

MINUTES
BRAHAM CITY COUNCIL
Special Meeting
Monday May 10, 2021
6:00 P.M.

Mayor Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. Members present Ryan Davis, Seth Zeltinger, and Robert Knowles.

Absent: Vicky Ethen

Also Present: City Administrator Angela Grafstrom; Officer Kevin Lease; City Attorney Shana Conklin; Val Anderson, Stanchfield Township Clerk; John Stockman Stanchfield Township Board Chair; Don Fix, Stanchfield Township Supervisor; Craig Sundemeyer, Stanchfield Township Resident; Jim Lee, Stanchfield Township Supervisor; Kevin Hanson, resident City plans to annex from Stanchfield Township; Craig Hasser, resident City plans to annex from Stanchfield Township; and Bill Becklin, Stanchfield Township resident.

60/40 Annexations

Stanchfield Township asked why residents were not notified of the annexation. Council explained only one notice has been sent so far to Stanchfield as the rest are still being researched.

Attorney Conklin opened the conversation explaining the different types of annexations and the way notices are given out for each type. She explained a 60/40 annexation requires notification to the township. She explained it was her understanding tonight's meeting was to host a listening session with the township board so they could address their questions and concerns. Stanchfield Board Chair asked if the 60/40 was an individual parcel or a group of parcels. Conklin responded it can be a group. Val Anderson said their attorney said it had to be an individual parcel. Conklin directed her, or the township attorney, to speak with Star Holman at the Municipal Boundary and Adjustment Unit. Conklin added that previous 60/40 annexations have been approved by area, not individual parcel IDs. She added that Holman is not an administrative law judge but can give them good preliminary information.

Craig Sundemeyer asked if anyone asked to be in the City of Braham, or why did this start? Conklin stated it was initiated by the City. The analysis was done by the City's engineer and checked by the Municipal Boundary and Adjustment Unit.

Shockman stated Hanson does not want to be annexed, this is a forced annexation. He said this is a small town and he is disappointed the City would sneak up and do this. Stanchfield provides fire service and a lower tax rate. He said, "Let's stay neighbors." Stanchfield members stated the last 5 properties annexed did not want to be.

Mayor Carlson stated she wanted to clarify that the annexation process did not start with Administrator Grafstrom. Sally Hoy, the former administrator had talked about annexation but thought the City should wait until after the 2020 census was completed. Carlson went on to say, Grafstrom asked when she started why the borders are so choppy. Carlson stated there are

certain ways to annex certain properties and they held this meeting to let both sides listen to the other and provide information. Carlson stated only 2 properties had an issue with the last annexation, the other 3 had no issue. Councilor Knowles added the first 5 properties the City annexed were surrounded by the city, they literally were "in" the city.

Kevin Hanson had concerns about no letters sent to the property owners. Greg Hasser asked Conklin why no letters. Attorney Conklin said ultimately it is not about me and we follow the state laws and rules. Stanchfield township members expressed frustration about the laws and again members reiterated, "we are neighbors" and the City should show more courtesy for their neighbors. City of Braham reiterated only one letter of intent has been sent to the Township so far. Conklin asked if Stanchfield had any other concerns about the properties to help guide the City moving forward.

Kevin Hanson, labeled Annexation #2 would like the council to reconsider the annexation as he sees the added taxes as more overhead with no gain. He understands if council deems it necessary. Stanchfield members do not see the value of annexation when they feel the City will be providing nothing to the new residents, not even water and sewer. At this point, Mayor Carlson copied the handouts provided by Grafstrom for the group including the list of properties with City water and sewer and the sheet of "Pros and Cons" of annexation which lists the only con for homeowners as higher taxes. It also lists 6 "pros" for individuals including the potential for lower insurance costs because of police and fire coverage, they gain a voice in City government, they can receive more city services including, but not limited to city garbage rates, curbside composting, access to the City compost site, street sweeping, and more direct mosquito spraying. Additionally, their property tax dollars would stay in their community, the City of Braham, to help improve, grow and beautify the City they live in. Some of the "pros" listed for the City include political boundaries which better reflect the existing sociological, economic, cultural, and physical boundaries of the City, more residents with a voice in the City government, increased tax base, and the fact that the properties are literally surrounded by the City and benefitting from service they should help pay for.

Shockman stated the township is opposed because Hanson is opposed, and they must look out for their residents. The township does not understand how the city can consider 5- and 8-acre parcels as urban in nature. Council stated, they are considered urban as they are surrounded by the City and could be subdivided later. Council stated they are not planning to force people to get City water and sewer, but 5 of these 11 properties already have it, and, if anyone wants it, it is available. Houses on East Central Drive do not have City water and sewer and they have been part of the city for many years.

After reviewing the handout of pros and cons Val Anderson added that township residents set their own levy, unlike a city which uses an elected board. She asked if the city would take over plowing of Ural Street. Grafstrom replied that if it is annexed, the city would have to take over the plowing. Anderson added that the Hearing board of the Border and Adjustment Unit always favors the city, and the township does not want to pay the fees for a hearing. The township's attorney advised them not to proceed with a hearing because if they lose, they could also end up having to pay the attorney's fees for the City as well.

After Stanchfield members left, the council discussed the annexations further. Council intends to proceed. Some councilors expressed maybe not annexing Hanson, but the fear is that it would open up discussion from other parcels and how would they differentiate, so they intend to proceed with all the annexations. At some point Hanson could also subdivide his property. Property owners can hook into City water and sewer if they want but will not be forced to. If they do, it will be at their own expense. Council sees many benefits to being part of the City beyond the water and sewer issue. Council also feels these parties benefit directly from being in the city and their tax dollars should be going to help maintain the City's roads, parks, police, fire dept, mosquito spraying, compost site, city garbage rates, etc. that they are directly benefitting from by being essentially in the City. Other City residents pay for these things and they should pay their fair share as well as they live within the limits of the City.

Adjourn

There being no further business of the Braham City Council, ***Councilor Knowles moved to adjourn the special council meeting of May 10, 2021.*** Motion seconded by Councilor Zeltinger and carried unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 6:40 pm. The next regular meeting of the City Council will be held on June 1, 2021 at 6 pm, with a Special Meeting on May 18 at 5pm to work on the City's Capital Financial Plan with Jason Murray of David Drown Associates.