

**DRAFT MINUTES
CITY OF STEVENSON COUNCIL MEETING
March 20, 2025
6:00 PM, City Hall and Remote**

Attending:

Elected Officials: **Mayor Scott Anderson; Councilmembers Pat Rice, Chuck Oldfield, Dave Cox, Michael Johnson, Lucy Lauser.**

City Staff: **Ben Shumaker, Community Development Director/Interim City Administrator; Tiffany Andersen, Planning and Public Works Assistant; Robert Muth, City Attorney; Ray Broughton, Stevenson Fire Chief; Carolyn Sourek, Public Works Director; Cody Rosander, Public Works.**

Guests: Lou Palermo, Executive Director of the Columbia Gorge Museum.

Public participants: Rick Jessell, Mary Repar, Melissa Kuehnell, Kelly O'Malley-McKee

1. CALL TO ORDER/PRESENTATION TO THE FLAG: **Mayor Anderson** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., led the group to recite the pledge of allegiance and conducted roll call.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Melissa Kuehnell requested clarification regarding **Councilmember Rice's** residency. **Mayor Anderson** requested that she meet with **Councilmember Rice** privately following the meeting.

Kelly O'Malley-McKee, Executive Director for the Stevenson Downtown Association, spoke to the Council about ensuring candidates have experience with strong civic partnerships as they search for a new city administrator.

Rick Jessell commented on the amount of funds to be generated by the recently passed levy and noted a numerical error in the ordinance text.

Mary Repar provided information regarding immigration rights.

3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA:

It was noted a change to the agenda regarding a street closure came in too late to be included on the agenda but will need to be acted on.

4. CONSENT AGENDA: The following items were presented for Council approval.

- a) **Utility Billing Adjustment:** The Council was asked to authorize an adjustment for the account at Account No. 15181. Service to the account was disrupted for approximately 8 months as a result of a City construction project in the summer of 2024. There is no policy to guide action during such situations. Council was asked to authorize removing 8 months of base rates from the customer's account (\$2,411.00) to cover the construction period.
- b) **Liquor License Renewal** - Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center
- c) **Liquor License Renewal** - Fraternal Order of Eagles
- d) **Liquor License Renewal** - Stevenson Farmer's Market
- e) **Liquor License Renewal** - Rock Creek Tavern
- f) **Minutes** of February 20th and February 25th, 2025, City Council meetings.

6:10

MOTION to approve consent agenda items a-f was made by **Councilmember Lauser**, seconded by **Councilmember Johnson**.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Rice, Lauser, Cox, Johnson, Oldfield**.

Following the vote, at the request of **Councilmember Oldfield, Interim City Administrator Shumaker** briefly explained that part of the utility billing review would include what authority would be needed from the Council to permit the Administrator to waive certain billing fees resulting from water leaks. He also shared the current cap allowing waivers of up to \$1,000 could be amended.

5. SHERIFF'S OFFICE REPORT:

- a) **Sheriff's Report** - The Skamania County Sheriff's report for activity within Stevenson city limits for February 2025 was presented for council review by Skamania County Undersheriff Tracy Wyckoff.

6. PRESENTATIONS FROM OUTSIDE AGENCIES:

- a) **Columbia Gorge Museum** - Lou Palermo, Executive Director of the Columbia Gorge Museum shared information about an important community asset. She distributed the Museum's annual report and provided updates on visitor rates and improvements taking place with the exhibits.
- b) **American Red Cross (ARC)** - Council agreed through consensus to support a proclamation declaring April 'Red Cross Month'.

9. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

7. COUNCIL BUSINESS:

- a) **Ordinance 2025-1226 – An Ordinance Enacting a New Section 3.08.032 to the Stevenson Municipal Code Imposing an Addit -**
Interim City Administrator Ben Shumaker presented and explained a draft ordinance to impose a tax on behalf of the Stevenson Transportation Benefit District. Following his presentation the Council held a brief discussion on how to direct and distribute the revenue generated to specific funds within the city budget. It was agreed to hold further discussion during the April 3rd, 2025, Special Council Meeting.

6:42

MOTION to approve an ordinance enacting a new section 3.08.032 to the Stevenson Municipal Code imposing an additional sales and use tax of three-tenths of one percent within the boundaries of the Stevenson Transportation Benefit District as authorized by RCW 36.73.065, RCW 82.14.0455, and the voters of Stevenson was made by **Councilmember Lauser**, seconded by **Councilmember Oldfield**.

Prior to the vote **Councilmember Rice** clarified the intent was to use the new revenue generated by the tax to supplant the amount of street funds currently provided through the general fund. In turn, the same amount from the general fund will then be devoted to the water/sewer fund as a way to lower the current sewer rates.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Rice, Lauser, Cox, Johnson, Oldfield**

- a) **TBD Tax Workshop - Interim City Administrator Ben Shumaker** presented and explained a staff report on the Transportation Benefit Tax and scenarios related to actual vs projected tax collections. Two mechanisms are available to infuse the Water/Sewer Fund with additional revenue.
- a) Initial Transfer-In: with this mechanism the projected \$270,000 would be transferred from the General Fund to the Water/Sewer Fund as part of the initial budget for each year, or
- b) Monthly Allocation of sales & use tax revenues: with this mechanism a sum equal to 0.3% of the taxable value involved in each month's sales & use tax remittance will be directed to the Water/Sewer Fund. No action is expected.
- Shumaker** advised Council a rise and fall in collections and market investments is always possible, which led to a discussion on how best to direct surpluses and manage shortages. A decision was reached through consensus to go with the initial transfer in the amount of \$270K, and monitor and direct any surpluses.

8. INFORMATION ITEMS:

- a) **Contracts Awarded Administratively** - The report on contracts, purchases, and change orders over \$10,000 approved administratively over the past month was attached.
- b) **Financial Report** - The Treasurer's Report and year-to-date revenues and expenses through the prior month were presented for council review.
- c) **Planning Commission minutes** from the Planning Commission meeting for the prior month were attached.

9. CITY ADMINISTRATOR AND STAFF REPORTS:

A last-minute change to the agenda was noted. First Street in Stevenson will need to be closed for approximately a week in order to complete the striping, which has been delayed due to weather.

7:31

MOTION to approve the closure of First Street to complete the construction project was made by **Councilmember Johnson**, seconded by **Councilmember Lauser**.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Rice, Lauser, Cox, Johnson, Oldfield**

a) Ray Broughton, Stevenson Fire Chief

- i. **Broughton** distributed a quarterly update regarding the fire department's projects.
- ii. Wildfire season is approaching; red card training is taking place. DNR Field Day activities will take place on Chief Broughton's property.
- iii. Worked with Burlington-Northern Santa-Fe regarding HAZMAT responses.
- iv. Training with NW Natural Gas for residential and commercial incident response will take place soon.
- v. Looking to order and purchase a new engine, cost is approximately \$800K.
- vi. A WSRB (Washington State Survey and Rating Bureau) audit is coming up. This inspection and evaluation of the fire defenses, communications and building code enforcement of cities, counties, and municipal fire districts helps to establish fire insurance premiums for property owners.

- vii. Fire District 2 officers will receive a monthly stipend of \$100.
- viii. The department is working to become fully digitized.
- ix. Turn out gear cleaning has been completed. Cascade Locks and Stevenson Fire Departments are looking to work together more often.
- x. He described joint training taking place with other local fire districts, DNR and EMS.
- xi. A tentative date for a combined Fire Commissioner and City Council meeting was set for April 9th at 5 p.m.

b) Ben Shumaker, Community Development Director

- i. A zoning change proposal is scheduled for the Council to review on April 3rd, 2025. **Shumaker** advised Councilmembers about not engaging in ex-parte communications about the project in order to avoid any challenges to their decision-making.
- ii. The Planning Commission is looking to ensure that the work that they're doing is advancing the city council's strategic priorities. **Mayor Anderson** attended a recent PC meeting.
- iii. **Planning Commission Chair Jeff Breckel** spoke on the desire to facilitate communication and coordination between the Council and the Planning Commission in order to address important issues.
- iv. **Shumaker** reported that the volume of building permits issued has declined.

c) Carolyn Sourek, Public Works Director

- i. **Sourek** is resigning effective mid-May 2025. **Cody Rosander** will be the new Public Works Director.
- ii. The 90% plan for the Cascade Avenue water project is in hand. Property owners along Cascade Avenue have been contacted.
- iii. Department of Ecology visited the WWTP. There are new challenges arising with the operations of the new plant and DOE is collaborating with the city Public Works Department on problem solving.
- iv. **Sourek** is working to ensure the new sewer ordinance provides residents with clear information on connection costs and availability.
- v. Spruce Up Stevenson is set for April 26th.
- vi. **Sourek** pointed to information in the packet regarding equipment replacement for rolling stock. **Ben Shumaker, Interim City Administrator**, highlighted the work that goes into the preparation of these documents.
- vii. **Sourek** has been working with the county to arrange a presentation on the care and maintenance of septic systems for homeowners. It will be on April 16th at 6 p.m. at the Hegewald Center. The intent is to help property owners preserve the life of their septic systems by understanding how they work and what can affect their functioning.
- viii. **Sourek** is looking to update the city's engineering standards before she leaves. The instruction chapter text is being replaced with more graphics and pictures.
- ix. **Sourek** acknowledged the work of the employee placed through People for People. She noted a recent project involved pressure washing outside of City Hall to remove mold.

d) Ben Shumaker, Interim City Administrator

- i. Tripepi Smith Consulting is still under contract with the city. **Shumaker** is looking to have them develop scenarios for the Council to ensure residents realize the biggest benefit from the reduction in sewer rate increases.
- ii. A utility billing audit is underway to ensure customer accounts are being billed accurately. A question to come before the Council will be whether or not to waive instances of under billing.
- iii. **Shumaker** is considering asking the tourism advisory committee to develop policies to help use lodging tax funds to repair and or improve certain facilities.
- iv. **Tiffany Andersen** reported on the current software used for public records requests and suggested a different program would be more suited to what the city needs to adequately maintain public records. If a change to a different system is made the information will migrate to the new system. She will have additional information at the April 2025 City Council meeting.

10. VOUCHER APPROVAL:

8:17

MOTION to approve the vouchers as presented was made by **Councilmember Oldfield**, seconded by **Councilmember Cox**.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Rice, Lauser, Cox, Johnson, Oldfield**

11. MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS:

Councilmember Johnson shared participants in the St. Patrick's Day 5K run liked the new First Street path.

City Attorney Muth highlighted the recent 11-0 boys' soccer team win.

12. ISSUES FOR THE NEXT MEETING:

None were provided.

13. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT:

Mary Repar commented on the First Street sidewalk and curbing design.

Prior to the Executive Session **Mayor Anderson** called for a brief break.

8:29

14. EXECUTIVE SESSION - City Council entered Executive Session under RCW

42.30.110(1)(i) at 8:29 p.m. for ten minutes for the purpose of discussing potential litigation. Announced time of reconvening was 8:39 p.m. Upon reconvening it was stated no decisions were made; the Mayor will proceed as discussed.

15. ADJOURNMENT – **Mayor Anderson** adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.