



COUNCIL WORK SESSION

Wednesday, March 16, 2022

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle (1:10 p.m.)
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

John Walsh, City Administrator
Kathy Payne, City Recorder
Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder
Matt Brown, Finance Director
Mouhamad Zaher, Public Works Director

Jacob Graichen, City Planner
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Bill Monahan, City Attorney
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Brady Preheim	Kathy Innocenti
John Brewington	Conor Delaney
Keith Locke	Paul Vogel and Guests

CALL WORK SESSION TO ORDER – 1 p.m.

VISITOR COMMENTS

- ◆ Tina Curry, Event Coordinator.
 - Met with Brad Hendrickson at Sand Island Campgrounds. He requested additional parking. There is a road that goes up the hill that would allow for 30-40 additional parking spaces. Is that an option?
 - Her portion of the tourism audit is complete. She cc'd City Administrator John Walsh with all her submittals to the auditor.
 - Working on a tourism budget for this year. It's been very busy.
 - Public Works and Columbia River PUD are going to move the totem pole tomorrow.
 - Received the dragon chair, which will be in the Kiwanis Parade. She suggested Council members ride in it. It will be on a permanent trailer.

Council President Morten pointed out that Brad vacated 15 feet of the street behind his storage area. They talked a lot about diagonal parking. Is he asking to park on his own property or across the street? Mayor Scholl added that both sides of the road was vacated. Brad may be referring to Wyeth Street where it intersects with First Street, the area that was dug out and they're refilling. Tina said Brad is referring to an area with available parking that no one is using.

Mayor Scholl advised Brad to speak with City Planner Jacob Graichen.

- ◆ Paul Vogel, Columbia Economic Team. He introduced Dansons, a company that is touring the Armstrong property today. Dan Thiessen and his son, Jeff, were in attendance. Dan explained that they operate a wood pellet company. They have about 550 employees world-wide and close

to 20,000 stores sell their products. They are a family operation and extend family to community. They care about the communities they work in. Their family has several charitable foundations they invest in, as well as many community organizations. This is the first time they've had an opportunity to visit a Council meeting prior to relocating. Paul added that they are interested in an Opportunity Zone.

Mayor Scholl said he worked at the pellet facility in Columbia City.

Council President Morten asked how many family-wage jobs it would bring into the community. Dan said they like this property because there is room for expansion. Initially, it would be 40 jobs. This site has the potential to be a distribution center, which would bring an additional 40-50 jobs. Initially, it would be wood pellets, but they also do chips, chunks, and charcoal. Jeff added that this area represents a very significant marketing area. It's a great location for box stores.

Paul said it's early in the process and they'll be speaking with Planning staff.

Council welcomed them.

PRESENTATION

1. Presentation of Plaque to John Brewington for Service on the Parks & Trails Commission

Mayor Scholl presented a plaque and key to the City to John Brewington. John served on the Parks & Trails Commission between 1983-1984 and 2002-2022. He has also been very involved in the community, reporter for the newspaper, and an Elks member.

John said he attended Council meetings for seven years as a newspaper reporter, otherwise he would have served on the Parks & Trails Commission sooner. He was pleased to see the Council make improvements to the Riverfront District. They have a good Parks Division.

Council President Morten thanked John for his hard work and dedication. In all his years serving on Council, John has been here helping. The Parks & Trails Commission rallied around John to assign parks and work collaboratively with all groups. It's amazing to see how far they've come, thanks to his leadership. It's a very functional and effective organization. He is already missed. It's been a pleasure.

John said the Council purchased property on Ross Road a few years ago. The gentleman who sold it took \$60,000 off the price so the park would be named after him. Mayor Scholl confirmed that it's already been done.

Council thanked John.

Mayor Scholl announced that the Kiwanis Parade is coming soon. Jaycees started it around the 1950s. He asked Communications Officer Crystal King to find out if the Chronicle has information about the year the parade began.

DISCUSSION TOPICS

2. Annual Report from City Auditor - *Conor Delaney with Pauly, Rogers & Co., PC*

Conor Delaney reviewed his report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Financial statement audit is substantially complete
- A few amendments to be made to the draft
 - Federal grant expenditures
 - A single audit is required when over \$750,000 is received in grants
 - The final report will include an additional 8-10 pages
- Reviewed Community Development Fund
- Slight change in payroll

- Slight change in capital assets
- Significant finding
 - Took a while to work out the kinks from the financial software conversion. Bank reconciliation should always be done within 30 days of the previous month.
- Will include a couple best practice recommendations
 - City's process for mid-month payroll draws is not recommended
 - You're supposed to withhold taxes for every payroll payment
 - Most payroll systems are not set up to do draws. It creates additional steps and errors.
 - The City should be constantly reviewing staffing levels in accounting
 - They are seeing the need to meet more requirements, which creates more work
 - Evaluate staffing levels to be sure they have adequate personnel
- The audit should be complete within the next week or so

3. Semi-Annual Report from Senior Center - *Kathy Innocenti, Manager*

Kathy Innocenti presented her report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting.

- Slowly reopening the Senior Center
 - Open for lunch
 - Band on some days
 - They still wear masks in the building because they're considered health care. They are not required at Top Notch.
 - Reservation system. Only four people are allowed per table.
- They have hired a cook and assistant cook
- Top Notch thrift store
 - Had to close for snow and ice, and a couple times for illnesses
 - Sales have been good
- The building is being used regularly
 - AARP doing taxes for community members
 - Evergreen Dance Center from Longview uses it on Thursday nights
 - Red Cross blood drives
 - VFW ladies
 - Medicare representatives
 - CERT was planning training there, but they withdrew
 - Approached by a church to use it on Sunday
 - Jewelry sale a week from Saturday

Mayor Scholl appreciates receiving the newsletter. It's very informative. Council President Morten agreed.

Councilor Chilton asked about the garden space. Kathy explained that it's managed by a community group. They do have a partnership with them for composting and occasionally receiving vegetables.

4. Request from Keith Locke for Right of Way Vacation off N. 2nd Street - *Jacob*

City Planner Graichen reviewed the request. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. The applicant must provide two-thirds consent from owners within the affected area to be eligible for the public hearing. The City owns a small portion of property within that area. The request tonight is for the mayor's signature to provide consent to apply for street vacation.

Councilor Topaz referred to the parking they discussed earlier. If you extend First Street through the hatched area, you end at the clear area. Is that private property? Graichen pointed out and talked about the area on the map. It's no longer an 85-foot right-of-way. It's now a 50-foot right-of-way.

Mayor Scholl said the yellow highlighted area is the area Brad referred to for parking. On-street parking is more feasible now. They have discussed emergency access and parking use only.

Councilor Topaz talked about the storm drain under Godfrey Park. Graichen said it was in disrepair and needed to be replaced. It has been repaired.

Councilor Birkle said this is stuff that will come up in Planning Commission. They are being asked to provide consent. He is concerned that they are approving development if it's a decision that eventually comes to Council. Mayor Scholl disagreed. The only person who can obtain the property is the abutting property owner. Graichen clarified the areas being requested to give consent. Public right-of-way is not included in the consent area.

Councilor Chilton is having trouble understanding the motive of the request to vacate the property. Graichen said there's a variety of reasons for street vacations. They don't want to get into the merits for this one. It's usually because they want to own the property, control the property, and sometimes there's motive for how it works with the Code. He reviewed the potential development incentives.

Councilor Topaz said they've gotten rid of sidewalks in the past with street vacations. Now they need the sidewalk back. Graichen said an easement was retained for some of those.

5. Review Right of Way Dedication Deed for 115 Little Street - *Jacob*

City Planner Graichen reviewed the report. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. He reviewed the map. The property is located at the back of Skinny's Texaco. The house was destroyed in a fire and has since been acquired by Wayne Weigandt. Wayne does want to do something with it in relation to the Texaco property. The property owner is in favor of dedicating that portion to the City for a right-of-way.

Councilor Topaz asked if it was ever the City's. Graichen does not think so.

6. Review New Job Description for Building Maintenance - Utility Worker I

Public Works Director Zaher reviewed the proposed job description. A copy is included in the archive packet for this meeting. They currently have one Building Maintenance staff member, who is Roger Stauffer. The workload is tremendous for him alone. A new system for maintenance requests is being created. He is requesting approval of the job description. This role is already in his budget, and he hopes to fill the position next fiscal year.

Councilor Topaz asked how much it would cost to hire someone outside to do this work. Zaher will be able to review that during the next Public Works report. He built a program to gain matrix and build data. There is a high demand for building maintenance. Councilor Topaz said it's probably cheaper to hire someone than have it done from outside. Zaher responded that there is a need to have someone here, rather than wait for a contractor's availability.

Council President Morten appreciates what Zaher has done. Reading over the essential duties, there's almost 40. This will be a great position. It's obvious that this person will be multi-talented. It's the first time since he's been on the Council that this has been outlined in the scope of duties and responsibilities. He thanked Zaher. They are hiring a team person who can fill in and help as needed. It's an asset to team comradery.

Councilor Chilton asked why he is asking if it's in the budget. Zaher said he likes to run new opportunities by the Council. Walsh added that Council approves job descriptions.

Councilor Birke clarified they are approving the job description, not necessarily filling the position. There is still a budget process to go through for hiring. He wants to make sure they are discussing it and are aware of it. They still don't have a budget for next year. Mayor Scholl explained that it's part of the general budget. Roger is very knowledgeable but will not be here forever. They need to educate someone who will be taking over some day.

Zaher explained that when he says this is in the budget, it's a position that has been vacated. Mayor Scholl asked for Brown's input. Councilor Birkle is not questioning that it's in the current budget year. However, they do not have a 2022-23 budget. He doesn't understand why he can't question this.

Walsh reminded them that this is for the approval of a job description and not to fill the position. Not all positions will be filled that they approve the job description. Brown agreed with Walsh. This is approving the job description and not the posting and hiring. Right now, it is included in the next fiscal year's budget. If it's approved, the position will be posted for hiring. Councilor Birkle was only asking questions for clarification. Council President Morten said the budget has nothing to do with this.

Mayor Scholl apologized to Councilor Chilton and Councilor Birkle for his behavior. He reacted to them based on what he thought was being insinuated.

Break - 2:33 p.m.

Brown clarified that the request is only for the job description. If the budget is approved, the job will be posted. It will not be posted or filled within the current fiscal year.

7. City Administrator John Walsh Report

- The Zoom accessibility feature has been turned on.
- The Armstrong property has seen a lot of interest lately. It's exciting. The site is incredibly well served with utilities and infrastructure. Councilor Topaz asked if the property is contaminated. Walsh responded that one of the reasons the property is marketable is remediation of the wetlands and a boundary line adjustment to separate the uplands from the lowlands. Council President Morten asked if changing ownership triggers a reassessment with DSL. Walsh said DSL has been in consultation with the boundary line adjustment throughout the process. As far as assessment of values and property tax, he is not aware. Councilor Topaz said it would be a great place to build wind turbines.
- Met with Marine Board representatives yesterday to talk about the design proposals for the Grey Cliffs Park ADA accessible fishing pier and kayak launch. It was a great conversation. It will be funded with a grant from Fish & Wildlife, a grant from the Marine Board, and a 25% match from the City. The State does all the design and permitting work. They just have to commit to the project. It's an exciting project that will serve the community well.
- Library Director interviews on March 28. They received 15 applications and plan to interview nine people.
- There has been interest in the RFQ for the Veneer property. He will ask for an extension if there's not much response.
- Joint City Council and Planning Commission meeting tonight. It will be a presentation for the First Street extensions and utilities.
- Good news on Central Waterfront project. They received \$984,000 from the State Legislature to advance the Riverwalk and \$287,000 from FEMA to evaluate the integrity of the wastewater berm. It will include a technical aspect and a community engagement aspect with a committee. State funds will go through Business Oregon.
- Tina mentioned that the Tourism audit is being worked on.
- They are still waiting for the Events Contract to be reviewed by the attorney.
- The Boards and Commissions Reception will be held on April 28 with a catered dinner at the Community Center.
- Docks and Waterways Committee doing good work
 - Code amendments being reviewed by the attorney
 - Kiosk is ready to install
 - Harbor Master discussion
 - Marine Patrol unit discussion

- Closer to getting the reservoir repaired
- Focusing on budget. It will be a challenging budget year. Everything is more expensive.

ADJOURN – 2:57 p.m.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor