

CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP

November 7, 2017
6:00 P.M.



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MINUTES

Location: Bonney Lake Justice & Municipal Center, 9002 Main Street East, Bonney Lake, Washington.

- I. **CALL TO ORDER** – Deputy Mayor Randy McKibbin called the workshop to order at 6:00 p.m.
- II. **ROLL CALL:** Administrative Services Director/City Clerk Harwood Edvalson called the roll. In addition to Deputy Mayor McKibbin, elected officials attending were Councilmember Donn Lewis, Councilmember Michelle Surdez, Councilmember Dan Swatman, and Councilmember Tom Watson. Mayor Neil Johnson, Jr., Councilmember James Rackley and Councilmember Justin Evans were absent.

Councilmember Watson moved to excuse the absence of Councilmember Evans and Councilmember Rackley. Councilmember Lewis seconded the motion.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

Staff members in attendance were City Administrator Don Morrison, Administrative Services Director/City Clerk Harwood Edvalson, Police Chief Dana Powers, Public Services Director John Vodopich, City Attorney Kathleen Haggard, Deputy City Clerk Susan Haigh, Public Works Superintendent Ryan Johnstone, and Planning & Building Supervisor Jason Sullivan.

III. AGENDA ITEMS:

- A. **Presentation/Discussion:** 2017 Budget Amendment (Proposed Ord. D17-97).

City Administrator Morrison provided an overview of the proposed budget amendment, which includes modest changes to the general fund and a separate line item for Recreation Program expenditures and revenues. He explained other changes for specific projects and expenses incurred in 2017. He asked Councilmembers to route questions to himself or Chief Financial Officer Cherie Gibson and said the Council has until the final meeting of 2017 to approve the budget amendments.

Councilmember Swatman expressed concerns about the Recreation Program. He said the budget amendment does not account for time for staff in various departments who are supporting the program. Councilmembers discussed specific fund items and requested more information on park projects and city properties. Deputy Mayor McKibbin confirmed the Council will discuss this item again at several future Workshops. A public hearing is scheduled for November 14, 2017 at 6:00 p.m.

B. Report: Update on Water Consumption/Meter Testing.

City Administrator Morrison gave an overview of customer complaints about high utility bills and the steps taken by City staff to date. During the current meter reading cycle supervisors are following behind meter readers to capture meter information and correlate it with electronic meter read results. Staff will also send a sample of radio and touch meters for third-party testing. He expects more information will be available in mid-December. He said staff have had numerous calls and complaints over the past weeks and have prepared resources for customers online. They are now waiting for results on meter testing.

Councilmember Swatman said many customers are upset and asked where the Council stands. He said he raised concerns before utility rates were raised. Councilmember Watson said he supports reviewing budgeted projects to ensure funds are spent wisely and reduce rate increases. Councilmember Swatman said Council has provided suggestions such as monthly meter reads, adjusting when meters are read, moving to electronic meters, etc. Councilmember Watson said Council did not learn about many of the specific steps taken by staff until today, and the City did not do a good job notifying customers over the summer months or responding on social media. He said Councilmembers have received a lot of questions and do not have the information they need to respond.

Public Works Superintendent Ryan Johnstone explained how the manual and radio meters function. Councilmember Swatman said it is difficult for customers or staff in the field to know whether digital equipment is functioning properly. Superintendent Johnstone said he believes the third-party testing should address this concern. City Administrator Morrison outlined City communications on the website and social media, resources added to the utilities webpage, and information provided to customers by phone and in person. He addressed questions customers raised about faulty meters at other agencies, and noted that Bonney Lake has used radio read meters for several years. Councilmember Swatman asked the City to release more data. Councilmember Watson asked how many people received high consumption letters. City Administrator Morrison said about 2% of customers had bills over \$400. Superintendent Johnston said existing meter reading equipment has a feature to alert the meter reader about high consumption in the field, but this feature is not currently functioning.

Councilmembers discussed the Mayor's plan for an open house to provide information and respond to customer questions. Deputy Mayor McKibbin said the Council can schedule a special meeting, if they wish. Councilmember Watson noted several factors that impact customer bills such as rate increases, a very hot and dry summer, leaks, etc.

Councilmember Swatman said some customers have difficulty paying extremely high bills, but City staff must operate within the bounds of the municipal code and state laws. City Administrator Morrison said the Finance Department offers payment arrangements, but customers are not always happy with this option.

Councilmember Watson said he understands that the City's utility rates must be sufficient to meet Washington State expectations and obligations. Councilmember Swatman said he disagrees with the basis of Department of Health estimates for 'reasonable' rates based on median income levels. City Administrator Morrison said Public Works runs a tight operation and typically under-spends on staffing.

Councilmember Surdez asked for details on which customer questions have been resolved, and which types of meters these customers have. She said staff should respond personally to each customer and treat each case as unique. City Administrator Morrison said that is their practice, and staff are gathering data on the types of meter reading equipment used system-wide. Councilmembers discussed the difference between radio and manual meter reading, costs, and staff time associated with meter reading. Councilmember Surdez referenced articles customers are sharing about other cities, and she did not think those were comparable to Bonney Lake's system. Councilmember Watson praised utility staff who have been dealing with unhappy customers.

Councilmember Swatman said he is working on draft legislation for utility billing policies. Deputy Mayor McKibbin said he expects more information to be available from staff in the coming weeks, and the Council will discuss this topic again at the next Workshop.

C. **Review of Draft Minutes:** October 17, 2017 Workshop and October 24, 2017 Meeting.

The minutes were forwarded to the November 14, 2017 Meeting for action with minor corrections.

D. **Council Open Discussion:**

Community Updates: Councilmember Lewis discussed Bonney Lake High School activities including an upcoming Chef's Dinner and last month's groundbreaking on a new school in Tehaleh. The White River Family First Coalition will meet November 27. He said area schools are holding fundraisers and food drives.

Pierce County Regional Council (PCRC): Councilmember Lewis said he attended the PCRC meeting on October 19, 2017. They discussed the Regional Centers framework and the Puget Sound Regional Council will discuss this soon as well. They are looking at a shift to 'metropolitan' regions, which may be less beneficial to small- and medium-sized cities. He said Bonney Lake's process to implement a Centers Plan will put the City ahead of the curve.

Councilmember Lewis said he has enjoyed his experience and support from staff and citizens during his 8 years on the City Council. He reminded all that Councilmembers are residents, and they serve because they care about the City.

Big Give: Councilmember Watson said the 'Big Give' donation program expects to provide 900 meals for the holidays this year. He asked whether Police officers

can help distribute food to the homeless in the Bonney Lake area.

Councilmember Watson described the Sumner & Bonney Lake School District's vision for 100% graduation rates. He also said the Pierce County Connector (a shuttle service available to seniors, children, and disabled persons) is expanding and will serve an area from Sumner to the Bonney Lake Walmart.

Trails: Councilmember Swatman said the Foothills Trail group is looking for space to locate a trailhead for the Flume Trail. They are considering the City-owned property on Barkubein Road (Reed Property) as a possibility.

911 Dispatch: Councilmember Swatman said he received background data from the recent Police study and feels the consultants did not do a good job analyzing the dispatch calls and times. He said he will be part of a group meeting to discuss cell tower routing for 911 calls made near State highways.

E. **Discussion:** AB17-28 – Ordinance D17-28 – Sign Code Update (previously AB16-29).

Planning Commission Chair Grant Sulham reviewed the history and purpose of the proposed update. A U.S. Supreme Court ruling deemed that sign code restrictions cannot be based on the content or purpose of signs. The Bonney Lake Planning Commission voted unanimously to forward the proposed sign code updates to the Council for approval. Planning & Building Supervisor Sullivan and City Attorney Haggard explained the proposed changes to reorganize and clarify language and revise definitions. They noted that most regulations on permanent signs have not changed, and the major changes relate to temporary signs.

Councilmember Watson asked about whether mobile billboards are regulated; Mr. Sullivan said staff would have difficulty enforcing moving vehicles with attached signs, and City Attorney Haggard said the code addresses vehicles parked for the purpose of signage. Councilmember Swatman suggested the 10' limit for sign placement be reduced on city streets. Several Councilmembers agreed that a 10' limit will not work for parts of the city that have less space between the road and people's front yards. Council consensus was to amend the proposed ordinance to adjust minimum space to 10' on principal arterials (SR410 and South Prairie Road) and 5' for other roads.

Councilmember Swatman asked whether the limit of 4 temporary signs per property is reasonable. Mr. Sullivan said the standards are based on court rulings and were written to ensure enforcement is possible. City Attorney Haggard confirmed the City cannot simply ban temporary signs along SR410. Councilmember Watson asked staff to relay the proposed sign code to the Chamber of Commerce.

Council consensus was to forward the ordinance as amended to the next Meeting as a Full Council issue.

F. **Discussion:** AB17-108 – Ordinance D17-108 – Subdivision Code Update – Definition Correction.

Mr. Sullivan explained that the proposed ordinance amends the definition of new developments, to correct an error to Ordinance 1580 approved in October. Council consensus was to move the proposed ordinance forward to the next Meeting on the Consent Agenda.

G. **Discussion:** AB17-105 – Resolution 2622 – Extension of Employment Agreement of the City Administrator.

City Administrator Morrison said he had planned to retire when Mayor Johnson left office, but the Mayor has since run for another term. The proposed resolution extends his employment agreement through May 2018 to allow for a transition to a new City Administrator. The agreement also clarifies payout for his banked leave. He said the only staff with separate employment agreements are himself and Public Services Director Vodopich, and the proposed change would not impact any other staff person's leave. He asked the Council to take action soon, so he could settle his own plans. Councilmembers discussed the cost of leave payout. They noted this issue was discussed at the last Finance Committee meeting. Council consensus was to forward the item to Full Council Issues on the November 14, 2017 agenda for action.

IV. EXECUTIVE/CLOSED SESSION:

Pursuant to RCW 41.30.140(4)(a), the Council adjourned to a Closed Session at 7:45 p.m. for 30 minutes to discuss collective bargaining strategies/positions. The Council returned to chambers at 8:12 p.m.

V. ADJOURNMENT:

At 8:12 p.m. the Workshop was adjourned by common consent of the Council.


Harwood Edvalson, City Clerk


Neil Johnson, Jr., Mayor

Items presented to Council at the November 7, 2017 Workshop: None.

Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all documents submitted at City Council meetings and workshops are on file with the City Clerk. For detailed information on agenda items, please view the corresponding Agenda Packets, which are posted on the city website and on file with the City Clerk.