

August 30, 2011
CITY OF WINDSOR HEIGHTS SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETING MINUTES
6:00 p.m. City Hall
Unabridged version

Item 1: Call to order.

Mayor Sullivan called the meeting to order at 6:21 p.m. Council present: Steve Peterson, Charlene Butz, David Jenison, Diana Willits and Betty Glover. Staff present included City Administrator Marketa George Oliver, Police Chief Dennis McDaniel, Public Works Director Jason VanAusdall, Community Services Director Josh Heggen, Chief Financial Officer Carrie Kruse and Fire Chief Christopher Cross.

Item 2: Approval of the agenda - Roll Call 233

Peterson moved Willits seconded approval of the agenda with the addition item 6, which Oliver distributed to the council. Voice vote passed unanimously.

Item 3: Discussion regarding precinct options.

Jon Chiodo, from the Polk County Election Office, said the code says if you are under 3,500 in population, you can consolidate voting areas. Windsor Heights can go to two precincts. Each precinct is a cost factor to voters, \$2,000 per election. Staffing is the biggest cost that the city has. The other cost is a phone line and printing of ballots. By combining to two, the precincts would be separated by school district. Voters would then be going to same location regardless of election. Half of voters in the Des Moines district and half in West Des Moines in district. He said the city now has a nice facility that can hold 2 precincts, which further reduces the cost by one phone line and then the county does not have to pay for a church location either. The city could have three poll workers and one chair to oversee the election. This would be convenient for voters. Willits asked Chiodo if the city combined and broke into precincts with Des Moines and West Des Moines and our population goes up, could it be changed back. Chiodo said the only time you could change that is at the census year. He said they would like to keep the voter going to the same place for every election. Windsor Heights could have three precincts and have two locations.

Peterson said Sunday night at the ice cream social he posed the question of two precincts. All 17 people at the event thought it was a great idea and should be done right away. Chiodo asked if the County did two precincts at the renovated facility if anyone has complained about driving to that facility. Willits said they are already coming to city hall, so the Community and Events Center is not that much further. Glover said we should focus on making it easier for voters and suggested making Sherwood Forest a voting area. She said we already have a low voter turnout so if it were easier, maybe that would help. Chiodo said that voter turnout in Windsor Heights is quite high. The percentage is 75-80% turnout for a general election, but city elections are lower. Willits said the break along school district lines is helpful. Heggen said from answering the phones on election day, there is a lot of confusion as to where people vote. One location is a lot easier than looking up their address. Sullivan asked how much the city would save. Chiodo said \$2,000 per election.

Item 4: Public Hearing regarding an ordinance amending the Municipal Code of Ordinances of the City of Windsor Heights, Iowa, by amending Chapter 3 to change the boundaries of election precincts.

Sullivan opened the public hearing at 6:35 p.m. Oliver noted she had not received any written comments but had heard from Kerry Bowen regarding her opposition to fewer precincts when running into her at the State Fair. Kerry Bowen, 7215 Reite Avenue, said she is concerned as a precinct worker. Her party has been stuck in the cafeteria at Clive School and they have nearly grown out of the space. If the city goes to two precincts, she is worried there would not be a large enough space in the city for a caucus. She said the community center would be good for one precinct, but does not think there is a place for the other caucus precincts. She is worried it would disenfranchise people from participating. John Chiodo, from the Polk County Auditor's Office, said caucuses are handled differently and handled by the political parties, who decide caucus locations. The caucuses have people there all at the same time and when you vote, you do not have the people there at the same time. Butz said that does not really address Bowen's concern. Bowen said if we change to two precincts, there is no other place to put the other precinct during the caucuses. Chiodo said relating a caucus to precincts is not a good way of looking at the issue. Bowen said what you are doing will affect the caucuses. Peterson said we do not want to just save money; we want to split it by school districts and make it at a convenient place to vote that is handicapped accessible, like the community center. Chiodo said the parties find their own caucus locations. He understands that this year will be a big caucus for the Republican Party. Butz said the place for large caucuses does not exist. Peterson said they do exist, like the Community Center, Cowles School, Walnut Creek Community Church, and Clive Elementary School.

Allen Sydnes, 2012 66th Street said he likes the sounds of the two precincts. He asked if the public was aware of this as a possibility. Oliver explained that the Council discussed it in June and had decided to stay with three precincts, but wanted to pursue a change to two voting locations, however a change to two voting locations would have meant different locations for different elections and the Council thought that would be confusing to voters. The city had then been approached by the County with the idea of two precincts in one voting location, to streamline costs and minimize confusion. Sydnes said the process seems too rushed. Agey said the way the reprecincting process works is that the numbers are presented to the states and county level. This is the time that counties are allowed to reprecinct the entire county. Butz asked if this has any other impacts on the city other than changing polling places. Agey does not know of any other consequences. Sydnes asked Agey when he sent the information to Windsor Heights. Agey said a week or two ago. Peterson said caucuses are separate events and should not be taken into account. Butz said we know that churches are willing to host that sort of thing. Dave Burgess, 7136 Wilshire, said all this does is change the districts; the voting locations are yet to be determined. He has heard that people are confused where to go and this would solve it. Sandy Sydnes said last year they worked as poll watchers and there was confusion when people vote at one place for one election and a different place for different election. Sullivan closed public hearing at 6:50 p.m.

Item 5: Consideration Ordinance 11-12: An ordinance amending the Municipal Code of Ordinances of the City of Windsor Heights, Iowa, by amending Chapter 3 to change the boundaries of election precincts. Roll Call 234

Peterson moved to change to two precincts, Willits seconded. The motion failed with Peterson and Willits voting yes and Glover, Butz and Jenison voting no.

Item 6: Consideration of a memorandum of agreement between Polk County and Windsor Heights for the inclusion of census unincorporated areas in Walnut Creek Township in the Windsor Heights voting precincts. Roll Call 235

Chiodo noted this is a census error and they are dealing with this around the county. That is why this resolution is needed. He said the agreement is necessary in order to file with the Secretary of State to show that the voters in the “township” are covered by the agreement. Oliver noted that the city will petition the census to have the people counted in the City of Windsor Heights census. The city will also work towards getting this area resolved for the next census to prevent the Census Bureau from making a recurring error. Willits moved Jenison seconded approval. Roll Call vote passed unanimously.

Item 13: Adjournment - Roll Call 236.

Butz moved Glover seconded to adjourn at 7:05 p.m. to September 6th, 2011 for the regularly scheduled meeting of the City Council. Voice vote passed unanimously.

Jerry Sullivan, Mayor

ATTEST:

Marketa George Oliver, City Administrator/Clerk