

ELECTRIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
03/18/2009

The special meeting of the Electric Advisory Committee was called to order at 6:00pm by Chairman, Ron Beauchamp, in Room 102 of City Hall.

Present: Larry Arkens, Pete Baker, Ron Beauchamp, Ann Bissell, Glendon Brown, John Mellinger, Tim Wilson

Absent: None

Also Present: Mike Furmanski-Electric Superintendent, Gil Cheves-Council Liaison

Approval/Adjustments to the Agenda:

Pete Baker made a *Motion to adjust the agenda so there could be public comment before the discussion of the issue by committee members. Motion was seconded by Bissell and CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.*

Conflict of Interest Declarations:

None

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

Public Comment

Chairman Beauchamp opened up the meeting to general public comment regarding the power plant referendum.

Brad Mantela, Dobber's Pasties, came to the podium and thanked the committee for the hard work and all the information that was put out there for the public to make a decision. He encouraged the committee, in what ever way was best, to form a statement or an opinion on where the committee stands on the issue so the public knows how they feel, and to possibly alleviate any confusion. He felt it important that the public know the committees feelings on the future of the plant and the power needs for Escanaba.

Member Mellinger asked Mantela how he heard about the special meeting on such short notice and Mantela said he has kept abreast of the situation and does follow the City's webpage for information. Mantela expressed concern for the transient population who will be returning in the next month. He hoped they too kept informed on the situation through the website. He questioned what kind of information was still going to be put

out there for them through the next month and a half so that when they step into the voting booths, they could base their decision on being educated and informed, and not just following their emotions. Mantela said he is not hearing a lot of talk in the community on the issue and he is fearful that people will be voting from the heart. He felt it is still important for the committee to continue to keep informing people up to the time of the vote.

Mellinger mentioned to Mantela that John Anthony was forming a group to get the word out to the voters. He asked Mantela if he was involved with this. Mantela said he heard that this was happening and would be inclined to join in on the matter.

Brown asked Mantela what he has done to keep being informed on the matter. Mantela said he follows the City websites which includes the energy website, reading, community groups and just being a concerned citizen.

John Anthony, citizen, approached the podium. He said a thought that he wanted to share is that sometimes we tend to get involved as we move through this process and as we carry it out, we make it more complicated. He said what he has come to realize through all of this is that by purchasing or obtaining our power through a different source, we can bring savings to the citizens of Escanaba. He said he did not want to personally bring numbers into the issue but keep the focal point on the fact that there will be savings to this community. He commented that we are looking at something that is economical, reliable and good for the community. We are creating a good environment. He looks at it as being able to vote to save himself money.

Baker questioned Anthony on the size of his company and the current bill. Anthony said his company is usually around 100 employees, but they have incurred some some layoffs. He said he is considered a large volume user and his power bill along with his sister company incurs power bills totaling around \$250,000/year. Just in looking at some of the increases that had been projected on different presentations made throughout this whole project, he could be looking at bills in excess of an additional \$30,000 to \$50,000/year. He commented that they are a small company and that is not good for them. He said they fight every day for pennies or fractions of pennies to continue on.

Power Plant Referendum Discussion-May 5, 2009

Furmanski said that at this point the group would discuss the upcoming referendum going before the City of Escanaba electorates on May 5, 2009.

Beauchamp started the discussion with the reading of the ballot language:

“Shall the Escanaba City Council have the authority to sell, lease, and/or dispose of the electric utility plant, equipment, and assets including up to 40 acres of real property where said assets are located.”

Brown related to committee members that at the joint City Council and the Electric Advisory Committee (EAC) meeting on Monday evening March 16th, Council had expressed an interest that the EAC as a committee, take up an opinion on the issue. He

further went on to say that he and member Baker had been doing some e-mailing back and forth on the issue and had come up with a potential motion that the committee might use to show support on the voter referendum. Copies were handed out to members and Brown then read it and offered it as a motion.

Motion: After an exhaustive and thorough multi-year study of Escanaba's future electric power supply options to provide long term reliable and cost competitive electric power, the EAC supports a YES vote on the May 5th, 2009 voter referendum.

This YES vote allows for the Escanaba City Council to sell, lease, and/or dispose of the City owned power plant and property.

The EAC further recommends that the Escanaba City Council members, and the Council as a whole, make public their support for a YES vote on the referendum.

Baker seconded the motion. Beauchamp then called for discussion.

Baker commented that in addition to the joint meeting of the EAC and the City Council, he was on the subcommittee for public relations for this issue. He commented that the EAC had done it's work in gathering all the information and passing it on to City Administration. Baker said that prior to tonight's meeting, the EAC, Council, and Administration had not taken a position on the issue other than to move the ballot language forward. At the joint meeting, Council had been talked to about taking a position on the issue. Council in turn put the issue back to the EAC for their stand, and that is how this meeting came about.

Bissell commented that she had a problem with making a recommendation. She commented that she does a lot of work with the League of Women Voters and said philosophically she can't direct a person on how to vote. She commented that she supports the process and knows that the committee has worked very hard but this is just a personal opinion of hers. Bissell also asked that we be respectful of the voters and not be condescending. We need to be respectful of why and how they vote, this is a vote of the people.

Beauchamp asked Bissell if she didn't feel that this was her way to sway the vote or give her reasons. Bissell responded that in working with the league, the nonpartisanship comes out and she can't direct people how to vote. She commented that she does have people ask her how to vote, but she does not give them an answer. Wilson commented that he felt that when someone asks him, he has been involved in the process and is able to provide them with the facts and help them in their decision. Baker commented that he respected her opinion, but did not agree with it. He said the committee had worked hard to finally come up with a position on the matter, of which she had been a part of for many years, and she was not now taking a position on the issue. Baker went on to say that 4 meetings were held on the issue to inform people with few people in attendance at any of them. People are now coming back to the area after the winter of being away, and he has had people come and ask him about the issue as well as those who have been in the area through the whole process. He said this is a community, he believes, where people look to leadership to help them and inform them and he feels it is our responsibility to let the people know. Mellinger also commented that he felt it was the EAC's responsibility to improve the City of Escanaba for its citizens, as well as the responsibility of the City

Council. Bissell said yes, the citizens could look for guidance from other people, however ultimately, it is a vote of the people. Wilson said he felt it was just a recommendation to the people, not the Committee telling them how to vote.

Baker urged all of those who could vote to get out and vote. He commented that the referendum requires a super majority, not just a majority to pass. He was concerned that it would not be decided by a fair representation of the electorate. He said we need to continue to get the word out to vote. We want as many people as possible to get out there and vote.

Beauchamp asked if there was any further discussion on the matter. No further discussion was brought forth, so he asked for a roll call vote on the motion presented by Brown and seconded by Baker. Roll call vote went as follows:

Beauchamp-yes; Mellinger-yes; Arkens-yes; Baker-yes; Bissell-no; Brown-yes; Wilson-yes.

Public Comment

None

Announcements – Committee Members/Staff

Mellinger asked when the next Council meeting would be and Furmanski advised it was the next evening, March 19th. Mellinger asked if it would be an agenda item, or if it would be added as an agenda item.

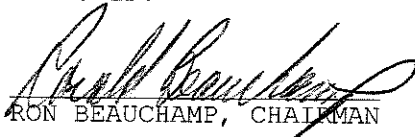
Cheves advised it was not yet an agenda item and did not know if it would be but it could be brought up in discussion.

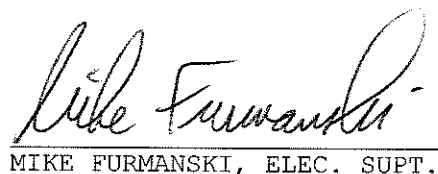
Beauchamp commented that no one from the Press was in attendance at tonight's meeting and wondered if Furmanski or O'Toole could see that some sort of press release got out on what went on with this meeting.

Baker commented on Cheve's response and said that he felt it was important that the matter at least enter into discussion at the Council meeting. He felt as much public discussion on the matter as possible before the May 5th vote was needed.

Meeting adjourned 6:33p.m.

APPROVED:


RON BEAUCHAMP, CHAIRMAN


MIKE FURMANSKI, ELEC. SUPT.