



MAYOR & COUNCIL COMMUNICATION

DATE: March 4, 2014

REGULAR

ITEM # 6

AGENDA ITEM: Resolution Supporting Publication Alternatives for Local Governments

SUBMITTED BY: Adam Bell, City Clerk/Assistant City Administrator

THROUGH: Dean Zuleger, City Administrator

REVIEWED BY: Beckie Gumatz, Deputy Clerk

SUGGESTED ORDER OF BUSINESS:

- Introduction of Item City Administrator
- Report/Presentation.....City Administrator
- Questions from Council to Staff Mayor Facilitates
- Call for Motion Mayor & City Council
- Discussion Mayor & City Council
- Action on Motion Mayor Facilitates

POLICY RECOMMENDER: Staff and the League of MN Cities

FISCAL IMPACT: projected cost savings for 2013 would have been \$6,500+. 2013 budget was \$2,400. 2014 budget was \$4,200. It is extremely difficult to project.

SUMMARY AND ACTION REQUESTED:

City Council is respectfully requested to adopt Resolution 2014-14, supporting SF1152/HF1286, which would allow political subdivisions to post proceedings, official notices, and summaries on the political subdivision's Web site. The recommended motion for this action is as follows:

“Move to approve Resolution 2014-14, a resolution supporting legislation allowing cities to designate their city website to publish public notices.”

LEGISLATIVE HISTORY:

Minnesota state law currently requires cities to publish certain types of information in one “qualified newspaper” designated by the city. These items are referred to as “official notices,” “legal notices” and “public notices” in state statute. While the requirements vary based on a city's population, most cities must publish: meeting minutes; new ordinances; advertisements for

bids; various financial reports; meeting and hearing notices; and notices of elections and sample ballots.

In the Minnesota State Legislature this year, a bipartisan bill has been introduced in both the House and the Senate. This bill would allow cities to determine whether web publication should replace or supplement newspaper publications of public notices. The proposed resolution would support SF 1152/HF 1286. The legislation does not change the requirements of what is published or when it is published – it only changes where it can be published. Residents would be able to request paper copies of official notices be mailed to their residence if they wish.

The League of Minnesota Cities is supportive of this bill and is requesting that cities pass resolutions of support as well. The Washington County Board has also passed a resolution in support.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (SWOT):

Strengths Publishing public notices online instead of in the newspaper would be more cost efficient. It would have saved the City \$6,500 in 2013. Budgeting for public notice publishing is near impossible. It would be comparable to budgeting for winter maintenance; it is extremely hard to predict how much it will snow. Much the same way, it is very difficult to predict how much publishing will be necessary for the coming year.

Publishing public notices online would also shorten wait times for residents by providing instant, updated and timely information. Some newspapers only publish once or twice a week, so residents need to wait in order to get information about what is going on in their city. It will be much easier to schedule public hearings and comply with notice deadlines.

Weaknesses Notices will no longer be published in the newspaper. People who only read notices in the newspaper will have to go elsewhere to obtain information. They have the option of requesting that the city mail all public notices to their residence, which would still be cheaper.

Opportunities Online publication could reach more residents. Newspapers may be seen as outdated and no longer how residents access information.

Threats Not everyone has access to the internet, but as noted, they can receive personal notices.

RECOMMENDATION:

City Council is respectfully requested to adopt Resolution 2014-14, supporting SF1152/HF1286, which would allow political subdivisions to post proceedings, official notices, and summaries on the political subdivision's Web site. The recommended motion for this action is as follows:

“Move to approve Resolution 2014-14, a resolution supporting legislation allowing cities to designate their city website to publish public notices.”

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution No. 2014-14