

The Cannon Falls City Council met in a work session on Tuesday, March 21, 2023, in the City Council Chambers. Present were Mayor Matt Montgomery and Council Members Derek Lundell, Steve Gesme, Lisa Groth, Ryan Jeppesen, Diane Johnson, and Laura Kronenberger (arrived at 5:04 p.m.); Also present were Neil Jensen, City Administrator; Sara Peer, City Clerk; Dan Howard, Public Works Director; Dianne Howard, Zoning Administrator; Tim Malchow, EMS Chief; and Jeffrey McCormick, Police Chief.

Call to Order

Mayor Montgomery called the City Council work session to order at 5:00 p.m.

Public Safety

A. Police Department.

Police Chief McCormick provided an overview of the Cannon Falls Police Department. He reviewed the mission, vision, and philosophy of the department. He described the primary roles and responsibilities of department personnel, including law enforcement, patrol, investigation, recordkeeping and reporting, background and license checks, emergency management, and community engagement. He discussed staffing challenges, vehicle maintenance, and the possibility of converting to electric vehicles in the future. The need for a Police Department garage was discussed.

B. Fire Department.

It was noted that Fire Chief Mike Althoff was ill and unable to attend the meeting.

C. Ambulance Department.

EMS Chief Malchow provided an overview of the Ambulance Department. He described the service area, noting that the Cannon Falls Ambulance Department serves more than 224 square miles, including portions of Goodhue County and Dakota County. He discussed training sessions, event stand-by services, and patient care. He reviewed call volume and patient transfer statistics. He reviewed Ambulance Department finances, the billing process, reimbursement rates, and collection procedures. He discussed planned capital projects, including a new ambulance and kitchen updates. EMS Chief Malchow and Police Chief McCormick discussed radio equipment needs. EMS Chief Malchow reviewed staffing challenges. He discussed training and certification requirements. He suggested exploring the possibility of creating a special taxing district or other ways to increase revenue. He clarified the service area and reviewed proposed legislation.

The service area was clarified. Radio equipment cost estimates were discussed. Reimbursement was further discussed.

Examples of recent incidents during which public safety departments worked together were reviewed.

Website / Agenda
Discussion

City Administrator Jensen referenced past Council discussion of adding meeting information to the City's website. He stated that he is researching options and referenced staffing considerations. Council Member Johnson reiterated her suggestion to post all City meeting dates, agendas, and minutes on the City's website.

Open Meeting
Violation Discussion

City Administrator Jensen provided background information and referenced information from the City Attorney relating to quorum considerations and Council Member attendance at public meetings. He reviewed a statement used by the City of Red Wing to indicate that a quorum of Council Members may be in attendance at a particular meeting.

Council Member Lundell inquired with regard to Council Member attendance at public or private events. City Administrator Jensen stated that Council Members may not discuss City business outside of Council meetings.

Council Member Johnson requested clarification of the public meeting notice procedure. City Administrator Jensen provided additional information and reviewed the special meeting process. Council Member Johnson provided the example of attending but not participating in Finance Committee meetings and asked whether these meetings could be publicly noticed. Mayor Montgomery reviewed the intent of the Open Meeting Law. Council Member Lundell suggested exploring whether more meetings could be recorded and broadcast. Council Member Gesme commented that meeting attendees and proceedings are recorded in the minutes.

Council Member Johnson suggested adding the statement used by the City of Red Wing to meeting agendas. Mayor Montgomery asked Council Members to voice their opinions in this regard.

Council Member Kronenberger suggested following the advice of the City Attorney. She stated her opinion that if a Council Member attends a meeting of a group of which they are not a member they should refrain from participating in that meeting. Council Member Groth expressed agreement with these comments.

Comments from the City Attorney were further reviewed, and Open Meeting Law violations were discussed. The language used by the City of Red Wing was further discussed.

Council Member Jeppesen asked about the possibility and cost of recording, broadcasting, or conducting hybrid meetings. Police Chief McCormick provided information in this regard and cautioned against publicly noticing all meetings. It was suggested to seek additional advice from the City Attorney.

Council Member Gesme stated his opinion that Council Members should be allowed to attend meetings but should not participate. He indicated that he did not see the need for the quorum language. Council Members expressed agreement with these comments.

Council Member Johnson asked about the procedure for data requests, and City Administrator Jensen provided information in this regard.

Adjournment

Mayor Montgomery adjourned the work session at 6:08 p.m.

Adopted by the City Council of the City of Cannon Falls on the 4th day of April, 2023.

Matt Montgomery, Mayor

ATTEST:

Neil L. Jensen, City Administrator