

Town of La Conner
Town Council Meeting
January 12, 2021 – 6:00 p.m.

The meeting of the La Conner Town Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Hayes.

Present: Councilmembers Brunisholz, Leaver, Stokes, Chamberlain and Wohleb.

Also present: Administrator Thomas and Finance Director DeGoede, Public Works Director Lease, Planner Manville, WWTP Operator Wynn, Fire Chief Reinstra and Sgt. Willard of the Sheriff's Department.

This meeting was held electronically on Zoom. Information to join was posted at Town Hall, the published Agenda in the La Conner Weekly News and on the Town Website.

Public Comments: No public comments.

Presentations: **La Conner School District Levy** - Rich Stewart and Maureen Harlan of the La Conner School District discussed the 2021 School Levy proposal up for citizen's vote on February 9, 2021. This levy is 1.45 per thousand, which is less than the last one at 1.50 per thousand. The Enrichment Levy is not to be used for basic education and teachers' wages. The funds will go towards the following:

- 1) STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math)
- 2) Athletics and CO Curricular
- 3) Braves Club (after school program)
- 4) Safety and Security
- 5) Special Education

In the last year they have saved over a million dollars by refinancing the school loan. Tribal annual contributions are \$500,000 as well as extra funding for staff members and other activities.

At this time, the plan is to reopen the school the first of February for grades one through three and by the end of February, will be in a hybrid model, half in the morning and half in the afternoon. They will also continue to offer online classes for families not comfortable sending their kids until vaccinated, which looks to be summer for full availability of the vaccine. To date, they have had no COVID cases with staff or students and are screening 100 to 140 people a day.

Mayor Hayes expressed his support and stated the La Conner School is the heart and soul of the community.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of Agenda

Approval of the Minutes of December 8, 2020

Approval of the Minutes of December 16, 2020 Special Meeting

Accounts Payable:

December 2020 Closeout	<u>Checks 23736 - 23769</u>	<u>\$385,778.09</u>
	Total December 2020 Closeout	\$385,778.09

January 12, 2021 Claims:	Checks 23770 – 23782	\$93,576.01
Auto Payments:	201673 Parking Meter Processing Fees	\$4.44
	201674 CC Payment Processing Fees	\$140.80
	<u>201675 4th Quarter Leasehold Taxes</u>	<u>\$1,390.10</u>
	Total January 12, 2021 Claims	\$95,111.35

Payroll of January 5, 2021	Checks 5320 - 5328	\$20,838.00
Auto Payments:	DCP #201670	\$2,291.00
	PERS #201671	\$10,995.07
	PR Taxes #201672	\$5,736.43
	<u>Payroll Auto Deposit</u>	<u>\$19,414.71</u>
	Total Payroll	\$59,275.21

Councilmember Leaver moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion carried 5/0.

Chamber Report:

Chamber Director Carter has highlighted The Birds of Winter Months on the website and Speaker Paul Bannick will do a Zoom presentation on January 28th about Snowy Owls. The La Conner Daffodil Festival is based on self-guided tours that encourages visiting La Conner. She is waiting for Roozengaarde's updated Bloom Map and when we can expect to see some color. The photo contest will have three categories: kids twelve and under, teens and adults. The 2020 painting contest winner "Trumpets of Spring" by Cindy Davis is the 2021 Poster. Saturday March 6th, the La Conner Kiwanis will host a craft fair/spring bazar in the parking lot between the Library and Crescent Moon Yoga. They will be selling smoked salmon and fresh cut flowers. This year there will not be a Kiwanis Salmon BBQ. It is too early to know about the Tulip Festival, all events and activities are on hold depending on the COVID restrictions, however, they are working on a virtual parade and contests. The La Conner Frequent Shopper Cards will continue through February with two more drawings.

Revenue and Expenditure Reports:

Mayor Hayes was relieved with the 2020 year-end Sales Taxes at 93.55% of the estimated budget. Hotel Motel was down by 20%, but that is without Canadian tourists. Property Taxes came in as always and REET Taxes were almost three times what we were expecting.

WWTP:

WWTP Operator Wynn installed a new compost screening device at the plant. The old one will be surplus later this year.

Sheriff's Department:

Sgt. Willard spoke with Cindy Verge, the Director of the Tulip Festival. She did receive the 2021 Grant from the County to fund traffic control, so that was positive news. She has not heard anything from either Roozengaarde or Tulip Town.

December was very quiet in Town. He has increased foot patrol downtown day and night. Hopefully it will make a difference.

Administrator's Report:

Administrator Thomas stated Skagit County Emergency Management reported we had 204 COVID Cases last week in Skagit County and this week there were 215 new cases, which equates to 315 per 100K in population. Our goal is 25 per 100K population.

Mayor Hayes expressed his gratitude to Marianne Manville for the excellent service she has provided the Town during her time as Planner. On the 19th of January 2021, the new Planner, Kevin Cricchio will assume his position as the Town Planner. Planner Manville will assist in the transition.

Planner's Report:

Planner Manville confirmed she will complete the task of updating the La Conner Codes on density and setbacks. It should come before Council for adoption the last meeting in February or the first meeting in March

Mayor's Report:

The Mayor is seeing more young families and professionals moving to La Conner. Several are working via computers. One has developed an amazing computer-based history walking tour of the Town. He is currently out of Town but is planning on sharing it with Council in the near future. Also, the Town's History project is fully underway with plans for presentation to Council coming up.

Committee Reports:

Utility Committee Report:

Councilmember Brunisholz attended the Utility Committee Meeting to discuss the Anacortes water billing. Mr. O'Donnell's calculations show we are losing about \$7,000. However, we are a very small player at a 2% position in water use. There is not much we can do, but Administrator Thomas is sending a letter to Anacortes expressing our view on how they are calculating the reconciliation.

Arts Commission:

Councilmember Leaver noted there was nothing to report directly related to the Arts Commission, but did want to mention the next First on First night is scheduled for February 5, 2021. It will focus on a valentine theme that will hopefully bring people to Town.

Axthlem Agreement – Pioneer Park Shelter Repairs

Public Works Director Lease explained this is the agreement for the repairs to the Pioneer Park Shelter from damage in the wind storms. He has been working directly with WCIA for cost of repairs.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve the Mayor to sign the Axthlem Agreement for the repairs to the Pioneer Park Shelter. Motion seconded by Councilmember Stokes. Motion carried 5/0.

PUBLIC HEARING – Comprehensive Plan Updates & Hedlin Amendment Request LU20-30:

Planner Manville explained the process for public comments. Letters received are in the Council Packet, however she did receive four more. Planner Manville confirmed all Councilmembers did receive and read the four new comment letters she sent via email before this meeting. All requirements to include notifications have been complete. There will be two Public Hearings, the first one is site specific for the rezoning of the Hedlin property from public to residential, and the second one is the periodic update of the Transportation Plan which will bring our Comprehensive Plan in compliance with the Growth Management Act.

Mayor Hayes opened the Public Hearing at 6:53 p.m.

Amanda McDade – Resident of 304 Maple Avenue requested more time to form a citizen's committee to review all options and funding to preserve the Maple Ballfield, before passing the Hedlin Property rezoning tonight. She also knows there were many other people that felt the same about this issue, who wanted to be at this meeting, but couldn't for various reasons.

Anne Hays – Resident at 616 Tillinghast had no comment but requested to be a party of record.

Catey Ritchie – Resident at 11767 E. Caledonia Street requested more time to set clear goals and decisions on rezoning. Because of her background in land preservation and environmental issues she is familiar with funding resources that are available. She also noted the rezoning addressed five parcels and there are six. Planner Manville will look into it.

Mike Ritchie – Resident at 800 Finley Lane is not necessarily opposed to zoning changes, but he is asking for more time to explore every viable option. Everyone grew up playing on that ballfield so there is an emotional element, but they also have to focus on the reality and needs that have to be met.

Jules Riske – Resident of La Conner also requested the delay of the zoning amendment for a citizen's collaboration of the Maple Ballfield and goals for funding. She is not adverse to rezoning and development, but also wants to be sure all options are considered in preserving the public space.

Frances McDade – 221 Maple Avenue also requested a little more time to review options.

Amy McFeely – Resident of 818 S. Fourth Street believes keeping the ballfield as Public zoning does meet many aspects of our growth management plan. Planning and development also has an addition to economic roots that should be rooted in stewardship. The Hedlin Family is an exemplary example of land stewardship. We need to look at stewardship and not just the economic impacts.

Mayor Hayes closed the Public Hearing at 7:07 p.m.

Mayor Hayes explained 1 ½ years ago the Hedlins approached the Town about the purchase of the ballfield. Unfortunately grants at that time were not a viable resource. The Town's concept is to provide affordable housing and preserve public space/park. That is why the Agreement has dedicated 25% for a park and 60% for housing; the residential parcels would fund the project. The Town would not profit from this as any extra funds would go towards staff time and other public needs. Mayor Hayes stated nothing is excluded or off the table by the rezoning and he is a supporter of citizen organizational groups for common goals.

Planner Manville explained parks are allowed in residential zones, but residential is not allowed in public zones. The current zoning map has a notation that the ball park public zoning would remain in place while the lease is in place. Once the lease has expired, the zoning of the property would have to be reconsidered, which is where we are at now. Parks are allowed in residential zones and can be done by a Conditional Use Permit. If this rezoning goes through, there would be nothing to preclude the citizens advisory committee to come together to make it all happen and at the same time, it would allow the Town to move forward for funding purposes.

Councilmembers Brunisholz is in favor of the park and a citizen's advisory group. We have another year for coming up with the funds to purchase the property. The rezoning has to happen anyway, and it becoming all residential doesn't mean we can't have a park.

Councilmember Wohleb stated this has been very challenging for Council as maintaining parks is very important to them and they don't want to see a developer come in and purchase the property for development. The \$37,000 payment was a path that bought us some time. She is also in support of a citizens group participating and helping to solve this problem. She asked if we could pull the rezoning amendment from the vote tonight to give more time.

Planner Manville explained if we remove the rezoning of the property from tonight's adoption, we would have to wait until next year at this time to bring it before Council.

Councilmember Stokes explained one of the drivers for this rezone is to solicit developers for the project. The \$37,000 paid was just for the first right to purchase the property. In the next few months, we are going to have to put down another \$37,000 to buy us another year. During that time, we need to find funding.

Councilmember Leaver is in favor of the rezoning and if citizens come up with the money to buy it and keep it as is, fine. If not, let's proceed as planned.

Councilmember Chamberlain confirmed zoning it all residential will not affect having as much park as possible.

Mayor Hayes stated the next benchmark is the second interest payment due April 15th should the Council decide to pursue the second-year option. With the residential rezone, the whole property could be designated as a park. Nothing has been excluded by the rezone, but on the other side, there is not unlimited time. What the park is going to be is a long way from deciding. Anyone can put an idea on the table.

Administrator Thomas noted the sale has to close by April 21, 2022.

Mayor Hayes acknowledged Charlie Edwards of the Little League who was participating in the Zoom Council Meeting. Nothing is for sure at this time, but if the project goes through as planned, the portion set aside for the park will not be big enough for a ballfield. The Mayor reached out to Senator Joe Williams of the Swinomish Tribe, to discuss the need of a community sports complex. The Senator has been advocating for this for years

Ordinance 1196 – Comprehensive Plan Updates and Hedlin Amendment Request LU20-30:

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve Ordinance 1196 amending the 2020 Comprehensive Plan. Motion seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion carried 5/0.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2020 TIP Amendments

Mayor Hayes opened the Public Hearing at 7:34 p.m.

No Comments.

Mayor Hayes closed the Public Hearing at 7:34 p.m.

Resolution 577 – 2020 TIP Amendments:

Planner Manville explained this resolution is in conjunction with the ordinance just passed, amending the 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve Resolution 577 amending the 2020 TIP. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement - ESO:

Administrator Thomas explained this is for the CAD integration for the Fire Department.

Councilmember Brunisholz moved to approve the Mayor to sign the ESO Agreement for the Fire Department. Motion seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement - Professional Services Marianne Manville-Ailles:

Administrator Thomas explained the amended agreement in the packet is to extend services with our current Planner, Marianne Manville-Ailles, to complete a few projects as well as assisting in the transition period of the new planner. However, because she is no longer Skagit Surveyors, we can't amend the original agreement. She will be signing an agreement like the one for the new planner, but it will be in her name as sole proprietor.

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the Mayor to sign the agreement for professional services with Marianne Manville-Ailles. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement – Professional Services Kevin Cricchio:

Administrator Thomas stated this agreement is for the new Town Planner scheduled to begin work on January 19, 2021. He spent a number of years with the City of Anacortes as well as other jurisdictions.

Councilmember Wohleb moved to approve the Mayor to sign the agreement with Planner Cricchio. Motion seconded by Councilmember Stokes. Motion carried 5/0.

Resolution 578 – Recognition of Linda Talman:

Mayor Hayes read Resolution 578 recognizing Linda Talman's years of service on the Planning Commission. She served from 1977 through 2020.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve Resolution 578 in appreciation of Linda Talman's years of service on the Planning Commission. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

Resolution 579 – Appointment to the Planning Commission:

Mayor Hayes has appointed Rick Dole and reappointed Marna Hanneman to the Planning Commission for terms that expire December 31, 2026

Councilmember Leaver moved to approve the appointment of Rick Dole and reappointment of Marna Hanneman to the Planning Commission for terms to expire December 31, 2026. Motion seconded by Councilmember Brunisholz. Motion Carried 5/0.

Whatcom Street Closure:

Public Works Director Lease explained the original traffic plan for the Snapdragon Hill Project was to leave one lane open during the project. A full street closure will make the project more efficient and timely. The closure will only be during working hours. Notification to residents will happen tomorrow after this is passed.

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the Whatcom Street Closure for the Snapdragon Hill Project. Motion seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion carried 5/0.

Mayor Roundtable:

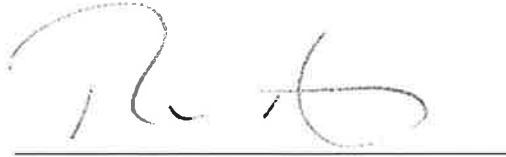
Mayor Hayes had a citizen request to reduce the 2021 Business License Fees by 25%. No response from Council.

Planner Manville reviewed the parcels involved in the Hedlin property zoning. It is correct as passed.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 p.m.



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor