

City of Medical Lake
Special Council Meeting
S. 124 Lefevre Street, 6:30 PM
May 26, 2009

Mayor Higgins called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

Council present: A. J. Burton John Paikuli Brenda Redell
 Art Kulibert Jeff King

Council Absent: Shirley Maike and Howard Jorgenson

Motion by Councilmember King, seconded by Redell, to excuse Councilmembers Maike and Jorgenson from this meeting. Council polled; all ayes.

Staff present: Doug Ross Pam McBroom Jacob Keith
 Nathan Bohanek Jennifer Willoughby

Others present: Free Press Reporter Cara Lorella, Spokesman Review Reporter Lisa
 Leinberger, two KXLY news reporters, Mr. & Mrs. Staples, Mikel Suniga,
 and 2 visitors.

INTERESTED CITIZENS: AUDIENCE COMMENTS:

Sandy Staples, 415 N. Legg Street: Her question to the Mayor was pertaining to the Resignation Agreement with Joe Mehrens. Given past history of misbehavior by Mehrens, why wasn't he fired instead of letting him resign? Administrator Ross stated that he will address that in his report.

SCHEDULED ITEM:

Resignation Agreement; Sergeant Joseph Mehrens

Administrator Ross explained the Resignation Agreement terms to council and public. After several hours of negotiations with Mehrens, his AFL-CIO union representative, City Attorney McMullen, WCIA Attorney Bolisino, Mayor Higgins and Administrator Ross – Mehrens agreed to the terms of this agreement which is before council for approval at this time. This resignation is effective May 29, 2009. The City has agreed to pay Mehrens the lump sum of \$20,000. A significant portion (at least \$13,000) of this severance is equivalent to what the city would have been paying for Mehrens sick leave buyout and unused vacation and comp time. The payoff balance is not a reward for bad behavior, but a method to insure that there will be no further legal fees incurred due to grievances being filed, arbitration or litigation that could cause this issue to remain unresolved for an undetermined amount of time. Litigation could potentially cost the city thousands of dollars and therefore it is in the city's best interest to approve this resignation agreement. There was council and staff discussion. The following questions were addressed.

- Councilmember Redell – was there potential litigation? Yes
- Councilmember Paikuli – what did Mehrens plead to in court? 4th degree assault
- Councilmember Redell – by entering into this agreement, has arbitration been prevented?
Yes

Councilmember King stated that he is opposed to any large payoffs but feels it is in the best interest of the city to approve this agreement.

He then made a motion, seconded by Councilmember Paikuli to approve the Resignation Agreement with Joseph Mehrens and the Washington State Council of County and City Employees AFSCME AFL-CIO.

Sandy Staples then addressed council with a final statement. She stated that she feels this situation is outrageous. It is a moral issue and she feels that accepting this agreement instead of firing Mehrens will make it possible for him to get a job as a police officer with some other city.

Councilmember Paikuli responded by saying that the city is doing all it can to abide by attorney recommendations and that whatever information can legally be released to potential employers of Mehrens will be done.

After discussion, the question was called. Council was asked to cast their vote. Council polled; all yeas.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Higgins adjourned the meeting at 5:15 p.m.

Mayor Higgins

City Clerk / Finance Director