

Town of La Conner
Town Council Meeting
September 12, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.

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

Present: Councilmembers Taylor, Dole and Wohleb.

Also present: Administrator Thomas, Finance Director DeGoede, and Public Works Director Lease, Planner Davolio and Fire Chief/Code Enforcement Officer Reinstra.

This was a hybrid meeting held in-person and 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.

Councilmember Wohleb moved to excuse Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion seconded by Councilmember Dole. Motion carried 4/0.

Public Comments:

Resident Gary Nelson complained about people parking in his off-street spots. The right of way has been fenced off around the Center Street Project, which has reduced availability for parking. The parking issue has become a nuisance and a safety issue, as emergency vehicles do not have access to the area.

Resident Kathy Shiner brought drug paraphernalia she found at the park. Fire Chief Reinstra and Councilmember Dole advised she should call 911 to report a finding and never remove it from the site, as it is considered a crime scene and can be dangerous. Fire Chief Reinstra took her findings to report and for disposal.

Resident Linda Talman discussed her conversation with Planning Assistant Eills. She was told there are nine types of housing we have to have, which Talman noted the Town is not required to have all of them with a population under 25,000. Talman requested slowing down development as we have a long time to reach 25,000 in population.

Ken Stern of the La Conner Weekly News discussed the Ordinance Council will be approving later in the meeting on the News Rack regulations. He requested to change the contact information to just a phone number or email as the cost to order new contact labels is up to \$15.00 each. Also, he requested reviewing the appearance requirement. Councilmember Taylor noted his news boxes are used quite frequently; this is more directed to ones that are not.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of Agenda

Approval of the Minutes of the August 22, 2023 Meeting.

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|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Accounts Payable: | Checks | 26366 - 26412 | \$103,494.90 |
| | Electronic Pmts. | 2018146 US Bank Fees | \$402.33 |
| | | <u>2018147 Invoice Cloud Fees</u> | <u>\$157.40</u> |
| | | Total Accounts Payable | \$104,054.63 |
| Payroll of September 5, 2023: | Checks 5770 - 5777 | | \$3,829.23 |
| | AWC Benefit Trust | #2018141 | \$13,646.08 |
| | Deferred Comp | #2018142 | \$2,429.21 |
| | PERS Retirement | #2018143 | \$10,262.06 |
| | Teamsters Benefit | #2018144 | \$8,716.00 |
| | Auto Payroll Taxes | #2018145 | \$8,081.61 |
| | <u>Payroll Auto Deposit</u> | | <u>\$24,494.69</u> |
| | | Total Payroll | \$71,458.88 |

Councilmember Wohleb moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Councilmember Dole. Motion carried 4/0.

Administrator’s Report:

Administrator Thomas discussed the following:

- The next Council meeting of September 26th will include a Special Meeting starting at 5:00 p.m. for the first 2024 Budget presentations from Public Works and the Fire/Code Enforcement.
- The Town and Fire District 13 had a meeting to discuss coordinating fire equipment. Both need a fire boat and a ladder truck. The next step is a possible Ad-hoc committee with members from both the Town and Fire District 13 to discuss future needs. Councilmember Carlson, Councilmember Dole and Administrator Thomas are interested in representing the Town on the committee. There has also been a meeting with the Port regarding their fire concerns.
- It was recommended to send a constituent representing the Town to the School Board Meetings. Mayor Hayes as agreed to attend.
- We need a policy to establish the publication of agendas and notices for Council and all the commissions. We are looking for other posting sites, such as in front of Maple Hall and at the Library. It was noted currently the agenda is available by notification to the public by text and email as well.

Planner’s Report:

Planner Davolio stated the State’s 60-day review for the Adult Businesses regulations has expired with no comments. Council will have an ordinance for approval the first meeting of October.

Fire Department/Code Enforcement:

Discussions involved parking issues and an encampment on Washington Street. Chief Reinstra stated people are getting creative in finding parking.

WWTP:

Administrator Thomas gave a brief overview of the timeline for the Plant upgrades. Currently we are in the engineering and planning stage at an estimated cost of \$200,000, covered by a grant of \$163,000 and the remainder balance to Sewer. He will be requesting two proposals, one with Shelter Bay included and the other without. We are hoping to have this done by the end of 2024, giving us the type of facility, we will need and the estimated cost range.

Council Committee Reports:

WAB:

Councilmember Taylor reported on the WAB meeting discussions. The agreement between the Tribe and the Town will need to be updated to accommodate the future upgrades. Also, a meter needs to be installed at the sewer cross connection on Morris to monitor capacity. Rates for next year are in review.

Arts:

Councilmember Taylor noted the Art Commission will resume their meetings after a summer break, and the Fish Art is back in place after repairs.

Communication Committee:

Councilmember Dole noted the Committee had an information table at the Welcome Braves Day. Also, it was suggested to have a sign on dedicated emergency shelters.

Emergency Management Commission: Councilmember Dole reported as follows:

- The Upper Skagit Tribe did approve the placement of ecology blocks on their property for flood control.
- We are working on a joint meeting with Council and the Swinomish Emergency Management Committee.
- The Great American Shake Out is coming up in October; brochures will be passed out for that.
- Public Works Director Lease has met with most of the property owners regarding the placement of ecology blocks and sandbags on their property and has received supportive responses. Administrator Thomas is working on the liability agreements, once signed, Public Works can begin the process of staging.

Strategic Plan:

Administrator Thomas stated Council could request changes in the Plan, but could also pass it tonight as is. **It was the Council consensus to table the Strategic Plan until Councilmember Chamberlian returned.**

Town of La Conner WWTP Award:

Mayor Pro Tem Carlson read the award from the Department of Ecology for the 2022 Award for High Performance of a Treatment Facility.

Ordinance – Newspaper Boxes:

Discussions included required contact information on the boxes, removal of abandoned boxes, required locations of placement, and maintenance standards for appearance.

Resident Scott Price suggested requiring a permit or business license as they are doing business in La Conner.

It was the consensus of the Council to table the Ordinance for further discussions.

Approval for the Purchase of the Ecology Blocks:

Public Works Director Lease presented the estimate for the ecology blocks in the amount of \$15,710 for Council approval.

Councilmember Wohleb moved to approve the purchase of the Ecology Blocks. Motion seconded by Councilmember Taylor. Motion carried 4/0.

Approval for the Purchase of Sandbags:

Public works Director Lease requested Council approval for the purchase of filled Polly Sandbags in the amount of \$19,157.04. He intends to reuse these for two years.

Councilmember Dole approved the purchase of the Polly Filled Sandbags in the amount of \$19,157.04. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 4/0.

Approval of Generator:

Public Works Director Lease explained there is a waiting list for the purchase of the pumps. His solution is to trade in his existing generator for a larger one from Birch Equipment, with a final cost of \$51,867, to keep the lift station going. It is approximately the same dollar amount as the purchase of the pumps.

Councilmember Taylor moved to approve the trade in and purchase for a larger generator in the amount of \$51,867. Motion seconded by Councilmember Dole. Motion carried 4/0.


Mayor Roundtable:

Council discussed the possibility of a moratorium on Short Term Rentals until our regulations have been adopted. Administrator Thomas will draft an Ordinance for the next meeting.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 6:55 p.m.



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor