



COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING

Wednesday, May 18, 2022

APPROVED MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Rick Scholl
Council President Doug Morten
Councilor Patrick Birkle
Councilor Stephen R. Topaz
Councilor Jessica Chilton

STAFF PRESENT

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

Sharon Darroux, Engineering Manager
Jenny Dimsho, Associate Planner
Crystal King, Communications Officer
Tina Curry, Event Coordinator

OTHERS

Steve Toschi	Stephanie Patterson
Jane Garcia	Brady Preheim
Jennifer Pugsley	Amanda Heynemann
Don Patterson	

OPEN PUBLIC HEARING – 5:30 p.m.

TOPIC

1. Purchase of Used Equipment described as a 30 Passenger Boat for Tourism Purposes

City Administrator John Walsh reported that the hearing is required to purchase used equipment. Tourism has been looking for a boat for quite some time and found this one. They do have a City barge, but it has reached its capacity. The purchase price is not to exceed \$250,000. They are purchasing it used and retrofitting it. It will be used for tourism activities.

Councilor Topaz has a problem with it hauling stuff. It will not work as a cargo mover with seats in it. Walsh clarified that the seats are removable. Councilor Topaz said it will not hold a tractor. Council President Morten suggested going to the army surplus store to see if any larks are available. They can hold huge pieces of equipment.

Councilor Topaz asked how and where it will be tied up to load passengers. Walsh said it will either be a side load onto a dock, or it can go right up to the beach with the front down. Councilor Topaz talked about loading and unloading 30 people. If the docks are full of yachts, how is that going to work without dedicated dock space? Mayor Scholl responded that they have taped off the dock in certain sections before. Councilor Topaz said that would require people to go up and down the ramp. It would not be a problem if there was a dock at the end of the Veneer property. Mayor Scholl said there will always be issues going up and down the ramp. Councilor Topaz wants to talk logistics. Where will the cars park? Mayor Scholl said there is available parking. Walsh explained that the boat is intended to be moored at St. Helens Marina. It will have a side and front load. Landing gear will come down to unload into the

sand. Councilor Topaz suggested they load and unload at the Veneer property. It is ideal with parking right there. Council President Morten disagreed. He would rather walk down a ramp than a rocky parking area. The boat has a three-foot gate. He does not see a problem getting people on there. Councilor Topaz said they need to come up with better logistics. Councilor Birkle said that is not what they are doing here. This is micro-management. They must determine if this use of money will serve the purpose. Administration needs to take care of the where, why, and when with staff.

Mayor Scholl talked about what the cost involved. Walsh said a lot of the work to be done is based on the Certificate of Inspection (COI) for the Coast Guard. Councilor Topaz asked if they could back out of the sale if they cannot get it re-certified. Walsh responded that it is a condition of the purchase.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

◆ Jim Coleman. He reviewed his comments:

- It is an interesting idea to buy a boat in Florida and truck it to Oregon. They do not know what they are going to get.
- He heard that they will be hauling equipment to Sand Island. Wasn't that turned over to a private individual? Walsh responded that the City still owns the Island.
- In 2019, the City had it with the Island and leased it to a private company. They turned over a public park to a private individual for their economic gain. They also gave away a ferry boat to Sand Island Park. The title has been transferred.
- He listened to a lot of the discussions about the purchase virtually. The purchase was brought to the Council during public testimony with a sense of urgency. He requested they slow down the process.
- Does the boat have a current survey? It is done by a private marine surveyor.
- The Coast Guard requires an annual inspection for boats carrying over six passengers. He suggested they talk to the Coast Guard about local requirements.
- He heard discussion about adding a ramp to the bow for unloading purposes. That would need Coast Guard approval.
- Landing on the beach may be a problem when the boat is full of people.
- Columbia River can be very dangerous. Is the boat safe enough for rough conditions?
- Sand Island has 90 campsites. How many people do they want on there at once? Last year, it took four hours to get help. The Police Chief said they will not respond to the Island.
- Is the Tourism Department going into the guide business? He heard ideas about charters for fishing, biking, etc. Does that put the City in competition with other guide businesses?
- How much money will be spent on a captain and crew for the year?
- How much is the annual insurance?
- How much is the moorage? He heard that Brad Hendrickson was going to provide that. They need to separate it from the Sand Island Park business.
- With the purchase price of the moorage and transportation from Florida to Oregon, he approximates that it will cost \$300,000.
- The main purpose is to support the Sand Island Sandcastle Competition. It would be good to get a better understanding of the long-term purpose for the boat. It does not make sense if it is only used for a couple weekends a year.
- This is going too fast.
- There are several charter operators who would be interested in shuttling passengers to the Island for a couple weekends.
- It scares him to spend that much money on a sight-unseen boat from Florida.

- ◆ Brady Preheim. He thinks they should respond about the boat titled being transferred. That is not correct. They leased a boat, but they never purchased it. Council President Morten said that was not correct. They purchased the boat, or it was donated, from RJ Brown. Brady went on to say that he is in favor of the boat. For the first time, they have a tourism director getting things done. Now that tourism is taking the money and making things happen, people are upset. She can make money. It is annoying that Council is even making this decision. It was made by tourism and should be spent by tourism. These business decisions need to happen faster. The money should have been left in an account to be spent for tourism. This is a known person with known successes. They should let her manage the department the way she does.
- ◆ Steve Toschi. The boat is needed to expand the ability to get public to and from Sand Island. He sees people lined up at the dock to get back and forth. At a couple events last year, there were 30 people waiting in the rain for a very long time. This boat will be better at maneuvering around in the river. It will also help expand the enjoyment of this beautiful area. The money is coming out of the tourism budget and should be able to be spent. He agreed that they do need assurances that the boat will arrive in sound condition. They need to make sure that the boat will run and do what they need it to do. It needs to lawfully perform the services they expect to keep people safe. The boat will be very popular and will expand offerings for citizens and others.

Councilor Birkle clarified that tourism is not a department. It is not money they tax citizens for, just like a lot of other funding sources. It is their duty to oversee expenses.

Councilor Chilton wants to make sure that the marine survey was done before they acquire it. What will the annual insurance cost? Walsh responded that he has not seen the formal survey. The Barge Works Company, which is in the business of building and certifying barges, has seen and inspected the boat. They are fixing anything that is wrong with it. Council President Morten agreed that they do need a survey for the insurance value of the boat. It can either be done now or when it arrives. Councilor Topaz said a Coast Guard qualified survey could be done in Florida.

Mayor Scholl is willing to vote yes, pending that the survey meets standards. Insurance will not be that bad. Councilor Chilton pointed out that this is a 30-person boat and not a personal boat, so probably costs more.

Jim Coleman said insurance will be around \$5,000/year. He talked about the survey results possibly showing the need for additional repairs.

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING – 6:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Scholl, Deputy City Recorder.

ATTEST:

/s/ Kathy Payne
Kathy Payne, City Recorder

/s/ Rick Scholl
Rick Scholl, Mayor