

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Guinn called the special meeting of the Bethel City Council to order at 6.05 pm.

ROLL CALL

Present: Buttane, Guinn, Hoffman, Sullivan,  
Twitchell, Veit  
Absent: Binkley (business travel)

NEW BUSINESS

RELATIONSHIP DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE - BETHEL  
POLICE DEPARTMENT

Councilmember Buttane abstained from the discussion and any vote on the matter for reason of conflict of interest (probation officer - Council concurred in the abstention)

Mayor Guinn reviewed the background to the problem existing between the DA's office and the Bethel Police Department.

Police Chief Varnell requested the opportunity to address Council in executive session because of matters related to active investigations and potential legal matters.

motion

M/M by Sullivan, 2nd by Hoffman to go into executive session as requested by Chief Varnell. Councilmembers Sullivan and Veit expressed the concern that the executive session be limited to discussion of active investigations and potential legal matters. Voice vote, motion carried. Councilmember Buttane abstained on the vote and did not participate in the executive session. Executive session from 6.12 - 6.30 pm.

Councilmember Veit made the following recommendations:

1. Police Chief report to Council at each Council meeting (for an unspecified amount of time)
2. increase in funding for police training
3. progress reports from DA's office and Police Department on implementation of reforms
4. assistance from DA's office in training members of the Bethel Police Department
5. DA's office to inform Council of problems with the Police Department when the problem occurs
6. implementation of the Grand Jury report on the Bethel Police Department in its entirety

Mayor Guinn concurred with Councilmember Veit's comments and recommended that a permanent DA be stationed at Bethel.

NEW BUSINESS CONT

Councilmember Sullivan concurred with Mr. Veit's recommendations and added that there was need for immediate action to resolve the dispute. Mr. Sullivan stressed the need for continuing reports from both the Police Department and the Department of Law concerning the performance of the Police Department. Mr. Sullivan expressed his concern that the problem be resolved as soon as possible so that the City may avoid any potential liability resulting from the performance of the Police Department.

City Manager Hoffman spoke in support of the Chief of Police noting the improvement in the operations of the Bethel Police Department during the tenure of Chief Varnell. Mr. Hoffman stressed the need for a permanent DA for Bethel and a commitment from the DA's office to work with the Bethel Police Department.

Police Chief Varnell requested direction from the Council with regard to the following matters:

1. Police follow-up work

Chief Varnell reported to Council that the DA's office is requiring the Bethel Police Department to present a transcription of taped statements and interviews on all cases before the DA's office will pre-screen the cases for possible action by the DA's office; such a procedure is not required elsewhere in the State. Chief Varnell asked for Council approval to utilize a speed recorder in copying tapes for the DA's office rather than hand transcribe interviews and statements. Councilmember Veit recommended that Chief Varnell send a memo to the DA's office stating that the Police Department will provide the DA with a taped copy of required statements and interviews in compliance with statutory requirements concerning the production of such statements and interviews.

2. immediate contact on every felony case

Chief Varnell indicated that the previous DA wanted immediate notification when a felony occurred; the present DA has indicated that notification is necessary only when a major felony occurs. Chief Varnell informed Council that he would notify as per the request of the acting DA. Chief Varnell requested that the Department of Law follow City procedures in voicing concerns about the operation of the Police Department rather than going directly to the newspaper. Councilmember Veit recommended that the Police Department follow statutory requirements concerning such reporting.

NEW BUSINESS CONT

3. steps to be taken to overcome the problem

Chief Varnell asked Council for direction as to what steps should be taken to overcome the problem.

Councilmember Sullivan recommended that the Police Department focus on training, especially in the areas of investigative techniques and report writing.

Councilmember Veit urged the Police Department to inform Council of problems before they reach the newspaper.

Police Chief Varnell recommended that Councilmembers spend some time with the Police Department to observe first hand its operation. Councilmember Sullivan expressed interest in Chief Varnell's suggestion.

Councilmember Sullilvan recommended that a formal letter be sent to the Department of Law expressing the City's concern about the problem existing between the DA's office and the Bethel Police Department; noting the City's attempts to overcome the problems; recommending that the Department of Law inform Council on a regular basis concerning the operation of the Bethel Police Department.

Councilmember Veit concurred with Mr. Sullivan and recommended that the letter request that the Department of Law through the DA's office note any weaknesses that exist within the Police Department and to assist in the training of the Police staff.

City Manager Hoffman informed Council that Administration has sent two letters to the Department of law concerning this matter but has not received a response from the Department.

Police Chief Varnell informed Council that training is scheduled for every payday; that the DA's office is welcome, and has been invited, to participate in these police training sessions.

ADJOURNMENT

M/M by Sullivan to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 7.13 pm.

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 29th DAY OF MAY, 1984.

ATTEST:

Wayne J. Majers, City Clerk

  
John Guinn, Mayor

John Binkley  
Acting Mayor