

THE STAR
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YOUTH, FAMILY COMMISSION APPROVED

Issues facing youth and families receive a great deal of attention in our society. To go one step further, however, Mayor Paul Esser proposed a Youth and Families Commission, which became a reality Tuesday evening when the city council voted in favor of an ordinance approved Monday evening by the Safety and Ordinance Committee.

Presented with a draft ordinance at Monday's meeting, the Safety and Ordinance Committee made only two changes in the language before sending the ordinance to the council. The first of the changes was the addition of the Child's Librarian from the Sun Prairie Public Library as an ex-officio member. Secondly, committee members felt there should be language specifying that committee members would be compensated at the same rate (\$10 per meeting) as the members of other citizen commissions.

Discussion

Cost is always a concern when a new proposal is made and Alderperson Dale Davis asked what the new commission would cost taxpayers. "What are we letting ourselves in for?" Davis asked.

Mayor Esser said his intent is not to form a group that will be responsible for the expenditure of money. Rather, he said he feels the commission will exist to gather information, upon which the city council can draw in the future. He said the commission would also be an advocate for special projects or concepts.

"When it comes to spending money," Esser said, "I don't see that this group is the one to spend it." In explanation, he said if any expenditures came up, it would be that the commission was recommending specific things to the council. Esser stressed that he intends the commission to be an information gathering body.

Admitting that there will be some administrative costs, including compensation for members attending meetings (\$10 per meeting), Esser said they should be minimal. "If you talking \$1000 a year, I'd be surprised. There's no hidden agenda."

Committee chairperson David Hanneman said he agrees with Esser's proposal that the school district be represented on the commission, but asked if it would be better to have someone closer to the students, such as a teacher or counselor, rather than the district administrator. Because the person in that capacity would be an ex-officio member, Esser said he believes the district administrator could appoint someone to act in his/her behalf.

Hanneman also asked how often the commission would meet and Esser said he envisioned at least once each month. However, no guideline was placed in the ordinance language because he said he wanted the commission free to set its own agenda. "I'm going to keep some distance from this," Esser said, explaining that he doesn't want it to

become just another arm of the city council. He also stressed that the frequency of the meetings depend upon the individuals he selects for the commission.

“I’d like to see the city council approve it tomorrow night so I can begin to contact people about serving,” Esser said.

Based on the discussion at Monday’s meeting, the committee voted unanimously to recommend that the city council adopt the ordinance language.

City Council Action

The matter was taken before the city council Tuesday night at which time members voted unanimously to establish the Youth and Families Commission.

Esser said he will now begin the process of selecting commission members.

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