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At a special closed meeting of the Niangua Board of Aldermen called on Aug. 17, actions were taken that are being questioned by several members of the community.

The Aug. 17 meeting was the meeting where the board voted in closed session to either give Scott Quinn, Niangua police chief, the option to resign or be fired. The meeting came one week after the board voted in closed session following its regular monthly meeting to fire police officer Michael C. Taylor.

The board, which entered into closed session at 7 p.m. according to minutes, later voted to modify the agenda to add action items. This motion was made by Alderman Tim Petty and seconded by his brother, Alderman Jamie Petty.

Questions have been asked about entering into open session for the purpose of voting on items, without properly posting

public notice about the meeting.

According to the Missouri Revised Statutes, section 610.020: "1. All public governmental bodies shall give notice of the time, date, and place of each meeting, and its tentative agenda, in a manner reasonably calculated to advise the public of the matters to be considered, and if the meeting will be conducted by telephone or other electronic means, the notice of the meeting shall identify the mode by which the meeting will be conducted and the designated location where the public may observe and attend the meeting. If a public body plans to meet by Internet chat, Internet message board, or other computer link, it shall post a notice of the meeting on its Web site in addition to its principal office, and shall notify the public how to access that meeting. Reasonable notice shall include making available copies of the notice to any representative of the news media who requests notice of meetings of a particular public governmental body concurrent

with the notice being made avail-

able to the members of the particular governmental body and posting the notice on a bulletin board or other prominent place which is easily accessible to the public and clearly designated for that purpose at the principal office of the body holding the meeting, or if no such office exists, at the building in which the meeting is to be held."

Many in the Niangua community feel that this statute has been violated because no posting was issued for the Aug. 17 open session.

Under the modifications in open session on Aug. 17, Mayor Roger Mephram discussed a mower that was purchased at a surplus sale in Jefferson City for \$250. It was noted that the mower was a Toro brand, and that it was in need of work.

Mephram also let the board know that he had purchased the maintenance employees some military work boots for \$10 per pair.

The minutes supplied by Niangua city hall also state that

Mephram let the board know that the maintenance workers were willing to reimburse the city, if the board wishes for them to do that.

Alderman Leonard Hart made a motion to approve the purchase of the lawn mower, which was seconded by Alderman Mitch Sitton.

During this time, Tim Petty suggested that the police cars be parked at City Hall, as they are presently parked at the residence of Mephram. No further information about the action is noted in the official minutes, and calls to Mephram were not returned as of press time.

Jean Maneke, legal counsel for the Missouri Press Association, said of the meeting, "They might not have discussed many items of importance. However, it is still a governmental body, and they need to post information pertaining to an open meeting. And it does not sound like they were discussing anything that was an emergency."

The minutes did not state that

anything was declared an emergency by the mayor or aldermen. In the Missouri Revised Statutes,

Marshfield Mail  
Marshfield, MO  
Circ. 5800  
From Page:  
15  
9/2/2009  
14840





the law further states in subsection 4: "When it is necessary to hold a meeting on less than twenty-four hours' notice, or at a place that is not reasonably accessible to the public, or at a time that is not reasonably convenient to the public, the nature of the good cause justifying that departure from the normal requirements shall be stated in the minutes."

Other items discussed in the meeting include adjusting Alderman Hart's water bill by \$10 for fixing a water leak, and ordi-

nances concerning ditches. Sitton moved that on next month's water bills should be a note to residents: "Please clean/burn debris in your ditch, if applicable, so we can have ditch cleaning around the city." The motion was seconded by Tim Petty.

The board also decided to contact an attorney about aldermen running a backhoe and the liability involved, if any at all.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

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From Page:  
15  
9/2/2009  
14840