with no issues. Lenexa staff said they never know what post will spur conversation – good and bad. Shawnee staff cautioned about comments on controversial issues. Outgoing messages are critical to the people managing it. Olathe staff said to have the website be the main source for information and provide links within posts that take them back to the website. The City’s website requires a user to ‘visit’ the site; whereas, social media is proactive to provide information to those subscribed. Ms. Bennett noted people can also sign up for instant notification through their cell phones via text, email, etc.

Councilmember Cain commented that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board initially requested social media be used as a tool to advertise their 40th Anniversary. Their intent was to explore only a Parks and Recreation Facebook page until the City establishes a certain comfort level.

Mr. Andrasik stated communication management is time consuming. Some cities designate Public Information Officer’s [PIO] to manage communications and social media full time, whereas others designate employees that do it in conjunction with other job duties and have departments also responsible for managing their specific content. The City would not be able to control advertising on its Facebook page; it is controlled by Facebook. Johnson County and several area cities worked together to develop an emergency mass communication service via “Everbridge.” This is a new service with limited staff knowledge. The service provides text messages, telephone messages, and/or emails to residents who opt into the system at a cost to Leawood of \$6,000-\$8,000 per year.

Councilmember Cain stated they began to explore social media because of limited advertising options. Ms. Claxton replied website users for Parks and Recreation tend to be from a younger demographic with small children. Sun Publications was a huge vehicle for local agency advertising; however, they are no longer operating. Schools no longer allow notification flyers to be sent home with children.

Councilmember Filla felt the risk would be low compared to the rewards and concurred with Councilmember Cain and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board to implement a trial pilot Facebook page for only the Parks and Recreation Department.

Councilmember Bussing agreed the City should pursue social media because it is the main communication for this generation; however, the relevant issues are cost, incoming/outgoing message management, and the risk to the City. They need to consider a well-thought-out exit strategy and its implications if this cannot be managed effectively.

Mayor Dunn asked who would manage the Parks and Recreation Facebook page. Mr. Andrasik replied this would be determined by the City Administrator. The Information Services Department could possibly manage this; however, they currently have a multitude of work as it relates to the Justice Center. Any additional workload at this time could dilute their abilities to perform at their best.

Councilmember Rasmussen agreed communication with their citizens has become increasingly difficult because of the demise in advertising options. He concurred to begin with a pilot Facebook page for Parks and Recreation; however, if they decide in the future to move forward with a full City Facebook page, they should consider the cost for another full-time employee to oversee it.

Ms. Bennett clarified “Everbridge” originally began as an emergency communication service; however, it has changed to allow other uses.

Mr. Andrasik clarified the “Likes” on the Facebook page would come from Leawood residents and other people in the metro-area.

Mayor Dunn received Council consensus to pilot a trial Facebook page for the Parks and Recreation Department and this be re-evaluated in six months.

Ms. Bennett felt it was important that staff draft a Social Media Usage Policy detailing what is and is not allowed before implementing this pilot Facebook page.

Mr. Andrasik confirmed staff could prepare a “mock” Facebook page for review at the March 4th Governing Body meeting.

There being no further business, the work session was adjourned at 7:20 P.M.

Pam Gregory, Recording Assistant City Clerk