



CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

June 20, 2017

City Council of the City of Ephrata, Grant County Washington met in regular session on June 20, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor Bruce Reim.

Members Present: Mayor Bruce Reim, Mayor Pro Tem William Coe, Council members Matt Moore, Valli Millard and Stephanie Knitter.

Staff Present: City Administrator Wes Crago, City Attorney Anna Franz, Community Development Director Ron Sell, Public Works Director Bill Sangster, Community Relations Director Traci Bennett, Police Captain Erik Koch, Fire Chief Jeremy Burns and City Clerk/Finance Director Leslie Trachsler.

Motion to excuse council members Wanke, Allstot and Mora. (m/s Moore/Knitter)
Motion carried.

Pledge of Allegiance was said.

No public signed up to speak.

Agenda: There were no amendments to the agenda.

Presentations: None

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

Items on the consent agenda are as follows:

Claims #86884 through #86942 in the amount of \$58,741.06
Manual Claims #86062017, 87062017, 88062017 and 89062017 in the amount of \$2,088.09
Manual Claim #86882 in the amount of \$1,728.00
Electronic Fund Transfer in the amount of \$17,915.28
Minutes of the June 7, 2017 Council meeting

Staff & Agency Reports:

Jeff Deal, et al from WSDOT: Jeff Deal addressed Council regarding the Washington State Department of Transportations (DOT) plans to re-strip a 1.4 mile section of Basin Street, SR28, from mile post 44.72 to 46.12 by Oasis Park area. They reviewed crash data for the last 5 years which revealed a total of 27 crashes along this segment, of which 18 involved left turning movements at approaches. This location recorded 25% more crashes than what DOT predicted. This portion of the highway currently consists of two 12-foot lanes and two 8-foot shoulders. They evaluated four alternatives to lower crash rates, address the baseline need and maintain driver comfort and pedestrian/bike safety.

1. Install advance warning signs – This alternative does not address the baseline need of crash reduction.
2. Re-strip to three 11-foot lanes with a 3.5-foot shoulder – This addresses the crash rates but lowers the shoulder width and run off the road crashes could go up.
3. Re-strip to three 10.5-foot lanes with a 4-foot shoulder – This provides adequate shoulder for pedestrian/bike traffic, performs at a safer level and has a strong benefit to cost ratio.
4. Re-construct roadway to two 12-foot lanes with two 6-foot shoulders – This widens the highway by 4-feet on each side, increases the footprint of the road, provides the best crash ratio but falls below the established benefit to cost ratio.

Alternative 3 provides the best benefit. DOT has discussed these options with the local bicycle group.

Council question and discussion ensued. When asked about implementation, Mr. Deal commented that the timeframe for option 3 would be this fall, possibly in September. The re-striping will take about a week. Discussion ensued regarding reducing the speed limit in this area. DOT has not conducted a recent speed study to determine the natural tendency. However, Mr. Deal advised that unless there is heavy enforcement, the change in speed limit is not beneficial.

Jake Maedke, local bicyclist, commented that it's a shame to lose what we currently have with the wider shoulders but understands there has to be balance between vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclist.

Bill Cox, local bicyclist, stated that with the current 8-foot shoulder only 4-feet is useable as there is debris on it. With the reduction in the shoulder, he would like DOT to be more diligent in sweeping that area. He also commented that in light of reducing the shoulder width he thought a reduction of the speed would be helpful.

Mayor Reim expressed appreciation for the DOT coming in and letting us know what they're doing. Council consensus is that option 3 is the better option. Jeff Deal stated that DOT will conduct a speed study after the striping to determine if speed is an issue and will follow up with Council to get any feedback on how it's working.

Fireworks Enforcement and Community Safety: Crago reported that aerial fireworks have been banned in Ephrata since 1991 due to the fire danger they present. Once again the Ephrata Police Dept. will team up with the Ephrata Fire Dept. to prevent injuries and accidental fires. There will be extra patrols on duty for all illegal and aerial fireworks enforcement.

Chief Burns reported that fireworks go on sale June 28th. The City licenses and inspects all stands. The call volume has gone down since the code change prohibiting aerial fireworks. Partnering with the police as the enforcement piece has been beneficial. In 2015 there were 481 fireworks-related injuries reported state wide and 239 fires caused by fireworks. Sparklers are the most common cause of injuries which burn at 1200 degrees.

Public Hearing – Community Priorities Street Maintenance Recommendation:

Mayor opened public hearing at 7:50 p.m. Crago gave a brief staff report. In 2013 the Citizens Community Priorities Team conducted a study to evaluate the needs of the community for the future 10 years. This Plan was adopted by Council.

- Phase I addressed public safety by asking voters for a 0.1% sales tax to fund two additional police officer positions. This was accomplished.
- Phase II was voter approval for a bond for new fire equipment. This was accomplished.
- Phase III is to address funding for street maintenance.

This winter has highlighted the need for street maintenance. There are no designated funding sources for streets. Crago reviewed the revenue history over the last fifteen to twenty years and historically we received large amounts of state/federal funding for streets. The roll back of state shared revenues in the late 1990's limited the ability to do regular street maintenance.

Crago identified two possible sources to increase revenues to provide the necessary funds for street repair and maintenance, both of which would not be implemented without voter approval and would require the forming of a Transportation Benefit District.

1. Dedicated sales tax
2. Fee on car tabs

Crago stressed that compared to other cities our size, we have fewer staff and our pay is less than the average, especially the senior-staff and elected officials. To move forward, first there would be multiple public hearings and meetings with civic organizations to gather public input. Two informational handouts would be sent out as an insert with the utility bills. Council would make the decision as to which funding option to take to the voters on November 8th and the question posed to the voters in April, 2018.

Public hearing closed at 7:57 p.m.

Street Maintenance Funding Proposal for Voter Approval: Council directed staff to proceed moving forward with the Street Maintenance Funding Proposal.

Authorize Administrator to enter Contract with Tommer Construction for Nat Washington Way Overlay Project: The bid for Nat Washington Way Overlay Project was awarded to Tommer Construction on May 17, 2017. Legal counsel has reviewed the contract and is now ready for Council approval.

Motion to authorize Administrator to enter contract with Tommer Construction for Nat Washington Way Overlay Project. (m/s Moore/Millard) Council discussion, motion carried.

Changes to the Backdoor Trail on Port Property: Informational only. Crago advised that the Backdoor Trail is encroaching on Port of Ephrata property along the western edge. The Port will be installing a fence that will run down the centerline of a portion of the trail where the property line is located. This will still allow for a 5-foot paved walking area.

Authorize Fire Chief to enter Memorandum of Understanding with MACC for iSpyFire program: Chief Burns has been working with MACC on a texting-based notification system using mobile phones for callouts. MACC is requesting a no-fee agreement for the operational use of iSpyFire. Legal counsel has reviewed.

Motion to authorize Fire Chief to enter Memorandum of Understanding with MACC for iSpyFire. (m/s Knitter/Moore) Motion carried.

City Administrator Report:

Office of Financial Management Population Estimate: Crago reported that the preliminary population estimate from the Office of Financial Management for Ephrata is 8005. A reduction of 15 from last year.

Construction updates: Pulverizing will begin tomorrow on Railroad Avenue. Chip shot will take place on June 28th and 29th on 14th and 15th Streets SW and Railroad Avenue.

Crews are working on the Division Street sewer line collapse.

Nat Washington Way overlay project will begin soon, the pre-construction conference is scheduled for tomorrow.

Splashzone Attendance: Attendance so far is slightly above average for the beginning of the season.

2017 Budget Report: Expenses are 15% below budget and revenue is 13% below. Cash reserves are up slightly and sales tax continues to be at a historic high.

There being no further business meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Bruce Reim, Mayor

ATTEST:

Leslie Trachsler, City Clerk