

Town of La Conner
Town Council Meeting
November 8, 2011 – 7:00 p.m.

The meeting of the regular La Conner Town Council was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

Present: Mayor Hayes, Councilmembers Brunisholz, Hubbard, Tracey, Welch, and Wright.

Also present: Administrator Doyle, PW Director Lease, Finance Director Taylor, Fire Chief Taylor, and Sergeant Wise.

Approval of Agenda:

Councilmember Welch moved to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Brunisholz. Carried 5-0.

Approval of Minutes:

Councilmember Hubbard moved to approve the minutes of the October 25, 2011 special and regular town council meeting. Seconded by Councilmember Wright. Carried 5-0.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Councilmember Tracey moved to approve checks 11006 through 11055 in the amount of \$181,523.71 as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Hubbard. Carried 5-0.

Approval of Payroll:

Councilmember Brunisholz moved to approve payroll checks 2390 through 2401, 201076 and direct deposits in the amount of \$40,075.38 as presented. Seconded by Councilmember Tracey. Carried 5-0.

Community Comments: Time was given for members of the audience to address the council regarding issues that are not on the agenda.

Tom Hill, 705 S First Street, stated that he attended a meeting of the Port of Skagit Commissioners and they are considering funding dredging of the channel through county taxes. He emphasized the importance of the economic impact of the channel on all of Skagit County.

Chamber Report: Marci Plank, Chamber Director, reported that Art's Alive had \$23,000 in sales and she thanked the Public Works crew for their help with the event.

Ms. Plank stated that the La Conner Tourism Marketing group is meeting monthly and have established a task force to take charge of going forward on the Ken Saunderson Marketing plan.

Revenue/Expenditure Report: Finance Director Taylor presented a written report to the council. There were no questions regarding the report

Department Head Reports:

Planner: There were no questions on the report included in the council packet.

Finance: Councilmember Welch inquired about the projected Hotel Motel taxes for the remainder of 2011. Ms. Taylor estimated that the town would receive \$22,000 for the months of November and December.

Public Works: There were no questions on the report included in the council packet.

Water & Wastewater: Councilmember Wright inquired about the reconfiguration of the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Mayor Hayes stated that the reconfiguration should be complete in February 2012.

Fire Department – There were no questions on the report included in the council packet.

Sheriff's Department – There were no questions on the report included in the council packet.

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Hayes reported that the cost of dredging the channel is \$1.2 million. He stated that the Upper Skagit and Swinomish Tribes, Shelter Bay, La Conner and Dunlap Towing will meet on November 9 to discuss the issue further. He stated that the Port of Skagit has allocated up to \$400,000 for dredging in their 2012 budget, but are looking for partners for the project.

Council Committee Reports:

Councilmember Hubbard stated that the Arts Commission met and they have not had any responses to the Sculpture Show invitations. She stated other cities are offering artists \$2,000 to place their art, and La Conner only gives \$200 to the artists and there have not been any sales in recent years. The art is set to be juried on December 7, 2011.

The committee discussed poetry in the sidewalk on Second Street but that will take place in the future.

Flood Control: Administrator Doyle reported he had researched temporary flood walls. He stated that it is more effective than sand bagging and faster to deploy. The height range of the temporary flood wall would be between 56" and 64" and cost approximately \$500,000 - \$580,000. He stated they are reusable, easy to store, and are strong enough for vehicles to drive on.

2012 Hotel Motel Allocations – Public Comments:

Tim Detweiler, Director of the Museum of Northwest Art, stated that they have 514 members and bring 12,000 to 15,000 visitors to the museum annually. He stated that they are planning to coordinate with the opening of the Chihuly Exhibit in Seattle and have an exhibit that focuses on the history of Pilchuck. He stated that there will be another glass exhibit in Vancouver, and hopefully people will stop in La Conner. He stated they are requesting funding for 2012.

Liz Theaker, Quilt Museum Director, stated she would like MONA to receive \$1,000 in Hotel Motel taxes in 2012, and at least \$55,000 in funding for the Chamber of Commerce.

Tom Hill, 705 S First Street, stated the economic conditions are having a huge impact on the businesses in La Conner. He stressed working together to promote the businesses in La Conner and the importance of the Chamber in bringing people to La Conner.

Clark McAbee, Historical Museum Director, stated that the museums are the economic engine of the town. He stated he would like the council to fund the three museums and the Chamber because it is the marketing tool for the town.

Rick Thompson, Chamber President, 416 N Third Street, stated that the last few years have been very challenging for the businesses. He supported the Chamber receiving funding since it will be taking the lead on implementing the Saunderson Marketing Group study.

Cathy Wyman, PO Box 424, stated that the town should be increasing the funding to the Chamber for promoting the town and not pay the bond payments.

Finance Director Taylor stated that Ordinance No. 890 did set forth the percentages for paying the parking lot bond, but Ordinance No. 692 was silent on the manner in which the town would pay the Maple Hall bond. She reviewed the two scenarios that council had requested in regards to paying the Maple Hall, parking lot bonds and funding the Hotel Motel recipients.

Councilmember Tracey recommended that the council fund the parking lot bond with \$14,532, give the Chamber \$70,000 and give the other museums \$2,000 each in 2012. Councilmember Welch recommended using \$5,000 toward the Maple Hall bond. Councilmember Brunisholz questioned if more funding increases tourism dollars. Finance Director stated that the two scenarios requested brought the general fund balance down to \$78,000 and \$64,000 respectively. She stated that the general fund would not be able to sustain paying the bonds in 2013 unless the economy turns around.

Councilmember Brunisholz moved to allocate the Hotel Motel taxes by reducing the Chamber funding to \$52,000, fund the Maple Hall bond at \$20,000, the parking lot bond at \$14,532, and reduce the other recipients in half. Motion failed, due to lack of a second.

Councilmember Tracey moved to allocate the Hotel Motel taxes by funding the Chamber \$70,000, the parking lot bond \$14,532, \$4,000 for restroom supplies, and \$2,000 for each of the three museums and \$1,500 for the La Conner Arts Commission in 2012. Seconded by Councilmember Hubbard. Councilmember Wright made a friendly amendment to the motion that any excess Hotel Motel money received in 2012 would be set aside for the bond payments. The friendly amendment was accepted by Councilmember Tracey. Motion carried 3-2, Councilmembers Brunisholz and Welch voted nay.

2012 Preliminary Budget: Council requested another budget meeting from 5 – 7 p.m. on November 22nd to assess the preliminary budget at that time.

Public Hearing – Preliminary 2012 Budget: Mayor Hayes opened the public hearing at 8:11 p.m. Dan O'Donnell, 328 N. Third Street, stated the preliminary compost budget before the council was \$110,000 short and if all the improvements were made, the ending fund balance in compost would be \$48,500. He felt this was risky and the fund balance should be approximately \$100,000. He suggested increasing the septage receivables to 12 cents per gallon; hold back on all capital improvements for five years; and stated we would get some surprises from the State Auditor's Office.

He recommended hooking up to the PUD water line at Alder Road. He stated that there would be \$13,500 in reconciliation costs from the City of Anacortes in 2012.

Mayor Hayes closed the public hearing on the budget at 8:21 p.m.

Policy on Internet Protocols: Councilmember Welch provided the council with information on internet protocols and recommending using the City of Yakima policy as a template for La Conner and the disclaimer from the City of Bonney Lake as a template, with modifications. Administrator Doyle agreed to draft a policy and have it reviewed by the Town Attorney, Brad Furlong.

Towing Junk & Abandoned Vehicles: Administrator Doyle stated the Town currently does not have an ordinance for towing junk and abandoned vehicles. Discussion followed on who would pay for towing a vehicle and the process involved. It was the consensus of the council to move forward on this issue.

Miscellaneous: None

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Lorraine Taylor, Town Clerk

Ramon Hayes, Mayor