
CITY OF SEDRO-WOOLLEY

Regular Meeting of the City Council
March 26, 2014 – 7:00 P.M. – Council Chambers

ROLL CALL: Present: Mayor Mike Anderson, Councilmembers: Kevin Loy, Germaine Kornegay, Brenda Kinzer, Keith Wagoner, Hugh Galbraith, Rick Lemley and Brett Sandström. Staff: Recorder Brue, Finance Director Nelson, City Supervisor/Attorney Berg, Public Works Director Freiburger, Planning Director Coleman and Police Chief Wood.

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 P.M. by Mayor Anderson.

Pledge of Allegiance

Consent Calendar

- Approval of Agenda
- Minutes from Previous Meeting
- Finance
 - Claim Checks #178877 – 178979 plus EFT's in the amount of \$164,262.05 (Void Check #178902)
 - Payroll Checks #58068 to #58081 plus EFT's in the amount of \$184,591.97
- SWPD Chief Appointment

Councilmember Lemley moved to approve the consent calendar items A through D. Seconded by Councilmember Galbraith. Motion carried (7-0).

Mayor Anderson informed the audience of the retirement of Police Chief Doug Wood and the appointment of Lin Tucker as his replacement for Police Chief.

Rotary Presentation – Mark Christ

Mark Christ of the Sedro-Woolley Rotary Club presented a drawing of proposed improvements to the Metcalf Park to include restrooms, moving of Tesarik Field and maintaining the Babe Ruth Ball Field within the plan. Christ spoke of the criteria they followed and introduced Steve Massey, head of Rotary's special projects committee who will be heading the project. He then requested approval to build restrooms on City property and answered Council questions regarding the restrooms, turf surface and the backstop.

Police Chief Wood added that the McIntyre Foundation has inquired and is interested in funding a viewing area for the skate park with picnic tables and portable bleachers. He noted they are working on gathering pricing and the project would coincide with the Rotary project.

Councilmember Sandström moved to allow Rotary to proceed with their project. Seconded by Councilmember Kornegay. Motion carried (7-0).

Councilmember Wagoner moved to allow the McIntyre Foundation to proceed with their project. Seconded by Councilmember Kornegay. Motion carried (7-0)

Public Comment

Peter Herd – 8567 Garden of Eden Rd. read a statement in opposition of the proposed industrial zoning change within the Garden of Eden area. He cited increased air, noise and water pollution as well as increased flooding, traffic and a decrease in property values.

Dorothy DeFremry – 316 Garden of Eden Rd., noted she has e-mailed each Councilmember with her concerns. She spoke of concerns with road access, a salmon stream running through the area and short notification. She noted that people live there due to the area being largely undeveloped. DeFremry encouraged Councilmembers to read the e-mail she sent which addresses her concerns.

John Fuller – 23117 Jones Road, addressed the Council to express his appreciation to Police Chief Doug Wood and Police Department. He also extended his congratulations to Lt. Tucker as the Chief's replacement and congratulated the Mayor and Council for their decision on Lt. Tucker. Fuller spoke of the well trained and professional department, community policing and being treated like friends and neighbors. He encouraged the city to maintain the philosophy within the department. Fuller's comments were met with a large round of applause.

Linda Tilley – 127 N. Central, thanked Police Chief Wood for his years of service and the betterment of the community. She noted she is proud to say she's from Sedro-Woolley. Tilley also addressed the property rezone and questioned why there is consideration of bringing in more industrial land when what we have is not fully utilized. She spoke of the need to fill in the core rather than spreading it around and also addressed the need for a thriving downtown.

Roy Lindsay – 22928 Apple Ln. requested Council to not proceed with the rezone. He spoke of the effect on the value of the property.

Elizabeth Fernando – 508 Creek Ln., announced the first piece of public art is now hanging in City Hall. The acquisition of the piece was facilitated by the Arts Council. Fernando announced the upcoming open house with the artist to be held on April 8th at 4:00 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING

Utility Tax Rates

City Supervisor/Attorney Berg addressed the need for funding of the police department in regards to staffing. He also addressed the decrease in the size of the force as well as the elimination of a full time code enforcement officer and a full time transcriptionist as a

result of the recession. He noted all city staff has been doing more with less still maintaining a high level of service. Berg stated the path is no longer sustainable and Chief Wood identified the critical issue and began the change through his retirement. Berg reviewed internal changes placing the emphasis at the patrol level. A Code Enforcement Officer will be hired with the funds from the retirement of the Administrative Secretary. He then reviewed the proposed ordinance which increases the utility tax by 4%. The additional tax revenue would help to fund additional officers.

City Supervisor/Attorney also noted the retirement of Sgt. Dougher, changes in the labor market and training. He presented a history of the utility tax increase and compared the tax with neighboring cities.

Berg entertained Council questions including the amount of increase to the average rate payer (\$3.25 per month), rehiring of officers and code enforcement training.

Police Chief Wood thanked everyone for their kind words. He commented on the great Police Department that is high functioning and well respected. He noted the need has been there for a long time and has been a top priority of the Council. Wood stated he believes the residents to be supportive of the utility tax increase for the purpose of maintaining the Police Department.

Mayor Anderson opened the public hearing at 7:38 P.M.

Linda Tilley – 127 N. Central, stated she wants to fund police department but addressed being on a fixed income, current cost of the bill and cost increases for everything. She also questioned if the Police Department goes beyond the city limits for calls. She addressed the inequity in the bill being only two people in her residence paying as much as a household of five people.

Pete Shamp – 819 Lucas Dr., presented a history of rates and increases back to 2000. He compared the billing on a duplex from 2000 to 2014 in comparison with assessed value and rental market. Shamp also spoke of road blocks for anyone trying to do projects or for businesses going in. He stated he doesn't agree with the increase and commented that you can't grow a city on taxes you can only grow a city on growth.

Paul Eaton – addressed the Council stating he is the officer hired to fill the last new position in the department as the 14th officer ten years ago. He encouraged Council to pass the increase to fund the well understaffed police department. He shared a couple incidents as an officer that greatly impacted him as a police officer where manpower was a major hindrance and could have caused a great liability to the City. Eaton stated the days of having one officer on duty alone are gone. Speaking as a citizen he noted that he and his neighbors expect a service that the Police Department is not able to provide. The money the increase would take from his monthly budget is well worth the price. He closed by asking the Council to approve the increase.

Heather Sorsdal – Sedro-Woolley Police Officer and a previous resident of 1106 Talcott, read a list of critical incidents the police department has responded to in her almost six years with the department. She also noted that the first thing an officer learns in training is not to act without backup stating that currently there are many times this is not possible

as they work alone. Sorsdal spoke of meeting Councilmembers who are appreciative and supportive of their work and asked that they return the favor and give the officers what they desperately need.

Melissa Dougher – 938 Presidio, currently employed as a Detective in the Department and is due to retire July 1st. She noted her whole career the department has worked understaffed. The chronic understaffing makes it difficult to provide professional service and is unsafe for the officers. Speaking as a citizen Dougher urged the council to fix the problem and noted she is willing to help by paying the tax because the benefits outweigh the cost.

Jason Harris – addressed the Council stating in January he was promoted to Sergeant and previously served 3 ½ years as a Detective noting they were tough years. He spoke of the drug emphasis, seizing cars, mobile homes and cash. Harris commented that they are now falling behind the curve due to inadequate staffing and rather than being proactive they are a reactive department.

Judy Haugness – 401 Warner St., a former Whatcom County resident, having lived in Sedro-Woolley for 18 months. She addressed the Council and said she never considered the safety issue before she moved here and has had two incidents since living here and feels very vulnerable in her own home. She noted the great response from the Police and does not want to be put in a position where they can't respond. Haugness stated she supports the increase in order to have adequate police service.

Matt Vollans – 613 Cedar Tree Dr., a long time citizen and Sedro High School graduate and a five year officer of the police department. He thanked Chief Wood for his service noting he was his DARE officer in grade school. Vollans voiced his support for the increase in utility tax. He noted the city has a population of over 10,000 with crimes of a city over 10,000. The City leaders need to make responsible decision and staff its police department like a city over 10,000. He spoke of responding to shootings and stabbings and the safety risk to officers working alone. He also stated we cannot rely on neighboring departments to help and need to be a self-sufficient. Vollans expressed the need for more officers on street and it should not take tragedy to open our eyes.

Rhonda Lasley – 350 N. Central, stated she was sworn in on March 6th 2012 and has 17 years previous experience with the Skagit County Sheriff office. Lasley said one of the reasons she resigned from the Sheriff office was she was not going to risk her life to provide less than mediocre services. She noted that she is proud to be part of the department and questioned how you put a value on a level of service for protection of property and life. She spoke of a shooting incident and being on duty alone with her back up coming from Burlington.

Mike Ellis – 10000 block of Sterling Rd., a nine year employee thanked everyone who has supported the police department especially Chief Wood for his mentoring and City Supervisor/Attorney Eron Berg for the great lengths in creativity in order to provide the basic services. He also thanked the citizens for taking time to be involved in government.

Tara Ellis – 10000 block of Sterling Rd. and wife of Officer Ellis. Presented a perspective from a wife of a police officer being overworked, and understaffed. She

noted officers are working when they shouldn't because there are no other options. She also commented that as the wife of a police officer it's hard to hear that a few extra dollars aren't worth the safety of the officers and begged everyone to support them and keep them safe.

Steve McCartt – 815 Evans Dr., Sedro-Woolley school teacher stated that he chose Sedro-Woolley to live because of the beauty of the town. He addressed suspicious activity in his neighborhood and noted they have installed a home security system due to the activities. He commented there is nothing that devalues the cost of a city more than crime and paying for peace of mind is worth the increase. McCartt urged support of the increase.

Elizabeth Fernando – 608 Creek Ln. and owner of Simply Silver and More in downtown addressed the council and said most people are speaking of the cost but it needs to be looked at as an investment in the community. People and businesses will not come if they don't feel safe. She noted she believes the downtown to be on the cusp of having a great downtown and urged everyone to invest in the community, shop downtown and to please vote yes.

Jed Cates – Sedro-Woolley resident and a Burlington Police Officer, noted he has responded several times to help out the officers in Sedro-Woolley. He spoke of services provided in Burlington that are not being handled in Sedro-Woolley due to lack of manpower. He also addressed the advantage of back up as an officer in Burlington because they have four to five officers per shift. He encouraged everyone to definitely vote yes to the increase.

Lin Tucker – 9744 Collins Rd. spoke of the officers who have addressed the Council tonight noting they are a product of several years of a lot of hard work and doing innovative things and trying to put things together with not enough. He spoke of the highly trained officers and their dedication. He also addressed the \$100,000 worth of overtime last year. Tucker spoke of the risk of seeing officers leave to other departments and urged the Council to support the department.

Carla Hull – 923 Presidio Pl., commented that people know there is only one officer on duty and they can get away with things. She also spoke of her husband being a Burlington police officer and would not want him working for Sedro-Woolley and working alone on duty. She stated she is against taxes but would be willing to pay in order to provide safety which should be a priority.

Sandra Tucker Miller – 3091 State Route 20, stated she lives outside the city limits but commented on the amazing job the officers do and supported the need for more officers. She encouraged people to shop downtown and would support the increase if it makes it safe for the police and citizens.

Mayor Anderson closed the public hearing at 8:44 P.M. He stated this was a first read and no decision will be made until the next meeting.

Councilmember Lemley addressed the audience and thanked them for their input and comments.

Councilmember Loy commented this solution is just keeping the roof from caving in and we need to come up with other solutions.

NEW BUSINESS

Building, Planning & Engineering Fee Schedule

Planning Director Coleman discussed the proposed Building and Planning Fee Schedule and noted that Public Works Director Freiberger will address the Engineering Fee Schedule. Colman stated the fee schedule was restructured in 2009. He noted the Building and Planning Department have made some minor adjustments to a missing fee and some housekeeping type items.

Public Works Director Freiberger addressed the engineering fees. He noted the current fees are complex and the objectives were to make sure the fees were affordable and to simplify the use for easier interpretation. He stated it is based on a model that is based on a percentage of the valuation. It drops the fees by approximately 45% of what they were. The change will bring us to a comparable level to our sister cities.

Mayor Anders noted this is a first read with no decision until the next meeting.

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND REPORTS FROM OFFICERS

Minor Contracts Approved Under SWMC 2.104.060

Planning Director Coleman – reported on a recent public hearing regarding a city proposed rezone on the Urban Growth Area in the vicinity of Jones Road. He noted notices were sent with a good turnout for the hearing. The feedback was unanimously against the rezone and some are in attendance tonight and addressed the Council tonight. Coleman requested guidance as to how to proceed.

Council discussion ensued regarding notification, whether the R-5 zoning should be maintained and whether the area in question should remain in the Urban Growth Area, other areas that would like to be included within the Urban Growth Area, the NIMBY philosophy and current unusable industrial land. Council direction was for the rezone to be taken off the table and question what the property owners view as the future for their property.

Further discussion ensued regarding the pitfalls of becoming a bedroom community, focus on how to improve our local economy and not focus on trying to be someone else.

Public Works Director Freiberger – reported that there was an error in the ranking for the STPR funds and we may be back in the running for the design portion of the SR9/Jameson arterial. He also addressed the rotor replacements at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Rotor #3 appears to be badly corroded and he will be bringing another purchase order for its replacement for Council approval.

City Supervisor/Attorney Berg – reported on the Skagit Council of Governments vote to proceed with a non- weighted vote on the bylaws. He reviewed the non-weighted vote and its effect for the city with discussion following.

Councilmember Kornegay – thanked Police Chief Wood for his service and noted she is looking forward to Chief Tucker. She also thanked the public for their comments this evening.

Councilmember Wagoner – questioned the City’s role in the OSO landslide.

City Supervisor/Attorney Berg reported that Assistant Fire Chief Olson lead a confined space team on Saturday at the OSO landslide with 13 crew members from the Sedro-Woolley Fire Department.

Councilmember Galbraith – reported the devastating loss of a former classmate from Darrington along with three others missing in the OSO landslide. He requested everyone keep the people affected by the slide in their thoughts and prayers.

Police Chief Woods – reported that volunteer Bob Parks who has been doing graffiti abatement will be moving to Arizona.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting adjourned to executive session at 9:30 P.M. for the purpose of Personnel under RCW 42.30.144 for approximately 20 minutes with no decision expected.

The meeting reconvened at 10:05 P.M.

Councilmember Galbraith moved to adjourn. Seconded by All. Motion carried (7-0).

The meeting adjourned at 10:05 P.M.