

PALOUSE CITY COUNCIL
Regular Council Meeting
February 14, 2023, @ 7:00 PM
PALOUSE CITY HALL | 120 E Main St.

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Tim Sievers called the regular Council Meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

ROLL CALL:

City Clerk Kelsey Blair, took Roll Call.

Councilmembers present: Bill Slinkard, Leslie Sena, Samuel Brink, Travis Deerkop, Robert Brooks, and Ann Barrington

Councilmembers absent: Sarah Bofenkamp

City staff present: City Administrator (CA) Misty La Follett, Police Officer Joel Anderson and Deputy Clerk Kelsey Blair

City staff absent: Public Works (PW) Superintendent (Supt) Mike Wolf

Councilmember Sena introduced a **MOTION** to excuse Councilmember Bofenkamp's absence from the meeting; the **MOTION** was seconded by: Councilmember Barrington. All council members approved, and the **MOTION** passed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Councilmember Sena introduced a **MOTION** to amend the January 24th, 2023 draft minute to change the words "mexi-pills" to say "fentanyl" on page 2. **MOTION** was seconded by: Councilmember Barrington. All council members approved, and the **MOTION** passed.

Councilmember Deerkop introduced a **MOTION** to approve the minutes from the regular council meeting on January 24th, 2023 as amended, the **MOTION** was seconded by: Councilmember Slinkard. All council members approved, and the **MOTION** passed.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:

Superintendent Wolf submitted a written report.

*PW report attached to minutes.

POLICE REPORT:

Officer Anderson presented his report to the Council.

14 calls for service and 2 callouts

- A citizen had a sick racoon under their house. Officer Anderson contacted Fish & Wildlife, who has "Human/Wildlife Conflict Biologist on staff to assist with these matters. The issue has been resolved.
- It was reported that, because of cars parked on main street near the gas pumps, a semi-truck ran over a Lions Club sign at the gas pumps. The reporting person thinks that the cars should be moved. The driver of the semi that ran over the sign is unknown. Officer Anderson parked in the area and observed a semi-truck that was able to make the turn without problems

- Officer Anderson assisted Garfield Marshall Hanley with a vehicle stop. The occupants of the car had felony convictions on record. The car was searched and a magazine loaded with ammo was found. The passenger was charged with unlawful possession of a firearm/ammo for a convicted felon.
- A dispute between neighbors about dogs was reported to Officer Anderson the next day after the incident. The incident has been documented.
- In Palouse there was a physical domestic violence call that Whitman County Sheriff's Office responded to. The next day Officer Anderson did a follow-up report. The suspect has been issued a no contact order and has been ordered to give up any guns.
- A parked truck was struck in a hit and run, causing minor damage. No suspects.
- Officer Anderson has sent off the 2nd 30 lb package of unwanted/expired medications to be destroyed from the pill drop box, located at the Police Station. Council asked how often it fills up, Officer Anderson said about 11 months.
- Brewfest – There were large crowds in Palouse, but no alcohol related events.
- New Police vehicle is delayed, now expected to be here in April

*PD Report attached to the minutes.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR:

City Administrator LaFollett presented her report to the Council.

- Asked council for permission to move forward with an RV Scheduling website that will cost \$20 per month and will allow customers to book online. Council had no objections.
- Palouse Arms building – a fence has been put up. Bl Jacob Billington and a potential buyer are going to meet this week. The realtor has asked if we would be able to work with a new buyer on the timeline for either getting the building torn down or repaired. CA LaFollett said that we would be willing to adjust the timeline within a reasonable manner.
- Palouse Caboose liquor license renewal - CA LaFollett asked council if anyone objected to this renewal. There were no objections.
- A response letter to the Dept of Ecology has been drafted by Varela. The mayor asked the councilmembers to review the letter and submit any changes to the mayor by the next day.
- Fire station roof - Insurance has approved a total roof replacement. CA LaFollett will send the quote to the fire board to sign.

OLD BUSINESS:

- TD&H F Street Bridge Update
 - Rich Utzman reported that he'll contact Loman in 2-3 weeks to schedule the final paving. The project has a cost overrun due to Loman being slow, therefore the TD&H person that oversees the work went over the budgeted amount of hours. We now owe TD&H an additional \$7497.51. Councilmember Brooks asked why doesn't Loman have to pay that since it was their fault. Mr. Utzman said that he would have a conversation with them.
 - Mr. Utzman asked for payment of pay application #3 which does not include the additional amount. Councilmember Sena introduced a **MOTION** for to authorize the mayor to sign pay voucher distribution #3; the **MOTION** was seconded by Councilmember Deerkop. All council members approved, and the **MOTION** passed.

NEW BUSINESS:

- TD&H – Chip Sealing Proposal
 - Mr. Utzman informed the council that there is money that we can apply for from TIB that, if awarded, could be used for chip sealing city streets. Mr. Utzman and Superintendent Wolf have worked together to come up with a plan for the streets that need it most. To

move forward the city would need to pay TD&H for engineering costs, because the money from TIB would not cover those costs. The TIB money for chip sealing would be between \$150,000-\$200,000 if the bids were accepted. The engineering cost to TD&H would be around \$21,000, but just to start the process and get through the bidding it would cost around \$12,000 to TD&H. There is no guarantee that TIB will award the money, but the city would need to pay for the initial engineering, either way, if council decides to move forward. There was a lot of discussion about whether we could spare that money for engineering costs and the gamble of sending money for engineering and then not being awarded the TIB money. It was suggested to wait until the next meeting, to know if the budget could carry the costs.

- Councilmember Slinkard introduced a **MOTION** to move forward with the chip sealing proposal; the **MOTION** was seconded by Councilmember Brink. 3 councilmembers in favor and 3 councilmembers opposed. Mayor Sievers' tie breaking vote, opposed. The **MOTION** failed.
- Mayor asked to have this topic added to the next meeting agenda
- SJ Environmental – Wastewater Treatment plant contracted certified operator.
 - The mayor reminded council that SJ Environment is a company that provides contract supervisors for wastewater treatment plants. SJ Environmental has a contract ready for the council to approve. This will fulfill the certified level 2 operator requirement for the wastewater treatment plant and will provide other services to keep the plant in compliance with the Dept of Ecology. This is a 3-year contract with a 90-day escape clause for \$4200 per month. The contract has been reviewed by the city's attorney Eric Hanson.
 - Councilmember Brink let council know of another option, other than SJ Environmental, and he introduced Shon Clark the Garfield Maintenance Supervisor and Certified Level 2 Wastewater Operator. Shon Clark presented to council that he could provide the Level 2 Certification for the City of Palouse for half the cost or less. He would not require a contract; we could cancel with him at any time. He has worked with the Palouse Public Works employees in the past. He told the council that he has a good working relationship with the Dept of Ecology. He explained that all wastewater plants get violations during the wet seasons when there is flooding and a lot of rain. He explained that the Department of Ecology won't accept any answers for the violations because the answers are not coming from a certified level 2 operator. Mr. Clark discussed this option with Superintendent Wolf and Walter Fealy and has cleared it with his mayor and city administrator. Mr. Clark made it clear that he was doing this to help Palouse. He is able to mentor Mr. Fealy and get him pointed in the right direction to get certified as soon as possible. Council asked Mr. Clark if he has a "company name." He explained that he doesn't have a company, he would be a 1099 employee and our plant would operate under his operator license number. CA LaFollett confirmed for the council that we do have other 1099 contract employees. Council was concerned about the risk, because his license would be liable for anything that goes wrong at the wastewater plant and if something did go wrong, he would be pulled away from his job in Garfield. Mr. Clark explained that in the past he has come to assist Palouse with emergencies, such as water leaks. CA LaFollett explained that there is an informal agreement between the cities, when Mr. Clark came to help Palouse, Palouse then sent Evan Weagraff to Garfield to assist them. Some councilmembers were concerned about the timeline and the deadline coming up so quickly.

- Councilmember Slinkard introduced a **MOTION** to approve the contract with SJ Environmental; the **MOTION** was seconded by Councilmember Sena. 5 councilmembers in favor and 1 councilmember opposed. The **MOTION** passed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Policy & Administration - Chair Barrington:

- Harvest Loop Easement / Eco Blocks
 - Chair Barrington reported that she has checked with Inland Fiber. They do not currently have fiber cable in the easement, they have put in empty conduit in that neighborhood and plan to expand, therefore there is potential that the utility easement could be used. It is the committee's opinion that the Eco blocks are not easily moved and that the city should not have that right encroached upon. The committee recommends that the council asks the residents to move or remove the retaining wall out of the easement. There was discussion that there are already places in town that are in violation of the easements, but they're not permanent structures, they're fences etc. There was discussion about Eco blocks not technically being a permanent structure or a substantial structure and that there is no clear definition. If they must be removed later that would come at the cost of the homeowner, and that might be a few homeowners down the line. Mayor Sievers read aloud a letter, in its entirety, that was submitted by Councilmember Bofenkamp, in support of having the Eco blocks moved or removed.
 - Councilmember Barrington introduced a **MOTION** to instruct residents to move or remove the retaining wall out of the city and utility easement; the **MOTION** was seconded by Councilmember Sena. 3 councilmembers in favor and 3 councilmembers opposed. Mayor Sievers' tie breaking vote, opposed. The **MOTION** failed.
- Petty Cash Policy
 - The committee is still working on a petty cash policy and should have an update at the next meeting.

Budget, Finance, & Major Acquisitions - Chair Bofenkamp:

- No Report

Streets, Properties, & Facilities - Chair Deerkop:

- Recycling Bin
 - CA LaFollett reported that the community recycling bin will be delivered the first part of March.

Personnel - Chair Brink reported:

- No Report

Water and Sewer - Chair Slinkard:

- The wastewater plant has until July 2024 to cool the effluent before dumping into the river and has to stop dumping into the river by 2030. The committee met with Varela Engineering, who conducted a feasibility study and came up with options.
 - Geothermal cooling option – Chair Slinkard said this option is very expensive. It entails drilling a well, bringing up groundwater and running it through a heat exchanger to drop the temperature of the effluent. The problem is, the well drillers have a year waiting list and the cost is very expensive. There are also issues with the shoreline permits and drilling shallow wells or deep wells.
 - Another option that came from the feasibility study, is pumping to another municipality. The committee determined it is not a reasonable option.
 - Chair Slinkard reported that we have until 2030 to accomplish storage lagoons and need to start that process.

- Chair Slinkard reported that the wastewater treatment plant is designed for 160,000 gallons per day and it is operating at 70,000 gallons per day. The plant is in good shape but does need some updates, particularly it needs a fine screen replacement and that cost \$300,000.
- Varela is looking into funding resources and has said that we need to ask the Dept. of Ecology for time extensions.

Joint Fire Board - Chair Sena:

- No Report

OPEN FORUM:

Kristi Inouye addressed council to thank them for the decision that was made about the Harvest Loop easement and Eco blocks. She reiterated her point that the utilities are in the street. She feels the council made the right decision.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

- A lot of positive things downtown
 - State Bank is in, and has had a grand opening.
 - Rants and Raves is doing better now.
 - Palouse Brewing Co is doing well
 - The health clinic is supposed to open in April
- Cell Tower
 - Verizon is working on a proposal to lease land by the solar panels for a cell tower. If it happens the lease will bring in some income. CA LaFollett said that the proposal will go to the board of adjustments and then it will go to council for approval.
- Community Assessment Board
 - Southeast Washington Economic Development Association (SEWEDA) has a polling board for community members to provide input on things that are important to them.

ALLOW PAYMENT OF BILLS:

Councilmember Sena introduced a **MOTION** to allow the payment of bills; the **MOTION** was seconded by Councilmember Brooks. All council members approved, and the **MOTION** passed.

The following checks are approved for payment:

Payroll paid	Ck# 12935, 12938-12939, 12944	\$15,894.62
Claims paid	Ck# 12936-12937, 12940-12943, 12945-12968 & EFT	\$86,444.41

ADJOURN:

Councilmember Slinkard **MOVED** to adjourn; Councilmember Deerkop seconded the **MOTION**: All other council members present approved, and the **MOTION** passed.

The council meeting Adjourned at 8:52pm

APPROVED: 

DATE: 2/28/2023

ATTEST: 