

**POLSON CITY COUNCIL AND
RURAL FIRE BOARD WORK SESSION AGENDA
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2008, 6:00 P.M.**

ATTENDANCE: Council Present: Jim Sohm, Tom Jones, Mike Lies, Elsa Duford, Fred Funke. Bruce Agrella absent. Mayor Lou Marchello presiding. City Attorney James Raymond present.

Meeting brought to order at 6:00 p.m.

POLSON CITY/RURAL FIRE INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT: James Manley, Rural Fire Board member, noted that the Rural Fire Board members are present along with Attorney Bob Long who they requested, because of his prior experience as County Attorney, to interpret the laws regarding the rural fire board. In light of some problems they are having they reviewed the interlocal agreement with the city and would like to make some changes. They met with City Attorney James Raymond and City Manager Jay Henry to discuss their problems but they did not agree with recommending the changes they proposed and are giving notice that they would like to make revisions prior to July 1. **James Raymond** replied that as Fire Chief, John Fairchild wears three separate hats but he is a full time City employee and bound by the City's personnel policy. To resolve any rural fire related issues he suggested including a rural fire board representative as part of the grievance committee. **Jim Manley** stated that they realize the value and benefit of having an Interlocal Agreement both to the firemen's retirement and the availability of more equipment to both rural and city fire departments. The problem areas that they are working on resolving have to do with complying with state statute relating to a rural fire board. This year the Big Arm Fire Company filed their report to the state separate from the city fire. Some issues came up when Finley Point recently asked to join the rural fire board. The Rural Fire Board feel they should have authority over the fire chief and expect that what they decide as a board will be implemented. They recognize they have problems and don't feel they have authority over the fire chief. Therefore They are concerned about renewing the Interlocal Agreement which says that the Rural Fire Board and the City Fire cooperate and that the fire chief is hired by the City with some input from the Rural Fire Board. There are conflicting interpretations of the statutes on some issues, by County Attorney Bob Long who they have contacted and two other attorneys that Fire Chief John Fairchild contacted. The Rural Fire Board has considered hiring a new fire chief which the City Attorney and City Manager do not find acceptable. They are in a quandary because splitting up the rural fire from the city fire is not in their best interest. **City Manager Jay Henry** stated that he could not support the Rural Fire Board having authority over a City department head and in that case a separation of city and rural fire would be the only solution. **Fred Nelson** asked Council to consider a change to the interlocal agreement to state that the Rural Fire Board may appoint the City fire chief and replace shall appoint. Alison Meslin asked that the Rural Fire Board have the option to keep the fire chief and also have a mechanism to require him to follow through with policy that the Rural Fire Board decides. Councilman Jones suggested that representative from both sides meet and prepare a revised interlocal agreement for Council approval. Mayor Marchello asked for volunteers to represent the City and Rural Fire Board. The committee members for the City are Councilman Lies, Councilman Funke and Councilman Sohm, City Attorney James Raymond and

City Manager Jay Henry. The Rural Fire Board committee members are, Fred Nelson, Alison Meslin, Jim Manley and Attorney Bob Long. The meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 20 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers. Mayor Marchello asked that the Rural Fire Board provide the City Council with a copy of their proposed revisions to the Interlocal Agreement.

Mayor Marchello thanked Rory Horning for pointing out that the agenda for work sessions should include a public comment period.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Rory Horning suggested that they would solve the problems and be able to come to an understanding if all the parties would keep in mind that their goal is to serve the community, their constituents and keep their neighbors' best interest in the forefront, they would have no conflict.

Meeting adjourned at 6:52 p.m.

Lou Marchello, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Aggi G. Loeser, City Clerk