



CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

July 01, 2020

City Council of the City of Ephrata, Grant County Washington met in regular session on July 01, 2020. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Bruce Reim. Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic and Governor Inslee's Proclamation 20-28, this meeting is being conducted telephonically using the ZOOM audio only conferencing.

Members Present: Mayor Bruce Reim, Mayor Pro Tem William Coe, Council members Mark Wanke, Matt Moore, Valli Millard, Sarah McDonnell and Tony Mora.

Staff Present: City Administrator Mike Warren, City Attorney Anna Franz, Fire Chief Jeremy Burns, Public Works Director Bill Sangster, Community Relations Director Traci Bennett and City Clerk/Finance Director Leslie Trachsler.

Motion to excuse Council member Allstot. (m/s Moore/McDonnell) Motion carried.

Pledge of Allegiance was said. No public signed up to speak.

Agenda: There were no additions or corrections to the agenda.

Presentations: Council Member Will Coe, as the City's representative on the Grant County Economic Development Council (EDC), gave a brief presentation on what is happening with the EDC. Since the COVID-19 Virus outbreak site visits have stopped and economic development is focusing more on sustainability in place of recruitment during this time. There were two Ephrata businesses approved for a CARES Act Grant from EDC.

Consent Agenda: Motion was made to approve consent agenda. (m/s Moore by unanimous consent) Motion carried.

Items on the consent agenda are as follows:

Claims #92117 through #92135 in the amount of \$45,436.57
Claims #92094 through #92096 in the amount of \$410.14
Claims #92115 and #92116 in the amount of \$261.69
Payroll Check #46684 through #46702 in the amount of \$35,383.60
Payroll Claims #92097 through #92114 in the amount of \$235,876.34

Payroll Direct Debit in the amount of \$5,875.00
Payroll Direct Deposit in the amount of \$173,450.50
Minutes of the June 17, 2020 Council meeting

“Scout Me in Day” July 29, 2020 – Proclamation: Grand Columbia Council of the Boys Scouts of America has requested Mayor and Council proclaim July 29, 2020 as “Scout Me in Day”.

Motion to proclaim July 29, 2020 as “Scout Me in Day”. (m/s Mora/Moore) Motion carried.

Report on Governor’s Proclamation 20-23.5 – Ratepayer Assistance and Preservation of Essential Services: Director Trachsler gave a brief report on the Governor’s Proclamation regarding the suspension of late fee assessments for utility accounts and disconnection for non-payment.

The Proclamation mandates that utility providers develop a COVID-19 Customer Support Program and post it on the entities public website by July 10th. In March, Council passed Ordinance 20-01 which authorized the suspension of late fee assessments and disconnection for non-payment for a period of 6 months – March thru September.

The City also provides an opportunity for customers to make payment arrangements for past due amounts in an effort to avoid disconnection and information on community service organizations that provide assistance. So in essence, the City offers a customer support program. A Public Announcement has been prepared and will be posted on the City’s website.

In light of the fact that it is highly possible the pandemic could last beyond September and in anticipation of being able to continue to provide support to our customers who have been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic, staff has researched several options for Council consideration.

1. Establish a reduced utility rate for qualifying individuals/small businesses
2. Reduce outstanding balance by a set percentage for qualifying individuals/small businesses
3. Continue to suspend late fees for qualifying individuals/small businesses

Customers would complete an application requesting consideration and providing proof that they are qualified. Once approved, then a payment agreement would be worked out between the customer and the city.

Staff recommends option 3 which aligns best with current practice; provides payment arrangements tailored to the customers’ needs without accruing late fees. Based on the delinquent account analysis presented, this could represent a negative financial impact of between \$800 - \$1000 a month.

Council discussion ensued.

Motion to proceed with option 3 as presented. (m/s Moore/Wanke) Motion carried.

CARES Funding – Supporting Local Businesses impacted by COVID-19: Director Bennett advised Council that after the City has been reimbursed for its COVID-19 related expenses from the CARES Funding the remaining balance will be used to provide small business grants based on eligible use requirements for CARES Funds.

The application process will be modeled after the Lodging Tax Committee process. We will reach out to the Chamber and a committee will be formed which will be tasked with reviewing each application for compliance with the established guidelines and make recommendations for approval.

Accept Donation for BOLD Scholarship: A \$25 donation was given in support of the BOLD program, per policy, all donation must be accepted by Council.

Motion to accept \$25 donation for BOLD Scholarship Program. (m/s Moore by unanimous consent/ Millard) Motion carried.

City Administrator Report:

Mid-Year Budget Report: Director Trachsler reported on the budget to actual for January through June, 2020. Overall revenues are 11% below budget and expenses are 17% below budget. Compared to 2019 for the same time period, 2020 revenues are 3% less than 2019 and expenses are 12% less. Trachsler reviewed the specifics of several of the tax supported funds and enterprise fund.

General Fund – revenues are on target and expenses are 5% below budget. Cash balance has increase 24% from January beginning fund balance. Sales tax revenue is 6% above budget and 10% higher than this time last year. It is still too early to see the total effects of the forced closure of businesses to count on this trend continuing.

Park Fund – revenues are 13% below budget and expenses are 23% below. Cash balance has increased 100% from January beginning fund balance. With the pool closure there is a net savings of approximately \$150,000. Program fees are down as well as the corresponding expenses and park maintenance expense is 9% below budget.

Library Fund – revenues are 4% above budget and expenses are 2% below budget. Cash balance has increased 48% from January beginning fund balance. The roof is in desperate need of repair and staff recommends moving forward with this project.

Street Fund – revenues are 10% below budget and expenses are 8% below budget. Cash balance is 30% less than January beginning fund balance. Fuel taxes for the last two months have dropped considerable. May is 37% less than for the same period in 2019 and June is 35% less. Recommend re-allocation of property tax for the remainder of 2020 from Park Fund to Street Fund.

TBD Fund – revenues and expenses are on target. The Division Street Phase I Project is being combined with Phase II for construction in 2021.

Water/Sewer Fund – revenues are 2% above budget and expenses are 20% below budget. Cash balance is 55% higher than January beginning fund balance. Expenses for the emergency repair on Well #3 and the Wastewater Treatment Facility have not been invoiced as of yet.

All in all, the measures implemented by Council have been very effective and staff has been very diligent in monitoring expenses.

Staff recommends that moving forward we continue/implement the following:

- Continue to hold the line on non-essential spending
- Continue to closely monitor sales tax revenues
- Re-allocate 20% of Property Tax distribution for the remainder of the year from Park Fund to the Street Fund resulting in an increase to Streets of approximately \$116,000
- Move forward with contract to design necessary repairs on the Library roof

Council discussion ensued. Council consensus was to support all recommendations as presented.

There being no further business meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

Bruce Reim, Mayor

ATTEST:

Leslie Trachsler, City Clerk