Chairman Ladd called the meeting of the Agenda Session to order with Councilpersons Berz, Rico, Robinson, Scott and Gilbert present. City Attorney Michael McMahan; Management Analyst Randy Burns; and Shirley Crownover, Assistant Clerk to the Council, were also present.

Others present included Danny Thornton, Dan Johnson, Larry Zehnder, Dennis Malone, Lee Norris, Tony Boyd, Alice Cannella, Steve Leach, Chief Parker, Susan Dubose, Daisy Madison, Stan Sewell, and Chief Dodd. Bill Payne joined the meeting later.

On motion of Councilwoman Robinson, seconded by Councilman Rico, the minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Mr. Johnson proceeded with agenda items, noting that there would be a Proclamation tonight by Chief Randy Parker. He stated that all of the Resolutions had been previously discussed except for one. Resolution (a) has been discussed by General Services. Resolution (b) is a Public Work’s item, with the blanks now filled in. It was deferred from 4/2/13. Councilwoman Scott stated that she would like to know, in view of the $250,000, which was for infrared repairs of streets, how many square feet or miles this included? Mr. Malone responded that $80,000 was for repairs. Chairman Ladd asked about the bidding process—if they were comfortable with the company that had been approved and if they were ready to go? Mr. Malone responded in the affirmative.

Mr. Thornton had already discussed Resolution (c). Councilwoman Scott noted that in looking at the information provided that it looked like this property (1818 Dodds Ave.) appraised for $31,000 in 2012, and now we were only getting $15,000 in 2013. Mr. Thornton responded that they could only go on what they got from CNE—that the appraisal should probably be taken down. Councilwoman Scott maintained that this was the same tax evaluation given to everyone all over town and asked if Mr. Thornton was saying the evaluation done by the County Appraiser is incorrect by 50%? Mr. Thornton responded “probably”—in this part of town; that the house is in bad shape and in his estimation not even worth $15,000.

Resolution (d) is a Parks and Recreation item. Attorney McMahan noted that there were questions surrounding the bidding process on this item—that there appeared that there were some irregularities in the bidding process and asked that this be deferred for one week.

Resolution (e) confirmed the appointment of Dan Thornton as Interim Purchasing Agent, effective April 16, 2013. Mr. Johnson noted that there was a legal issue involved—that the current Purchasing Agent will be gone as of the 15th. Attorney McMahan added that this is a position outlined in the City Code, and we don’t need a vacancy in this job.
Resolution (f) authorizes the acceptance of 34.80 acres from the Tennessee River Gorge Trust, Inc. for the conservation area at the Stringers Ridge Park. Adm. Zehnder stated that Rick Wood was not here tonight but that Jim Brown of Tennessee River Gorge Trust was present; that this is the final movement in this project and is a transfer or property with a Lease Agreement. Mr. Brown explained that this was the last step of the creation of the Stringers Ridge Park—that this is a unique park with an urban experience; that one-half had been owned by the City, and they took the remaining one-half because they had to own this as a matter or expediency; they were now ready to let the City have the rest of it. He assured that the River Gorge would be the City’s partner—that he, himself, would be leaving, but a new person would be taking his place. He stated that we needed to get past this hurdle, jokingly saying that if we did not accept this today, they would refuse to pay taxes on it. He mentioned the good view of the City. Chairman Ladd thanked him for their dedication. Mr. Brown stated that the Council would be glad they did this, and he thanked them for the work they had done.

All of the agenda items next week are zoning matters.

Mr. Johnson went over tonight’s purchases.

COUNCIL STAFFING

Chairman Ladd moved out of the Chair seat at this time in order to discuss this matter. Councilman Rico took the seat.

Councilwoman Ladd stated that she was so glad that Councilman-elect Henderson was present today. She explained that we needed to hire three employees and that we needed to do this on a temporary basis for a few days of training; that if we waited for the new Council to do this, they would come in with no staff and no one to train the staff. She stated that Councilwoman Scott, Councilman McGary, and herself had been conducting interviews and had found an outstanding applicant; that they had found three outstanding people, whom they felt would do a fantastic job. She went on to say that the dilemma was that the Council Clerk position is appointed by the Council; that we could appoint someone now and the new Council could appoint someone different next week—that this new hire would be a “sitting duck” for one week. She noted that Susan Dubose was here to hand out applications of those interviewed, along with resumes; that the names had been “blacked” out in order for discussion. She stated that she thought this was a good way to proceed, leaving the door “open” for the new Council to make any adjustments. She explained that we would hire three part-time people; that one that was interviewed, they believed to be an excellent choice for full-time Council Clerk; that right now we would offer her a position as a part-time, permanent employee on an interim basis; that if the new Council does not wish to keep her in place as Council Clerk, she would take one of the part-time positions. The third offer will be a part-time, temporary employee, and this person would know there is a possibility they will not remain on staff. Training would start on Monday.
Councilwoman Berz stated that she had no idea what Councilwoman Ladd had just said.

Councilwoman Ladd explained that we would be filling two part-time positions that would be responsible for sitting in meetings and taking minutes and doing clerical duties; there would be one fulltime appointed position as Council Clerk—that this position is in the Charter and can be appointed by this Council.

Councilwoman Berz clarified that rather than three fulltime employees, we would have one fulltime and two part-time. She wanted to know the hours the part-time employees would work? Councilwoman Ladd responded one would be from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and the other from 1:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m.; that on Tuesdays, both would work later. Councilwoman Berz confirmed that there was one full-time Council appointee.

Councilwoman Ladd stated that our concern was to hire someone for this position and start the training Monday; that the new Council could appoint someone different, and the person we hire could be without a job; that is the reason we are making this position part-time permanent and interim Council Clerk; that if the new Council wishes to keep her, they can remove the term “interim” and make her full-time. She can be hired and can learn in the part-time permanent position, and if they choose not to keep her, she can stay and fill one of the part-time positions.

Councilwoman Berz confirmed that we would be hiring one part-time permanent and one part-time temporary, and the part-time temporary position could “roll off”.

Councilwoman Scott explained that the thinking behind this is that it allows some training to go on before the current staff “roll-off”—all three individuals are leaving, and this gives the opportunity for the incoming Council to make the final decision; that those being hired will know upfront that there could be some changes going forward, and this keeps all on the same page.

Councilwoman Berz thanked Councilwoman Ladd for her hard work in arranging this and questioned how the three people would be “juggled”.

Councilwoman Ladd indicated that she respected the fact that the new Council should be a partner, as they had to work with the staff; that this way gives them the “feel” that it is not a “done deal”; that she hoped this was fair, and she hoped the new Council would give this interim person a chance.

Councilwoman Scott added that advertisement of these positions brought back 95 applicants and 27 of these took the tests for keyboard and accuracy of speed—that minute-taking would be an integral part of their job, and these individuals scored high on these skills, plus the fact that the applicants all interviewed well—that it was a good group of people.
Councilwoman Ladd stated that if everyone was on the same page, she would ask Susan Dubose, who was in front of everyone, to go over the applications.

Ms. Dubose stated that she and Julie Brown had been working on this—that they had contacted all of the candidates; that the one for the temporary part-time position was a little unhappy with the circumstances but did accept; that we were possibly looking at a nominee for Clerk to the Council on an interim basis—that this person had an issue concerning the salary, and would like the position full-time if it works out; that all did well on the tests. She stated that they would bring them in Friday for paperwork; that they knew the decision was being made today.

Councilman Rico asked if there had been opposition by the new Council to this Council appointing a Clerk? He noted that when he became a Councilman, he did not get to choose who works here. He asked if any of the new Council wanted to have their choice or if they trusted the system to chose people who would be qualified?

Councilwoman Ladd responded that the new Council were not challenging our judgment or choice; they were just concerned about this Council picking someone and them not having any “say-so”, and she could understand this; they did not question our ability or the process; that it was a question of equity. She noted that she started this process a year ago, when she thought she would still be here.

Councilman Gilbert asked what the salary would be? Ms. Dubose responded that for a part-time position, the salary would be $17.00 an hour; that one candidate said as a part-time clerk, $17.00 an hour was great; another candidate said that was not what they had applied for; one candidate wanted to talk to her husband first. She added that sometimes people “melt by the wayside”; that we wanted to tell the candidates that were interested the situation. Councilman Gilbert still wanted to know the current salary we were offering? Ms. Dubose responded that the salary could change at anytime.

Councilwoman Ladd explained that the Resolution tonight is for the appointed position only; that the other two positions do not have to be voted on; that this Resolution will be for a part-time permanent, interim appointment.

Councilwoman Berz asked if the Council would know the name? Councilwoman Ladd stated that the name would be in the Resolution.

This meeting was adjourned.