

A special session of the Grundy Center City Council was called to order at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, June 24, 2024, in the Council Chambers by Mayor Eberline. Present: Smith, Kuester, McDonald, Lamp and Rasmussen. Absent: None. Visitors: 86 visitors. Please join my meeting on your computer, tablet or smartphone. <https://meet.goto.com/566587813> You can also dial in using your phone. Access Code: 566-587-813  
United States: +1 (872) 240-3311.

Mayor Eberline opened the discussion regarding the continuance of local police department or proceed with 28E Agreement with Grundy County Sheriff's Office for law enforcement services. Mayor Eberline commented that this discussion has been ongoing for many years, with different mayors and city councils. This meeting is to listen to the residents of the City as to their feelings on retaining a local police department.

Mayor Eberline acknowledged Grundy County Sheriff, Kirk Dolleslager, for his opening comments. Dolleslager commented that this is not a planned takeover, that the City requested contract pricing many times. Dolleslager said the residents of Grundy Center would not see much difference other than different uniform colors and vehicles. He would possibly hire current city officers, if they apply and pass the necessary testing, however, would not be a guaranteed spot. Main reason local police officers are recruited to a county position is for the higher salary. Mayor Eberline commented that the City is unable to compete with the county salary and keep the property tax levy reasonable to the residents. Smith commented that it also takes a certain number of officers on staff with acceptable salaries to keep the local police department which will in turn require a higher tax levy.

Mayor Eberline opened the public comments at 6:50pm. Rex VanWert, David Stefl, and Paul Sealman, previous Mayor and City Council Members, commented that the loss of control over the law enforcement would be detrimental, residents would not feel safe or comfortable, a price tag cannot be put on every aspect, and little confidence that the county department can provide all the current services. Residents asked what the county offers for service times and cost to the City. Sheriff Dolleslager answered cost to the City would be \$654,000 for 24/7 coverage, four full time officers, no school resource officer plus take over City squad cars, tasers, firearms and equipment. Dolleslager commented this is about a \$20,000 savings to the City based on fiscal year 2025 city budget.

Comments were made by Dwight Gliem, EMS Director, and Megan Bradley, EMT, regarding that many times the local police officers are the first person on scene to secure the scene and/or start immediate care prior to an ambulance. This is another service that may not occur if County services were in charge.

Jesse Huisman, Brandon Bunkers, Kyle Waugh, Jessica Bradley, Justin Fox, Sam Broome, Zach Tripp, former and current members of the police department, all spoke on low wages, overtime, burn out is huge and better work/life balance is needed. Discussion was on how county department has the ability to have the higher salary, upgraded equipment and vehicles, computers, firearms and training. Mayor Eberline commented that City officials are aware of the wage differences however the legislators have also tied hands by limiting the growth which affects the tax revenues.

Erika Allen, County Attorney, commented that it is great to hear residents are willing to pay more in property taxes to help fund the local police department however the current state legislation has restricted the City and County's abilities to levy for the growth meaning the State is not paying the City/County what they should be. State of Iowa has restricted how much can be levied and placed more restrictions on how to use the funds and residents should keep this in mind for future elections.

Mayor Eberline thanked everyone for their support and input and City Council plans to work through further discussion to come to a decision very soon. No further discussions and no formal action were taken during this special session.

Smith moved and Kuester seconded adjournment of the meeting at 8:10pm. Motion carried five ayes. Next regular meeting will be Monday, July 1, 2024, at 6:30pm.

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Attest: Kristy Sawyer, City Clerk

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Dr. Paul Eberline, Mayor