

Town of La Conner
Town Council Meeting
November 14, 2023 – 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 Taylor, Carlson, Dole, Chamberlain and Wohleb.

Also present: Administrator Thomas, Finance Director DeGoede, Public Works Director Lease, Planner Davolio, Fire Chief/Code Enforcement Officer Reinstra and Sgt. Holmes of the Sheriff's Department.

Due to technical issues, this was held in-person only.

Public Comments:

Resident Sandy Stokes was relieved to see the flood measures setup.

Resident Linda Talman discussed the speed bump on Center Street. It is a trip hazard in the dark and suggested reflective paint.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of Agenda

Approval of the Minutes of the October 24, 2023 Council Meeting.

Accounts Payable:	Checks	26533 - 26583	\$219,392.89
	Electronic Pmts.	2018165 - US Bank Fees	\$132.96
		2018166 – Invoice cloud Fees	\$159.40
		Total Accounts Payable	\$219,685.25
Payroll of November 5, 2023:	Checks 5801 - 5808		\$4,313.06
	AWC Benefit Trust	#2018160	\$13,646.08
	Deferred Comp	#2018161	\$2,429.21
	PERS Retirement	#2018162	\$10,301.26
	Teamsters Benefit	#2018163	\$8,716.00
	Auto Payroll Taxes	#2018164	\$8,075.26
	Payroll Auto Deposit		\$24,322.70
		Total Payroll	\$71,803.57

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

Revenue & Expenditure Reports:

Mayor Hayes noted Sales Tax is at 86.6% and Hotel Motel, REET and the Fire Tax have exceeded the budget estimates.

Planner's Report:

Planner Davolio discussed waiving the \$1,455 application fees for requested Comp Plan amendments. Council tabled it for the next Council meeting.

Fire Department:

Fire Chief Reinstra discussed the Fire Department's plans on moving forward with refurbishing and installation of the old reader board. Plans are to install it at the Fire Station, but he still has to get the permits from the County. The school has agreed to pay half of the installation cost, that is estimated to be around \$10,000. They are hoping the Town will contribute the other half. The Fire Association stepped up and paid for the refurbishing costs.

WWTP:

WWTP Operator Wynn was going to join the meeting by Zoom, but because of technical difficulties he was unable to. On his behalf, Finance Director DeGoede explained they had to replace the bucket to the front loader as it was

no longer useable for the compost hauling. They had to go through Pape for the purchase as venders are limited on these items. The cost for the new bucket is \$14,498.10. No budget amendment will be needed, he will reallocate his costs due to the budgeted repairs to the auger will not be done this year.

It was the consensus of the Council to approve the purchase of the new bucket for the front loader.

Sheriff's Department:

Sgt. Holmes noted the patrolling emphasis has been targeted on North Sixth Street and Maple Avenue for speeding.

Public Works:

Public Works Director Lease stated flood measures are now in place. There have been no negative responses from businesses or residents.

Council Committee Reports:

Arts Commission:

Councilmember Taylor noted there was no meeting, but everyone was busy with Art's Alive. The power outage for the first half of Saturday did affect the sales and processing payments.

Parks Commission:

Councilmember Wohleb explained they are on the path to move forward with the Waterfront Park Pavilion.

Mayor Hayes noted he, Administrator Thomas and Marna Hanneman met with Senator Muzzall on funding of the Fire Boat.

Center Street Project:

Planner Davolio stated the building application has been submitted and is under review. There are several issues that need to be discussed with them at the upcoming meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING – The Formation of the Transportation Benefit District

Mayor Hayes Opened the Public Hearing at 6:41 p.m.

Public Comments:

Resident Sandy Stokes questioned why a Town our size would need this.

Resident Linda Talman asked if it included non- motorized needs.

Resident and Owner of La Conner Weekly News Ken Stern asked what the estimated revenue would be from the tax.

Resident William Smith asked who or how the board will be selected for the Transportation Benefit District.

Mayor Hayes closed the Public Hearing at 6:51 p.m.

Ordinance 1233 – Formation of the Transportation Benefit District:

Administrator Thomas recapped the process. This ordinance is the formation of the Transportation Benefit District. It will be a separate entity from the Town with separate meetings and Council as the board. There are two ways of collecting the tax, by vehicle tabs or sales taxes. Also, the board can vote on approving 1/10 of 1% tax, but above that would require a vote. 3/10 of 1% is the maximum taxation allowed. How it will be taxed and the percent will be decided later, but the plan is to collect it from sales tax and start with the one tenth of percent tax.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve Ordinance 1233 for the Formation of the Transportation Benefit District. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

2024 Transportation Improvement Plan Updates:

Public Works Director Lease explained this is a 20-year plan with the priority projects of First Street – Commercial to Caledonia, Morris Street Mill/Overlay and S. First Street Reconfiguration with flood prevention.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2024 20-Year Transportation Improvement Plan Updates.

Mayor Hayes opened the Public Hearing at 6:57 p.m.

No Community Comments

Mayor Hayes closed the Public Hearing at 6:58 p.m.

Resolution 626 – 2024 20-Year Transportation Improvement Plan:

Councilmember Wohleb move to approve the 2024 20-Year Transportation Improvement Plan. Motion seconded by Councilmember Dole. Motion carried 5/0.

2024 Preliminary Budget:

Finance Director DeGoede explained the only changes made since the last meeting were minimal updates to medical insurance and other rates.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2024 Preliminary Budget:

Mayor Hayes opened the Public Hearing at 7:04 p.m.

Resident and Owner of the La Conner Weekly News, Ken Stern, asked for funding for the library to be included in the 2024 Budget. Mayor Hayes explained he has met with representatives of the Library on funding mechanisms for the Library, such as programs or possibly through Hotel Motel with a targeted tourist event.

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

Sacred Heart Church Tree Removal Fee Wavier:

Planning Director Davolio shared the Church is in the Historical District, however they did hire an arborist and plans on replacing the tree with one that won't affect the structure of the building.

Councilmember Carlson moved to deny Sacred Heart Church the wavier of fees for the tree removal. Motion seconded by Councilmember Taylor. Motion carried 5/0.

2024 Property Tax Revenue Source:

Finance Director DeGoede explained this is the annual 1% tax increase up for Council vote. The estimated increase for the Town if Council approved it would be \$3,536.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2024 Property Tax Revenue Source:

Mayor Hayes opened the Public Hearing at 7:21 p.m.

Resident Linda Talman questioned what the tax was.

Mayor Hayes closed the Public Hearing at 7:23 p.m.

Resolution 627 – 2024 Property Tax Revenue Source:

Councilmember Taylor moved to approve the 1% tax increase for the 2024 Property Tax Revenue Source. Motion seconded by Councilmember Carlson. Motion carried 5/0.

Ordinance 1234– 2023 Budget Amendment:

Finance Director DeGoede noted this reflects the closure of the Fire Truck Fund 212 with the balance to be transferred to the General Fund Fire Apparatus Reserve. Also, the General Fund is transferring the Street Impact Fees for 2023 to the Street Fund.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve Ordinance 1234 amending the 2023 Budget. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement – Department of Commerce Solar Grant:

Councilmember Wohleb explained this is for the Feasibility Study for the Fire Hall Solar Project, in the amount of \$26,520. The Fire Hall qualified for the grant as it a Town emergency shelter.

Councilmember Dole moved to approve the Department of Commerce Solar Grant Agreement. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement – Swinomish Housing Authority Infrastructure Improvements for 931 Maple Avenue:

Public Works Director Lease explained this for a water main update and fire suppression.

Councilmember Dole moved to approve the Mayor to sign the Swinomish Housing Authority’s Infrastructure Improvement Agreement for 931 Maple Avenue. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

2024 Utility Rates:

Administrator Thomas explained this is just up for discussion. Previously the Town implemented a 5% plus CPI annual increase. The Ordinance for the Rates will expire by the end of this year. There has been no rate analysis, but Council will need to decide to either build up reserve or assume more debt for upcoming utility projects. After discussion, it was decided to reach out for public input.

Mayor Roundtable:

Councilmember Wohleb encouraged the Emergency Management Commission to expand on strategies for power outages. Councilmember Dole noted the Commission completed the temporary flood plans and are now looking at earthquakes and other emergencies. Power outages will be a part of those.

There was the suggestion of harvesting tidal power from the Channel. Solar panels are not the only option. Also, there were concerns the Cell Tower went down during the power outage. Public Works Director Lease explained there is not enough room for all the Cell Towers to have a generator. The outage was not just centered in La Conner.

Executive Session:

Mayor Hayes explained this Executive Session is regarding Collective Bargaining and should last up to 20 minutes. There is no plan for Council discussion or decision after.

Executive Session began at 7:48 p.m.

Executive Session Ended at 8:08 p.m.

No further Council discussions.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 8:08 p.m.



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor