



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, May 01, 2024

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Jessica Chilton
Councilor Mark Gundersen
Councilor Russell Hubbard
Councilor Brandon Sundeen

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator	Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director
Kathy Payne, City Recorder	Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder	Ethan Stirling, Field Supervisor/Safety Coordinator
Gloria Butsch, Finance Director	Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Suzanne Bishop, Library Director	Tina Curry, Contracted Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Howard Blumenthal	Lynne Pettit	Ron Trommlitz
Brady Preheim	CDC	Joseph Shaefer
MM	Mitz	Jenn
Jennifer Massey	Steve Topaz	Stephanie Patterson
Steve Toschi	Robyn Toschi	Richard Mason
Jane Garcia		

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 2:00 pm

VISITOR COMMENTS - *Limited to three (3) minutes per speaker*

- ◆ Howard Blumenthal. Mr. Blumenthal speaking on his own behalf and not the Parks & Trails Commission of which he was a member, said he was shocked to hear that Melisa Gaelrun-Maggi's position with the Parks Division was being eliminated. He described her improvements and how they had already given a position up a few years ago in order to afford a position in the library. City parks were important to residents, almost more than tourism.
- ◆ Ron Trommlitz. Mr. Trommlitz described his concerns about the effects of the 2MG Water Reservoir leaking, noting the City denied the leaking when he questioned it because City employees were directed not to talk to him. He described the information he requested via the Freedom of Information Act which revealed the City's involvement with the reservoir's rehabilitation failure. He recalled being warned to stop probing the reservoir rehabilitation and threats of being sued, noting with no transparency for the public the true cause of the reservoir's water loss would never be known. He submitted a copy of an email from Mouhamad Zaher and another email into the record.
- ◆ Brady Preheim. Mr. Preheim expressed his astonishment that the event coordinator of nine years for the City was not consulted on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for an event coordinator

and that the Councilor put in charge of tourism had to have tourism defined for him and did not reach out to anyone who knew about tourism. He urged the Council not to make the same mistake the new City Council of Leavenworth made in destroying their event.

- ◆ Steve Topaz. Mr. Topaz noted the minutes were months behind which basically evaded the new ethics rules saying complaints about meetings must be submitted within 30 days. The Council approved minutes that he felt did not accurately reflect what he said. The Council was afraid to act as Councilors and listen to the people, not replying to or opening emails. If he were bringing a company here, he would not want his employees fearing the Council would not stick up for the law. He addressed there not being enough power for the possibility of a large plant coming to take over the old paper mill, asking why he would bring employees to a town that basically ran on fear.
- ◆ Lynne Pettit, Parks & Trails Commission Chair. Ms. Pettit read a letter of support for retaining the position of Parks Administrative Assistant which she sent to all Budget Committee and City Council members. The letter commended Melisa Gaelrun-Maggi's work in the position.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

1. Public Works Department Semi-Annual Report - *Director Mouhamad Zaher*

Public Works Director Mouhamad Zaher, Engineering Manager Sharon Darroux, and Field Supervisor/Safety Coordinator Ethan Stirling presented via PowerPoint the Public Works Department Semi-Annual Report, a copy of which was included in the archive packet for this meeting. Key highlights of the report were as follows:

- In Water Quality, the screen rebuild for the headworks, NPDES permit renewal, sewer overflow at the Armstrong property, and routine maintenance.
- In Engineering, the Columbia Boulevard sidewalk project, collaboration to improve traffic issues at Lewis & Clark Elementary School, development of policy for speed humps, National Engineers Week in February which included hosting 20 students at City Hall including to tour two projects, and current and upcoming projects.
- In Operations, maintenance of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA). Mr. Zaher met with the IT team and Operations Team, and they were able to save the City \$15,000 by procuring the computer to support the software themselves.
- In Facilities, storage shed replacement, Flusher truck rebuild, Senior Center parking lot lighting improvements, and the addition of the Veterans Memorial to McCormick Park.
- In Safety, Zoll AED upgrades, upgrades to exit/emergency sign backup batteries at the library, compressed natural gas (CNG) tank removal, new confined space rescue equipment, and other improvements to the City's safety culture.

It was confirmed there would be no sewer work on the new stretch of Columbia Blvd., but on Gable Road between Columbia Blvd. and Highway 30, and that the Safety Committee oversaw the Police Station. The last inspection of the station was February 20, which was followed up with a report given to the all the supervisors. Current safety concerns about mold had been taken care of.

The presentation concluded with what was in the works for the Department as follows:

- Waterfront construction updates.
- McCormick Park pedestrian access at Old Portland Road and S. 18th Street. It was confirmed that the team brought someone in to show them how to do it.
- Reservoir project update. Costs have more than doubled. Staff sought Council direction on whether to complete the design for the two-million-gallon reservoir at the current site and wait for funding or move to a new location for a 4- or 5-million-gallon reservoir on Sykes Road per the Master Plan which would get the City out of the water storage deficit.

- The Council had no objection to moving forward with design for the current site and then hold until funding would be available for construction.
- It was confirmed if the work continued at the current site, final design would probably be completed by mid- to late summer if not sooner.
- Sanitary sewer capacity upgrade design in progress. It was clarified basins six and four and maybe five would all be under construction at the same time. Council President Chilton advised thinking it through because the basins were on busy roads.

Councilor Sundeen thanked Public Works for their work and being responsive.

2. Discussion Regarding Events in the Downtown Area Considering all the Construction Projects

Mayor Scholl reported on being in a meeting yesterday with MEI and speaking with staff and the contractors about the downtown area in September and October and events during construction work. The City was willing to look at the areas that would be affected and work with Mr. Zaher. Because the time period would be towards the end of the project potentially they could schedule around the areas for Spirit of Halloweentown to be held downtown.

Mr. Zaher said the contractors asked for a potential highlighted area downtown of where the City would like to have the event and what would be necessary. Mayor Scholl said the Council would not make any decisions now but would have better information for the next meeting.

Mr. Zaher reported that what he took from the meeting was positive with a path forward for an event with maybe a limited or medium scope, clarifying hopefully it would not result in a change order. The contractors would not want to deviate from the completion date.

Council President Chilton encouraged flexibility of shifting the location of some of the events while keeping the event in the square.

3. Finance FY23/24 3rd Quarter Report - Finance Director Gloria Butsch

Finance Director Butsch reviewed her report, a copy of which was included in the archive packet for this meeting, reiterating the discussion in the Budget Committee about professional services being on the high side and a little over budget. She would be doing some budget adjustments but did not see the need for a full-on supplemental budget this year. The adjustments would come before the Council in June. She updated on what the Finance Division was working on: a payment box was installed at the library; preliminary audit fieldwork would begin next week; revisions to the purchasing policies, key card policies and procedures, and training and travel policies; express bill pay payments would tentatively go live in June; and the Budget Committee would meet again tomorrow at 6:00 pm.

Council President Chilton commended Ms. Butsch for her professionalism and her hard work.

4. Review Proposed New Job Description for Librarian I (Youth & Makerspace)

City Administrator John Walsh reviewed the job description for Librarian I (included in the meeting packet) which combined the Youth Librarian and Makerspace Technician positions. Library Director Suzanne Bishop addressed the changes in the consolidation of the positions. Council President Chilton said the new position was a great idea that made sense.

5. Report from City Administrator John Walsh

Mr. Walsh presented his report with key highlights as follows:

- The proclamation for Municipal Clerks Week May 5-11 was on tonight's Regular Session agenda. He thanked City Recorder Payne and Deputy City Record Scholl for their work.
- Congresswoman Bonamici met Thursday with city leaders where she talked about federal infrastructure dollars and grant opportunities; the applications were due Saturday. Staff worked

all Friday on two applications which included letters of support, both for the reservoir, one for \$4 million with no local match and the other for \$5 million with a 20 percent match.

- He was appointed Vice Chair to the League of Oregon Cities' (LOC) Energy & Environment Committee and reported on attending and leading a meeting this morning. Mayor Scholl added PGE wanted the City to find a parcelization that would work for the City. Last night at the City/County dinner, it was confirmed PGE had the transfer order ready to go. Mr. Walsh noted a grant was still in process with the Department of Justice, addressing parcels identified and confirming funding of about \$2.4 million. Mayor Scholl confirmed PGE would supply the transformer.
- The power in McCormick Park should be done in a few weeks. Mr. Walsh confirmed Columbia River PUD made a \$7,000 contribution to the work.
- He attended the Marine Board meeting last week. St. Helens received a \$170,000 award to repair the Courthouse docks.
- The City/County meeting was held in Vernonia last night, and the main topic was power.
- He provided details on the film crew that would be filming downtown over the next few weeks, noting hopefully it would have a residual effect for tourism.
- Strategic Network Groups would have one more check-in with the Council on the strategic broadband readiness assessment report. Staff was working with the County and the Broadband Advisory Team in looking at framing a project that would access some of the \$650 million of funding allocated from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) for broadband.
- Budget Committee questions that were answered went out this morning.
- LOC Small Cities regional meeting would be hosted in this room on Friday.
- The City was doing its best to keep the machines secure on the mill site. He had toured the site yesterday looking at stormwater issues; there were no issues with vandalism.
- The police levy would be on the May 21 ballot. Information about the levy was available on the website or at the entrance to City Hall.
- He sought direction on 13 Nights on the River, explaining that since the Council had opted not to extend the tourism contract past June 30, the contract would end in the middle of the event, after four shows out of 13. He further explained if the contract was switched it would result in logistical issues about who would contract with the bands and vendors as well as needing a third party to serve alcohol in McCormick Park because the City could not do it.

The Council discussed the 13 Nights event and the question of extending the tourism contract.

Council President Chilton expressed concerns about changing the contract in the middle of the event.

Councilor Gundersen said he was concerned about a smooth transition if Contracted Event Coordinator Tina Curry stepped away, suggesting the contract go through the end of the year.

Mayor Scholl stated he was upset no 13 Nights schedule was out because the City did own tourism. He had believed a month ago the Council was talking about the language in the contract and getting ready to extend it which apparently got lost in translation as far as the contract versus the RFP.

Councilor Hubbard pointed out the contract was supposed to be revisited every three years per law, and it was confirmed the last time was 2017.

Councilor Sundeen believed the Council had not been in favor of an extension.

Mr. Walsh recommended doing the RFP, updating the contract, and extending the contract through the end of the year.

Mayor Scholl was not opposed to the contract extension. But if the City owned it, the Council needed to know more about the contract.

Council President Chilton urged action, noting there was a high chance of having the same contractor.

Mayor Scholl said the contractor needed to be more professional. Council President Chilton urged the Council to be respectful, as many people have fought to keep the events.

Councilor Gundersen supported however it would work best for everybody.

Councilor Hubbard recommended letting the contract slide and starting after Halloweentown.

Ms. Payne pointed out the RFP process takes time, explaining why she supported a six-month extension on the contract. Council Hubbard said she suggested the last six-month extension which was not how she remembered it.

Mayor Scholl suggested adding to the contract/RFP that if the contractor failed to do their duties they should have to transition a new contractor.

Attorney Bill Monahan explained that the contractor was working under the present contract and the City could not impose new conditions. The City could negotiate at the end of the process when making a choice for next year and then negotiate with the present contractor for a transition period. Per Mr. Monahan's recommendation, Mayor Scholl said the Council would continue the discussion with the attorneys working on the contract.

He then addressed that St. Helens needed industry and directed staff to look at parcelization for power in order to attract businesses. If the city did not get industry, the City's budget would not last. He clarified how the transformer would be sufficient for the City's 204 acres and that PGE was willing to meet with staff and come on site.

ADJOURN – 4:25 pm

EXECUTIVE SESSION

- Real Property Transactions, under ORS 192.660(2)(e)
- Consult with Counsel/Potential Litigation, under ORS 192.660(2)(h)

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor