

MINUTES OF A TRUTH IN TAXATION MEETING OF THE
INDEPENDENCE CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, DECEMBER 1, 2008 – 6:30 P.M.

PRESENT: Mayor Johnson, Council Members Betts, Gyllenblad, Wallace and Wenck
STAFF: Administrator Hirsch
VISITORS: Wyman Haberer, Perry Haberer, Tom Stevens, Bob Frank, Penny Bailey, Leo Poole,
Lynda Franklin

1. CALL TO ORDER.

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the Independence City Council was called to order by Mayor Johnson at 6:30 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE.

Mayor Johnson led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Truth in Taxation Budget Hearing.

Johnson asked those in attendance if they were attending the meeting to discuss their own property tax statements or to discuss the general City budget. He noted that those who wanted to discuss their own property tax statement would need to contact the Hennepin County Assessor. Johnson stated that by law, the City was not required to hold a Truth In Taxation meeting, but decided to do so.

Wyman Haberer, business owner and resident, stated that he would like the City budget to be cut 10 percent. He stated that his commercial property valuation increased 37 percent.

Tom Stevens, business owner and resident, stated that the he has an issue with his valuation because it's based on the idea that his land would easily be developed; however, it is not, due to poor access on Highway 12. He added that his property and many of the adjacent properties have poorly drained land that has too high of a value.

Johnson stated the County told the City that the commercial/industrial/agriculture share of the overall tax dollar went up considerably. Because of the value of comparable agricultural properties in western Minnesota, our agricultural property values have increased.

Stevens expressed a concern about the valuation of his home.

Johnson responded that concerns about property valuations are discussed at the Board of Review meeting that will be held next spring.

Bob Frank, resident, stated that his taxes increased 22.2 percent and he has not done any substantial improvements. Johnson told Franken to look at the valuation of his agricultural property, as those values increased.

Penny Bailey, resident, stated that she is concerned about her property value. She stated that because she lives on Lake Robina, her property is being taxed as lakeshore. However, she noted that the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources classifies Lake Robina as wetland, not lakeshore. Bailey stated that she brought that information to the Assessor's attention about a month ago.

Johnson stated that the Council was not required to hold a Truth In Taxation meeting because the initial levy limit was set for a 2.2 percent decrease. He noted that the Council decided to hold the meeting anyway.

Hirsch asked Bailey if the Assessor had mentioned anything about notifying other property owners on Lake Robina about the DNR classification. Bailey responded that she made photocopies of the DNR classification and gave them to neighboring property owners.

Johnson notified the audience members of the dates for the school districts' Truth In Taxation Hearing. He also recommended that residents attend the Hennepin County Truth In Taxation Hearing that will be held at 5:30 p.m. on Dec. 4. He noted that the County levy increased 7 percent.

Gyllenblad stated that the Hennepin County Commissioners gave themselves a 7 percent pay increase. He added that he spoke to Commissioner Penny Steele about his concerns.

Lynda Franklin, resident stated that she wasn't sure if her agricultural property values had increased.

Johnson noted that the Legislature changed the Green Acres law during its last session. He added that the City doesn't have decision-making authority on that issue. He stated that the Legislature will be discussing the issue again early in 2009.

Leo Poole, resident, expressed concerns about the wording of the Green Acres legislation.

Johnson noted that recent changes in the Green Acres program have meant that wetlands cannot be included in the program. He added that the payback was changed from 3 years to 7 years. Johnson noted that the change was made during a Legislative committee meeting, not during a regular session.

Wallace added that the people who made the decision to change the Green Acres program do not live in the areas most affected by the change.

4. ADJOURN.

Motion by Wenck, second by Wallace, to adjourn the Truth In Taxation meeting at 6:55 p.m. All present voted aye. MOTION DECLARED CARRIED.

Respectfully submitted by Christina Scipioni,
Recording Secretary