

Town of La Conner

Town Council Special Meeting
September 28, 2021, 5:00 p.m.
Maple Hall
108 Commercial Street
La Conner, WA 98257

Mayor Hayes called the Special Meeting of the La Conner Town Council to order at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Councilmembers Leaver, Stokes and Chamberlain.

Also Present: Administrator Thomas, Finance Director DeGoede, Public Works Director Lease, Assistant Fire Chief Avery and Sgt. Willard of the Sheriff's Department.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to excuse Councilmember Wohleb. Motion seconded by Councilmember Stokes. Motion carried 3/0.

Policing and Code Enforcement:

Administrator Thomas read the comparison of crimes from 2018 through 2020. The crime rate has not really changed through the years and is mostly property related.

It was agreed a vehicle for a code enforcement officer is needed for either a full-time or two part-time positions. \$75,000 has been included in the 2022 Budget for code enforcement. As code enforcement, they would work in unison with the Sheriff and communicate with the citizens.

Chief of Fields Services Baldwin, Undersheriff Clark and Sgt. Willard of the Skagit County Sheriff's Department attended the meeting. It was explained they have the same number of vehicles during the day as at night. If there is a trend of issues, they supply extra patrol to address the issues. If the Town wants additional patrol, it can be requested and included in the agreement. Response time is dependent on prioritizing calls, if people are getting hurt, that call has priority over a property crime.

Mayor Hayes and Administrator Thomas had a meeting with the Chairman and Chief of the Swinomish Tribe per Council request. They proposed to give it a year for more time to put together a proposal to be available to Council the first quarter of 2022. We will be extending with the Sheriff for at least one more year, but if the Town wants increased policing, it comes at a price. Mayor Hayes questioned the Sheriff's cost of \$217,000 for an additional officer to cover 40 hours a week. It was explained \$98,000 is a one-time cost, for the first year, for the new vehicle. After that, it drops to \$136,000 with \$20,000 towards the maintenance of the vehicle and for the projected lease of a new vehicle in six years.

There were discussions on the extra duties that could be negotiated in the contract with the Sheriff, such as parking violations, traffic and animal control. They can also handle noise ordinance, shooting in Town limits and illegal parked vehicles. But these need to be in the contract to enforce. Funds from tickets written for these violations would go to the Town.

Councilmember Leaver requested to be a part of the code enforcement hiring process by being included in the interview process. Mayor Hayes stated the hiring and firing of personal is the job of the administration, but out of courtesy he could make that person accessible to Council before hire.

Resident Stuart Hutt's main concern is the response time and felt there should be a Town survey or vote on who they want for policing.

Resident Rich De Shon expressed the need to work inclusive as a cooperative effort with the Town, Sheriff and Swinomish, as this affects everyone.

Resident Jerry Shull is concerned about the kid's safety and would like a stop sign at the corner of Fourth and Center Streets. He requested a letter be sent to the County Safety Department for an investigation. Mayor Hayes will follow up after discussing it with staff.

Resident Rick Dole shared the Sheriff and Swinomish Police worked together with a positive outcome of a property issue. Also, he is in support of hiring a code enforcement officer and recommended the Sheriff help in the selection of a quality person for the position.

Resident Dan O'Donnell suggested combining a regular deputy officer and code enforcement as one position.

Resident Ivan Carlson would like to see accountability of the Sheriff's 80 hours of service a week the Town is paying for. Sheriff Clark stated it is from the ten-minute response time and he can provide a report with the information.

Chief Baldwin confirmed the Sheriff and the Swinomish Police have a good working relationship.

Mayor Hayes stated there is no question that citizens are looking for enhanced policing. This is not entirely the fault of the Sheriffs. We are buying what we can afford

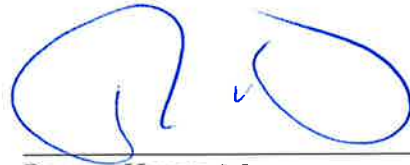
There were discussions on the outcome of thefts in Town.

This meeting was also held remotely By Zoom, but audio was not always clear for the participants in Zoom.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:00 p.m.



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor