

**Aberdeen Council Work Session
June 8, 2009**

Present: Mayor Bennett, Council President Hiob, Councilman Kupferman,
and Councilwoman Young

Absent: Councilwoman Elliott

Also Present: Douglas Miller, City Manager
Phyllis Grover, Director Planning and Community Development
Matthew Lapinsky, Director of Public Works
Captain Henry Trabert, Aberdeen Police Department
Opiribo Jack, Director of Finance
Monica Correll, City Clerk

The work session was called to order by Mayor Bennett in Council Chambers at 4:30 p.m.

1. Byrne Grant

Captain Trabert presented information on the Byrne Grant to the Council for review. This Grant will be in the amount of \$14,871.00 for the intention of purchasing the Recon Scout Mobile Tactical Reconnaissance Robot. This is a remote control camera operable in the dark.

Councilwoman Young asked if there was similar equipment used at Aberdeen Proving Ground. Captain Trabert responded that probably the equipment is similar, but due to federal law, they are not allowed to use any of it. The APD is always available to any allied agencies: federal, state or local.

2. Budget Amendment Review

Mr. Miller stated that Budget Amendments will be presented at the next Council Meeting. Anyone with questions should see either Mr. Jack or him.

3. Property Maintenance Code

Mr. Miller explained that there have been several versions of the Property Maintenance Code. The first one was based on the International Building Code (IBC) as the template. There have been concerns about right of entry into dwellings or places of business. The objectionable sections have been edited.

Ms. Grover cataloged what was changed and what the ordinance is intended to do. She explained that it was reviewed last Fall and there was a Public Hearing. Any reference to looking at the interior portion of dwelling for violations has been deleted. The International Property Maintenance Code (IPMC) and what is current in the Code of the City of Aberdeen (Chapter 63) was used. They implemented the best of both to tighten up the document and focused on the exterior of the dwelling. She also explained what is in the environmental control and livability code.

Mayor Bennett that he really does not like the lack of appeals process. He inquired whether the Appeals Board could assume this quasi-legal responsibility so the citizens can go before a group of their peers rather than going directly to Circuit Court. Ms. Grover said she spoke to the Director of Planning for Harford County to see how they handle the appeals process. They have about three cases per year and it works well. Ms. Grover feels we can handle our violations. She will draft a section for a means of appeals and bring it back before the Council.

Council President asked if Harford County Board of Appeals could do this instead of our Board. Ms. Grover did not know how this type of process would operate if we took it outside our government, but she would investigate. Mr. Miller pointed out that many citizens prefer home rule. Mayor Bennett mentioned that we have an active appeals board used to looking at these types of issues. He disfavors doing this outside when we have the ability to do it ourselves. Ms. Grover will present this to the Aberdeen Board of Appeals.

Discussion covered changes to be made to the notices and orders portion, enforcement issues (posting, certified mail), job requirements, habitable property, bundling policy, court ordered demolitions, vegetation policy (grass mowing), fines and reimbursement issues, exterior property areas, firewood and kindling, exterior structure, collection frequency, compliance time, roadways, paved streets, sidewalks, screens, noise, and various forms of garbage. There was also discussion on various grammatical changes, adding definitions, redundancies, violations, and penalties.

Mr. Miller said the Staff would work on the changes and word-smithing and come back with the update in July with introduction in late July or early August.

4. Other Matters

a) Ballot Question

Mr. Miller said that he was asked whether the 4-year term question could be placed on the ballot to change the Charter (if voted in). The answer is no. It could be placed on the ballot as a non-binding question. There are only two ways to amend the Charter: 1) by the governing body taking legislative action or, 2) the citizens by referendum.

b) Harford Habitat for Humanity and Connection Fees

Mr. Miller reported that traditionally, the City of Aberdeen has waived the connection fees for building permits for Habitat for Humanity. In order to do this properly, the City should put aside money in the General Fund as a grant when these projects are planned. When Habitat for Humanity applies for a building permit, it can be transferred at that time from the General Fund to the Enterprise Fund for the connection fees. This would be the best way since it cannot be handled administratively. It is still uncertain that the Council can do this by majority vote of the Body. To avoid any misuse of funds, the funds should be designated.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:50 p.m.