



REGULAR COUNCIL MINUTES

Fire Hall - 111 D Street

March 20, 2024 at 6:00 PM

WORKSHOP – LAW ENFORCEMENT CONTRACT SERVICES FROM 6 P.M. TO 7:00 P.M.

Last month GH Sheriff's Office gave a proposal. Chief Layman gave a review of the proposal. Mayor Springer and Councilmember Winn have been hearing from the citizens that they want their police department and concerns about the county taking Cosmopolis on. There is a proposal from Aberdeen. Chief Green and Deputy Chief Snodgrass came to present the proposal and answer any questions. Chief Green gave the presentation and answered questions.

FLAG SALUTE – PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

CALL TO ORDER - ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Councilmember Kim Skinner, Councilmember Jeremy Winn, Councilmember Justin Spargo, Councilmember Mark Collett, Councilmember Jim Ancich.

APPROVAL OF AGENDAA

Motion made by Councilmember Spargo to amend the agenda and have a discussion about utility billing and payroll (under new business), Seconded by Councilmember Winn. Voting Yea: Councilmember Kim Skinner, Councilmember Jeremy Winn, Councilmember Justin Spargo, Councilmember Mark Collett, Councilmember Jim Ancich. Motion carried. Attorney Johnson stated that Mayor Springer would like to request that we have a motion to add item D under new business to hire a CPA and to remove item 9A about the new building codes. Councilmember Winn made a motion to add an item for discussion of hiring a CPA and to move item A to a discussion only. Seconded by Councilmember Skinner. Voting Yea: Councilmember Kim Skinner, Councilmember Jeremy Winn, Councilmember Justin Spargo, Councilmember Mark Collett, Councilmember Jim Ancich. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion made by Councilmember Skinner to approve the consent agenda, Seconded by Councilmember Collett. Voting Yea: Councilmember Kim Skinner, Councilmember Jeremy Winn, Councilmember Justin Spargo, Councilmember Mark Collett, Councilmember Jim Ancich. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Public Safety - Councilmember Skinner said they had five more applicants approved to be volunteer firefighters. Based on the decision tonight about the Police Department, we will be putting forward in the next meeting a motion to put together a subcommittee to explore and put together a proposal for an M&O (Maintenance and Operation) Levy for our Police Department. This will get the Police Department out of the general fund and into a fund of its own. Councilmember Collett said the M&O would not take effect until July 2025.

Parks – Councilmember Spargo said he got an email this morning the non-profit Friends of Highland Park received a \$20,000.00 grant, from Grays Harbor Community Foundation, for the revitalization of Olympic Terrace Park that is located at 101 Alder Dr. No cost to the city, only time for city to unlock the gate for access. Councilmember Winn asked if they can actually report out for the parks. He was told yes. He stated he has been through the parks and seen what is needed. At this time the focus is concentrating on repairing the city budget, but when funds are available the issues at the parks will be addressed.

Public Works – Councilmember Ancich said no meeting, no report.

CITY OFFICIAL REPORTS

Public Works – Tom Distler is here to give update. As they are down to just two of them, he is doing the day to day. If something comes up the two will respond and do the best they can.

Fire Chief – Submitted grant for new bunker gear for all the firefighters. Will hear back on that in September. It will be a year out for them to get the gear (due to supply issues) if they get the grant.

Police Chief – No further report except what he spoke to earlier and will later on the law enforcement proposals.

Building Inspector/Code Enforcement – Bill Sidor said he has two plans he is currently reviewing. One for the retrofit for the grade school and one for Pape Machinery. Some money will be coming into the budget from permit fees for these two projects.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Stated that as most everyone is aware we had staff that left on Friday. She wishes them the best. She is unable to answer any questions about former personnel. Transparency is what she wants and she would walk into this job again because she wants the best for this community. Her continued goal is to serve this community and citizens. She wants to be a good steward of city finances and resources. She will continue to do her best to move forward and get us in the black. She has always been in careers about helping people. She knows there are lots of questions people have that she can't answer right now.

NEW BUSINESS

A. 2021 Amendments to the International and Uniform Building Codes

Bill Sidor said we are behind on adopting codes. 2024 are being worked on now and would be put into place in 2025. So we need to adopt the 2021 codes. These codes are mandated by the state. Councilmember Winn asked about the areas that were crossed out. Bill said those are only appendix. Most cities have their own rules on how officials are put in place and also appeals. The new codes are stricter than the old codes.

B. Utility Billing / Payroll

Councilmember Spargo asked about the utility billing and payroll and who will be taking over this role. Mayor Springer said she reached out to neighboring cities for assistance. She did contact the utility clerk that had been laid off to see if she would like to come back. She declined because she had another job. She then reached out to Kasey Grove, who was the Police Clerk that had been laid off. Kasey agreed to come back part time. Councilmember Spargo asked about digitizing this process.

C. Hiring of CPA

Mayor Springer said that cities struggling with finances have brought in a CPA that is qualified and specializes in working with struggling cities. It was recommended to her that we do the same to see exactly where we are financially. The council will vote on this tonight. The CPA she is presenting would be \$185 per hour, and this can stop at any time. We are not committed to the \$18,000 that is on the contract. The CPA can help us to get back in the black, but we need council support to do this.

Motion by Councilmember Winn to approve contract with the CPA, Seconded by Councilmember Skinner.

Councilmember Winn said due to the urgent nature of the situation, he thinks yes, but for future would like to know ahead and see more options presented. Councilmember Skinner feels that same. Councilmember Skinner said MRSC can help also. They are shorthanded, so we have to schedule a time. In the meantime, lets get a clerk hired and a CPA to help right now. After some other back and forth discussion Mayor Springer called for a vote. Voting Yea: Councilmember Skinner, Councilmember Winn, Councilmember Collett. Voting Nea: Councilmember Spargo and Councilmember Ancich. Motion carried.

D. APD Law Enforcement Service

Motion made by Councilmember Skinner to go with Aberdeen Police Option, Seconded by Councilmember Collett. No discussion. Voting Yea: Councilmember Skinner, Councilmember Winn, Councilmember Collett. Voting Nea: Councilmember Spargo and Councilmember Ancich. Motion carried.

12. COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Skinner said the Mayor has been here a lot. He is retired, and none of the other councilmembers are, so he has tried to come down and help as much as possible. He made the motion he did about the police because he has heard from the citizen that they want their police department.

Councilmember Winn wants to thank his fellow councilmen. Has spent much time speaking with them, and on the phone with the Mayor. Even when we disagree these are folks that have your best interest at heart. He is very fortunate to serve with these folks. We all have different information and backgrounds and will have different opinions. Feel free to reach out to any of us if you have concerns. He will respond to all emails received, but can't respond to comments on social media.

Councilmember Spargo thanks everyone for coming and for their time. He knows what he says isn't liked a lot, but he isn't doing it with harsh feelings against the police or community.

Councilmember Collett said he is sorry to see what happened on Friday happen, but it is what happened and we just need to move forward.

Councilmember Ancich stated he has been the sounding board between staff and the Mayor for the last four months. Said he has spoken to the Mayor several times about her demeanor. We lost four critical staff members to this city. We are hiring a CPA, but we have not staff. The elephant in the room is what happened and he is aware that Mayor can't address that. He wants it to be known that the staff that was here was committed to this city. He wants to know about the bonds for the new municipal building. Mayor Springer addressed the issue.

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were many public comments made and much discussion going on.