

Several matters rescheduled for later action by Austin City Councilmen

Written by Administrator

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A couple of issues facing Austin City Councilmen on December 8 were tabled and rescheduled for the Council's end-of-year meeting, which is now set for Tuesday, December 29.

The city has been seeking CDL training for a couple of its employees in its Street and Sanitation Department. A quote of \$3,200 was received in November but was taken under advisement.

When employees have their CDLs, they are more valuable to the city because they are allowed to drive the larger trucks. They also increase their own take-home pay. Noted Councilman Richie Buchanan, "I like the scaled pay on (this) certification. That gives them an incentive to get their CDL. At the same time, they need a good opportunity to pass the test."

Speaking of pay, Mayor Doug Campbell asked the Council, "What if they go through the training we provide and still don't get their CDL? Are there any repercussions?" No, the Council determined, except that, of course, the employee doesn't get the increase in pay such a certification would provide.

In a lot of cities, the Mayor went on, CDLs are not required of employees. "But I felt we had the need for more CDL-certified employees because we do share duties with other departments at times. With the limited number of employees we have, having a CDL just makes sense," he said.

"I'm all for it. Any time you invest training in your employees, you get better employees," Buchanan stated.

The Mayor then asked the Council: "Do we make this mandatory?"

Councilmen Chris Fugate and Lonnie Noble both responded with a question of their own: "Do they want to take (the training)?" Noble added, "Ask them. We don't want to waste \$3,200, but if you sit in the seat, you should be willing to take the training."

Campbell said training would be conducted after work hours. He said he would check to determine how many employees want the training and report back at the end-of-the-year meeting.

Another issue that has been discussed several times by the Council was the topic of business licenses. Issuing a business license does not make a business legal. Its purpose would be to notify city officials that a business is establishing itself in Austin.

In past conversations on the subject, each Councilman agreed that, if such licenses were established, they would be low in cost. However, through his research, Mayor Campbell discovered that apparently no city or town in Indiana requires a business license. Greencastle has a registration fee businesses pay. That system activates if a business changes, he explained. If the building use changes, the building inspector is sent to determine if the building can safely house the new business.

The city recently lost a business on its Main Street, Dynamite Video. There was some concern over what sort of business could go into the building, but it was learned that a new video rental will use the structure. "But if it had been a restaurant or (scheduled for) a residential use, there would have been some question if the building would have been adequate." the Mayor related.

At that point, city attorney Raleigh Campbell asked the Mayor, "So, you're just wanting to make sure buildings are up to code as a safety issue?" Yes, the Mayor responded, saying, "It's nothing to do with zoning." Fugate stated, "I really think we need to have something in place."

The attorney then told the Council and the Mayor that he wanted some time to consider the issue because he needed to determine the city's liability. Buchanan liked that idea, telling him, "You set the standards, and then we can see if the building meets those standards."

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Added Mayor Campbell, "We don't want to make it any harder for businesses to come here, but we do want to know what is coming in."

Attorney Campbell said he would create a form for the Council to consider at the end-of-the-year meeting.

That final session may be delayed until Thursday morning, December 31, to allow the Clerk-Treasurer's Office adequate time to have all claims processed and ready for the Council's consideration.