

**CITY OF STEVENS POINT
SPECIAL COMMON COUNCIL MEETING**

**City Conference Room
1515 Strongs Avenue**

**January 4, 2019
4:15 P.M.**

Mayor Mike Wiza, Presiding

PRESENT: Ald. Jennings, Shorr, Nebel, Johnson, Slowinski, Kneebone, Dugan, McComb, Phillips.

EXCUSED: Ald. Oberstadt.

ABSENT: Ald. Morrow.

OTHERS

PRESENT: Clerk Piotrowski, Attorney Beveridge, C/T Ladick, Joe Bachman – Portage County Gazette, Brandi Makuski – Metro Wire, Alan Hovorka – Stevens Point Journal.

2. Consideration and possible action on Resolution Directing a Spring Primary Election for the Office of Alderperson in District 9, there are three (3) or more qualified candidates.

Mayor Wiza said there is not an ordinance or state statute in regards to holding a primary when there are three qualified candidates.

Ald. McComb said she is abstaining from the vote due to being the Alderperson in the 9th District.

Ald. Johnson asked a clarifying question due to the School District having a primary.

Clerk Piotrowski said School District is having a primary election because there are seven candidates.

Mayor Wiza read a letter from Candidate Brian Beaulieu saying he was unable to attend the meeting due to work constraints.

Ald. McComb asked how much the City will save if there will not be a primary.

Clerk Piotrowski said if the City were to have a primary on their own it would cost around \$1200 - \$1500 per district. He said any District that does not have a primary the School District will reimburse the City for the entire cost of the primary and said the City and the School District will split the cost if there is a primary in the 9th District.

Mayor Wiza said the City would spend between \$600 - \$750 to have a primary for District 9. He asked Clerk Piotrowski what a typical turnout is for a primary election.

Clerk Piotrowski said a really good turnout would be 150 people.

Ald. Phillips **moved**, Ald. Nebel seconded, to hold a primary for the 9th District.

Ald. Dugan said having a primary is a lot of work because it is like running in two separate campaigns.

Mayor Wiza said Council should not be looking at it from a candidate's perspective.

Ald. Slowinski said it is only fair to the constituents of District 9 to have the next person that represents them to be voted in by a majority vote rather than a split vote.

Ald. Johnson asked about the election in 2011 for Mayor with three candidates and no primary.

Clerk Piotrowski said the City holds a primary when there are four candidates and said when there are three candidates it is up to Council. He said the outcome has gone both ways.

Ald. Kneebone asked if there was a minimum vote count if there was not a primary.

Clerk Piotrowski replied no.

Ald. Jennings said the discussion is being rushed. She said it is true that it is not done on the perspective of the candidate and said the motion can be tactical. Ald. Jennings said Ald. McComb has not said much about this and asked for her to talk more.

Ald. McComb said having a primary would put all three candidates in a yank.

Ald. Shorr said it comes down to a very compressed campaign.

Ald. Johnson asked Mayor Wiza if he was on Council in 2011 and asked if he remembers the rationale behind not having a primary.

Mayor Wiza replied yes.

Ald. Johnson asked if he could elaborate.

Mayor Wiza said Council voted on it because there were three people running and said it was a tie vote and Mayor Halverson did not break the tie.

Attorney Beveridge said in 2011 there was a three way race in the first district and said there was not a primary election.

Ald. Nebel asked if Council could ask Ald. McComb what she prefers.

Ald. McComb said she is not going to answer that question.

Attorney Beveridge said for future reference Council can create a Charter Ordinance to have a standing rule for when primaries should happen.

Ald. Jennings said there is still a cost for the election and in staff time. She said anytime Council can save on staff time they should.

Ald. Nebel asked if she could withdraw her second.

Mayor Wiza replied yes.

Ald. Slowinski said all three candidates are going to be in the same position and no one is going to have an unfair advantage. He restated to be fair to the constituents in the next 9th District the Alderperson needs to be voted in by a majority vote.

Ald. Shorr said in the Municipalities magazine the withdrawal of the second is irrelevant to the status of the motion on the floor as soon as Council starts discussing it.

Attorney Beveridge said he does not believe it would affect the motion that was made. He said a second could be made by a different person.

Ald. Slowinski said he would second the motion.

Ald. Kneebone said in a primary there is no guarantee that the two leading candidates are not elected with 33 or 33% of the vote and said whether it be made at the primary or the general election.

Ald. Slowinski said with having a primary one of the candidates should get around 51% of the votes at the general election.

Ald. Nebel said she is trying to understand Ald. Slowinski's point. She said more people will be voting if there was just an April election. Ald. Nebel said you would get a higher turnout in April because people would know to get out and vote because all Districts are, not just one.

Ald. Johnson said it sounds like Ald. Nebel is saying it would be better to talk in pure numbers rather than a percentage.

Ald. Jennings said percentages ignore the numbers.

Ald. Phillips said it is unfair to the district if the person who gets voted in is not voted in by a majority. He said numbers have nothing to do with it, and it should be by majority.

Ald. Nebel said it is based on perspective. She said at a general election you would get a clearer picture on how the district feels because there are more people getting out to vote. Ald. Nebel said she thought not spending money was the way to go.

Ald. Johnson said last year Council decided to have a primary. Ald. Johnson said she is trying to reconcile the arguments with consistency.

Ald. Kneebone asked Clerk Piotrowski if the School Board primary would drive more voters to the polls for a primary.

Clerk Piotrowski said it depends on the personalities involved. He said typically the School District primaries do not draw extra attention and said if each District got 100 voters each he would be surprised.

Ald. Shorr said one of the factors last year was a question of the incumbent bowing out.

Ald. Slowinski asked what is going to be on the ballot for the general election.

Clerk Piotrowski replied: a State Supreme Court race with two candidates, District Four Court of Appeals with one candidate, School Board Race, Mayor's Race, Clerk's Race, and odd numbered District Aldermanic race.

Ald. Slowinski asked if there is going to be a big difference in what's going to pull people out to vote in April rather than February.

Clerk Piotrowski said if anything is going to drive turnout it would be the State Supreme Court race.

Ald. Jennings asked for a point of clarification in regards to a primary for the Mayoral race.

Mayor Wiza said there was not a primary in 2011, and said there was one in 2015.

Clerk Piotrowski said there was one other situation where there were three candidates for Mayor and there was not a primary.

Ald. Jennings asked how Ald. Phillips voted in the past for primaries.

Ald. Phillips said he has always voted in favor of primaries.

Ald. Slowinski said he has always voted in favor of primaries in the past because of the same reasoning.

Ald. Phillips said by not voting for a primary Council is not allowing the people in the 9th District have a majority vote for their representative on the Council. He said a 34% vote is far from the majority and he agrees with Ald. Slowinski.

Call for the Vote:	Ayes:	Johnson, Slowinski, Kneebone, Dugan, Phillips.
	Nays:	Jennings, Shorr, Nebel.
	Abstain:	McComb. Motion adopted.

3. Adjournment.

Adjourned at 4:36 p.m.