



**City of Newport  
Special City Council Workshop Meeting Minutes  
October 29, 2015**

**1. ROLL CALL -**

**Council Present** – Tim Geraghty, Tom Ingemann, Bill Sumner, Tracy Rahm, Dan Lund

**Council Absent** –

**Staff Present** – Deb Hill, City Administrator; Fritz Knaak, City Attorney;

**Staff Absent** - Bruce Hanson, Superintendent of Public Works; Renee Eisenbeisz, Executive Analyst; Steve Wiley, Fire Chief;

**2. DISCUSSION REGARDING LAW ENFORCEMENT SERVICES**

**Mayor Geraghty** - Tonight we have a discussion regarding the future of law enforcement services. Just a few ground rules, we're not going to have public comment tonight, it's more for the Council to discuss. We may express our opinions but there won't be any votes tonight, no decisions. You may get an indication of which way we're headed. I would ask the Council to not have any personal attacks, stick with the issue and facts and where we want to go in the future. I know there was a packet delivered to three of the Council members from Pauline Schottmuller, for transparency, I would like to have a copy of that. If it's a communication that came to the Council, I think Bill and I should have a copy of that.

**Councilman Lund** - It's documents supporting her numbers for the properties along the River.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Going by the suggestion that Deb has here for the police study/consolidation/contracted services.

**Admin. Hill** - It's not my recommendation.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I know, it's a start. What she has is if we're going to do a study, how long should it be, should it just include Newport? I mentioned to Tim that the Chief in St. Paul Park is getting close to retirement and it might not be a bad idea to see if St. Paul Park is interested in merging departments so we would have one chief, one sergeant and patrol. That would make more sense than Cottage Grove coming up here. If our cops were to go with Cottage Grove, they start at the bottom.

**Councilman Lund** - That's under the current proposal for contracted services and my discussion with Chief Woolery, it sounded like a merger would be different.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I'm seeing this as we have three choices, merge, keep what we got or go with the County and the County is my absolute last suggestion. The people told us they want what they got and they don't care what it costs. Hello, does that mean something?

**Councilman Rahm** - The savings that were proposed, the people were concerned about those to get rid. If the Police costs \$2 million per year, there might be some threshold.

**Councilman Lund** - We pay \$240 per resident, the proposal under the County would about \$200 per resident and Cottage Grove is relatively high across the County and they pay about \$160 per resident but I think that's the kind of savings we should be looking for, is to get the efficiencies a larger community has.

**Councilman Ingemann** - If St. Paul Park is willing to merge, we have to find out if they're willing.

**Councilman Lund** - Same with Cottage Grove.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I think keeping it local because they know our area. The Deputy that's here is doing a great job but she's driving around trying to figure out where she is and what the addresses are. Someone sent an email saying that she was happy because she turned south on 2nd Avenue, 2nd Avenue is a dead end, our cops know that, the Sheriff doesn't.

**Mayor Geraghty** - She's purposefully driving down dead ends. I had another resident on a dead end street tell me they saw her.

**Councilman Sumner** - Any new cop in Newport has to do the same thing.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Eventually, yes. I'm not faulting them, I'm just saying that it's a learning experience and St. Paul Park would already know.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Was the public input only for not going with the County or are they willing to look at going with the Grove or Park?

**Councilman Ingemann** - From what I can gather, they want to keep what they have.

**Mayor Geraghty** - We had a good turnout but it wasn't a majority.

**Councilman Ingemann** - You also have that petition with 311 names.

**Mayor Geraghty** - I disregard that petition because the person who came to our house was a 10 year old boy asking for signatures and saying that Mayor Geraghty wants to get rid of the police department. I don't know how they were explained or what was being proposed but I would probably sign that too if someone brought it to me and said that's the only thing that would happen. I don't know if people were informed of what they were signing, what was really on the table. The kid wasn't even from our community.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Reading what was sent from the people, they want to keep what they have.

**Mayor Geraghty** - I don't think the people were informed.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I believe they understand.

**Councilman Rahm** - I thought this workshop was to talk about the alternatives.

**Mayor Geraghty** - He brought up the petition and I don't think people said they were interested in merging with the Park or Cottage Grove.

**Councilman Rahm** - My concern is that we have a contract through the end of the year and we have to do something, either merge, go with the County or do our own thing. If we do our own thing, we're getting close to bringing someone in. We'd still be short-staffed because we're down an officer. I'm concerned a little bit about the timing.

**Councilman Sumner** - We can extend the contract with the County.

**Admin. Hill** - I'm sure that could happen.

**Councilman Rahm** - We need to make sure that is possible, do a three month extension.

**Councilman Lund** - Or longer because a study will take a while.

**Councilman Rahm** - What would we learn in the study that we don't already know? Do we think a study will give us more information.

**Mayor Geraghty** - We could probably do our own analysis with St. Paul Park and come up with some solid numbers.

**Councilman Rahm** - My concern is that the earlier stuff that came out, I thought was a little slanted, it only had one side. I think putting those options out gave the residents more to look at. I did have some concerns on the cost because where are we saving? It looks like we're saving on squad cars and replacing a sergeant for a chief. Is this the type of policy that we want to follow? Does it make strategic sense to us? I'm concerned about that. I want to make sure that these policy decisions are aligned with what we want to do in the longer term.

**Councilman Sumner** - The plan doesn't say we're serviced by a chief, just that we have law enforcement.

**Councilman Rahm** - I know, I'm just saying does it align with our plan?

**Councilman Sumner** - We should look at something that tells us what we're getting and what our needs are.

**Councilman Ingemann** - That would be study.

**Councilman Sumner** - Yes it would. I understand that there are some capabilities not available through St. Paul Park.

**Councilman Ingemann** - The County doesn't provide CSO and animal control.

**Councilman Sumner** - There's much more than that.

**Councilman Ingemann** - We have better clearance rates than the County. Statistically over the last 20 years...

**Councilman Sumner** - I don't know if you know what you're talking about..

**Councilman Ingemann** - This is the State of MN.

**Councilman Sumner** - I think you need to know what goes into those.

**Councilman Rahm** - The reports from the State are supposedly comparing apples to apples. If we question that, what else do we question? It's one factor of many that should go into the decision.

**Councilman Lund** - Going back to Tom's question on if we need a study to merge with St. Paul Park, I don't think we do because the communities are so similar but a merger with Cottage Grove, a study would be important.

**Councilman Ingemann** - You need to find out if they are interested in a merger.

**Councilman Lund** - I think there's efficiencies we can get by partnering with our geographic neighbors that we can't get with the County. When the County comes in, we can either have a full officer or no one on at a time. That's what a lot of the communities in the north do because there's always someone from the County around but

we don't have that because no one down here contracts with the County. There's a geographic reason why I would like to partner with our neighbors. I think the County does a fine job but there's more efficiencies with our neighbors.

**Councilman Rahm** - I don't think anyone is saying negative things about our Sheriff's Department, it's what's best for Newport. I'm interested in looking at synergies, my only concern is longer term, is if you get a situation where a City like Woodbury wants to become their own school district, by having our cities combined, there would be a lot of difference in economics that 833 is benefitting from by being a larger group. I think you need to look at it when talking about combining cities.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Back in the 90's we were one vote away from merging St. Paul Park and Newport.

**Councilman Sumner** - It didn't happen.

**Councilman Lund** - I think if it did happen, there would have been a lot of cost savings.

**Councilman Ingemann** - The two cities were supposed to merge.

**Councilman Sumner** - It didn't happen so now we have to figure out what to do now. I have asked and there are capabilities with the County and Cottage Grove that are not provided by St. Paul Park like investigations.

**Councilman Ingemann** - We do that here.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Putting that aside, that can be studied and analyzed.

**Councilman Sumner** - If we have a study and it comes up with that we go with another organization, will you accept that?

**Councilman Ingemann** - I am looking for information that's not ram-rodged to me, which I feel this is. I want a study to justify my decision. I want a study to look at keeping, merging, or going with the County. One that will be independent.

**Councilman Sumner** - Would you accept that study?

**Councilman Ingemann** - Yes.

**Councilman Lund** - A study will gather information and it's up to us to decide what's best. We know or should be able to figure out what it would cost to go with the County or keep things in-house. What we don't know is what a merger would look like and that's what I prefer a study to focus on. Then it's up to us to look at the three options. We need Cottage Grove or St. Paul Park to say it's worth exploring. I think we should reach out to them very shortly as well as confirming that the County could extend the agreement.

**Councilman Ingemann** - For three or six months.

**Councilman Lund** - Yes and what their terms are.

**Councilman Sumner** - I would look at a study that's broader in scope, not just merging. I would like the County option to be examined. I would be in favor of one that would do a detailed, independent examination of those three options. I want to make sure that if we go through the time and effort you won't come back and say you only want one thing.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I'm only one vote.

**Councilman Sumner** - You're a loud vote and not with a lot of information. I would like to have good information. If you would enthusiastically support good information, I'm all for that.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I want good information, not something that's stuffed down my throat.

**Councilman Rahm** - Whatever information we get, we need to make a decision. We need to look at things that are harder to quantify like having your own police force and what you want to do for the community.

**Councilman Sumner** - I have a comment about the identity. I can remember several years ago when rural schools were faced with the need to consolidate. There was a lot of concern about that but they lived through it. I understand that identity thing, I didn't move here because we had our own police department. I don't think a lot of people look at that. I understand that some people have an affection towards some of the officers but things change. These people are independent employees but everyone that works for Newport is an employee and I think we have to make sure that we get the best law enforcement protection that's available at the best cost. A study would help us make that decision.

**Councilman Lund** - Going along with what Tracy says, I'm very skeptical of government studies that reach decisions, that's our job. We got a study for the transit station saying we have to put affordable housing and I don't think it's worth the paper it's written on. If they marketed it, they would find that we could put something else down there. I'm much for a study that will look at different facts. We can have the study include what the cost is for going with the County, as well as a merger and staying as is.

**Councilman Sumner** - I want to remind people that we're already paying for the Sheriff's office on our taxes so why not take advantage of it.

**Councilman Ingemann** - The main reason I moved here is because of the cop shop.

**Mayor Geraghty** - I didn't. Tracy did you?

**Councilman Rahm** - No. When it comes down to it, the biggest savings, \$180,000, what does that boil down to per resident, not very much.

**Councilman Sumner** - That's just with a chief, it could be a ripple effect. If we get a sergeant, that's another \$100,000, and if we have to advertise at a higher rate to get a chief because we now know that the salary is less than what sergeants make. We want to get the best available option and if we have to increase the chief's salary, that would raise other salaries and it would have a major impact.

**Councilman Ingemann** - One thing you should keep in the back of your mind, you were elected by the people to represent the people and you should go with what the people want.

**Councilman Sumner** - We saw some people here and that's fine, I understand that there are a lot of strong opinions. I'm not sure they're making their decisions based on true information.

**Councilman Rahm** - When I came here and saw my property taxes, I did come down to City Hall and ask for the budget and when I looked, the first thing I saw was that they spent about 30% on public safety. To provide 24/7 police protection in a smaller town, costs more. When you talk about outsourcing, they have to pay salaries and those things will inflate too.

**Councilman Sumner** - Yes but we've seen numbers that show that the inflation numbers are less than Newport.

**Councilman Rahm** - Those costs will change in the future too. Where do you want control at?

**Councilman Sumner** - What does local control mean?

**Councilman Rahm** - That we can influence the policies?

**Councilman Sumner** - Why don't you think that can be done with the Sheriff's office?

**Councilman Rahm** - I don't know about that. I think that's what we'll have to talk about.

**Councilman Sumner** - What do you think is a local control issue? That we have cops 24/7? We already have that.

**Councilman Rahm** - Here's an example, police go to Newport Elementary in the morning and afternoon.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Do you think that'll change with the County? I don't think it will.

**Councilman Rahm** - I don't know.

**Councilman Ingemann** - The County will do what they want when they want.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Not if they're contracted with us. Let's try it for two years and we'll find out. People don't believe it, let's show them.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Let's do the study and find out.

**Mayor Geraghty** - We can study it to death and in the end it'll come down to subjective things. Do you think the County will do as good a job as Cottage Grove?

**Councilman Ingemann** - No.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Then we're not going to change your mind with a study.

**Councilman Rahm** - I want to look at the cost per resource. I think when you look at the population numbers, we get skewed.

**Councilman Sumner** - Haven't we looked at dollar per hour of patrolled time? I thought I asked for that.

**Councilman Rahm** - That's a good metric.

**Councilman Sumner** - To have a cop on the street, patrolling our streets, to make sure our citizens on the dead ends are getting protection.

**Councilman Rahm** - And making sure the supervisory costs are in there. I don't see big savings.

**Councilman Lund** - The part that's missing is that you can provide 24/7 coverage with less FTE's than a merger situation. When there's no calls at 3 am on a Tuesday, you can have one guy covering St. Paul Park and Newport.

**Councilman Rahm** - I don't disagree that we have limited facilities. We don't have holding facilities or adequate evidence rooms that would cost to upgrade or make standard. There are issues in that. There are economies there.

**Councilman Lund** - I don't expect a study will teach us a whole lot for expenses of in-house versus the County but we don't know anything about a merger. Step one is asking the other two cities if they have interest.

**Councilman Rahm** - Is the main driver for this policy all cost-savings?

**Mayor Geraghty** - No, I think the County can provide leadership, supervision, direction, take care of updating procedures and policies, ongoing training, better opportunity for the officers, filling in. This department needs direction and leadership and supervision and I think the Sheriff will do that.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Or we hire our own.

**Mayor Geraghty** - It didn't work for the last one.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Look what you had.

**Councilman Lund** - What do we think the procedure is for Cottage Grove and St. Paul Park?

**Admin. Hill** - I spoke with Kevin Walsh at St. Paul Park this week and he was somehow involved in the Minnetrista study. He said they might be interested but he needs to talk with his Council. Cottage Grove has a new administrator so I haven't talked with her yet. Maybe next week, the three of us can meet. I've also been talking with Senator Sieben's office for potential funding on a study.

**Councilman Lund** - I know Dan Schoen has been a big advocate. I think we have a strong point, the County works better for people in the northern half but we're off on an island if we go with them. The County's work is focused on the north half, it won't be the same if they come here.

**Councilman Sumner** - I don't believe that.

**Mayor Geraghty** - I don't buy that either.

**Councilman Lund** - We don't have an option of getting less than 6 officers with the County and if the study says that Cottage Grove has four guys on at 3 am and they can cover Newport then we're kicking in for half an officer.

**Mayor Geraghty** - I know but in the end, Cottage Grove is looking out for Cottage Grove.

**Councilman Sumner** - Do we have a summary of our proposed actions?

**Mayor Geraghty** - I want to see what the other communities say and how long it will take.

**Councilman Lund** - If we're taking the lead on it, maybe we should pass a resolution.

**Mayor Geraghty** - If it's going to drag on for a year.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I don't think it'll take that long.

**Councilman Rahm** - I don't support that.

**Councilman Ingemann** - Check with the Mayor about a three month extension.

**Councilman Lund** - The sooner it gets sorted the better.

**Mayor Geraghty** - If it doesn't look like they're interested, are you in favor of hiring a chief and sergeant?

**Councilman Lund** - I haven't reached a conclusion on our current proposals because I don't think either of them are the best option.

**Councilman Rahm** - We had a sergeant years ago. Do we need a sergeant?

**Councilman Ingemann** - They were on the night shift.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Deb thinks a new chief would want one.

**Councilman Rahm** - I think you need a supervisory person but I don't think you need two, I think one could do it. If we're going to do a study I'm ok with that but I don't want to drag it on forever.

**Councilman Sumner** - Within 9 months.

**Councilman Ingemann** - I want it done before Easter. Talk with the Sheriff about extending it.

**Admin. Hill** - Ok, I'll talk with Cottage Grove and St. Paul Park about meeting next week. I think it would cost about \$40,000.

**Councilman Ingemann** - We should get that from the State.

**Mayor Geraghty** - We won't know until next May.

**Councilman Rahm** - We should find out what it costs.

**Admin. Hill** - The study in the packet cost \$36,000.

**Mayor Geraghty** - I would find out from St. Paul Park if they're interested in a tri-city merger. I would guess not.

**Councilman Lund** - A contract is totally different than a merger. Cottage Grove is offering a similar contract to the County.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Except the officers would be starting over.

**Councilman Ingemann** - The County bids every year so they might be gone.

**Councilman Sumner** - Not necessarily.

**Mayor Geraghty** - We can put it in the contract. I don't know if there will be anything on the next agenda regarding this. I'm concerned that it'll drag on and if it will, I would prefer to go with the County right away and go with the County for two years while doing the study and then make a decision. It would force the issue.

**Councilman Lund** - I think it'll happen faster than two years. This needs to move along.

**Mayor Geraghty** - Alright, we're done.

### 3. ADJOURNMENT

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
Tim Geraghty, Mayor

Respectfully Submitted,

Renee Eisenbeisz  
Executive Analyst