

Palouse City Council  
Regular Council Meeting via ZOOM teleconferencing  
November 24, 2020

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Cook called the Council Meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

**ROLL CALL:** Council members present: Mary Welcome; Bill Slinkard; Tim Sievers; John Snyder; Jim Fielder; Katie Cooper. Staff present: Police Chief Jerry Neumann; City Administrator Kyle Dixon; & Deputy Clerk Ann Thompson. Councilmember Alred submitted his letter of resignation today. He is thanked for his service and wished well. The city will seek his replacement after the holidays.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Councilmember Welcome **MOVED** to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing and Regular Council Meeting of November 10, 2020. Councilmember Snyder seconded. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:** Supt. Wolf submitted a written report.  
PW ordered a spare drive for the booster pump so there will always be a spare on hand.

**POLICE REPORT:** Chief Neumann submitted the police log.  
-Thanks to the generous donation of a community member who wishes to be anonymous, Palouse PD was honored to be involved with the giving of gift cards to deserving Palouse families.  
-Chief would like council to consider his request for a tiered city staff vacation policy to reward career longevity and loyalty.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

ECY sent us notification on Nov 18<sup>th</sup> that our Wastewater Facility Plan has been approved to construct seasonal storage lagoons to eliminate river discharge during periods of low river flow between April and October. While this should be considered a milestone, it is important to understand that it took roughly 6 years and \$300,000 in planning dollars to get this approved document. ECY rejected this identical proposal back in 2017 and we subsequently vetted several other alternatives that all eventually proved unfeasible or were again rejected by ECY. Perhaps as important, we lost those 3.5 years of design and funding prep to move this project forward. We are now faced with an aggressive timeline to fund and construct our proposed improvements. We are still planning to meet with ECY and various funding agencies via video teleconference before the end of the year to chart our course leading up to construction. We applied for design phase funding back in October and approvals will be announced in January. CA Dixon will continue to lobby for legislative funds in Olympia. Water and Sewer Committee Chair Slinkard will discuss the committee's recommendation for 2021 utility rate increases in his report.

The city's statutory general and EMS levy increase is 1% per year and must be passed annually by Ordinance. The rate of inflation has averaged roughly 2% over the last 5 years and climbed as high as 4% in a preceding year. As such, the current trajectory of only accepting the statutory 1% increase each year will see our tax rate per \$1000 of assessed value continue to fall. When the tax rate is no longer sufficient to meet the needs of city operations, a levy lid lift may be necessary to increase the tax rate to an appropriate level. This will be discussed further during our next budget cycle in 2021 once next year's valuations are finalized.

2021 budget adoption, 2020 budget amendments, and 2021 water/sewer utility rate proposals will be on the agenda for council vote at our next meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Pullman EMS Interlocal Agreement Renewal for 2021-2023:** This contract is up for renewal every three years. Every time there is an EMS call, an ambulance from Pullman is dispatched to Palouse. It's a big benefit to the community. New negotiated contract is as follows:

- 2021, 1.0% increase, to \$18,995
- 2022, 1.5% increase, to \$19,280
- 2023, 2.0% increase, to \$19,666

Councilmember Cooper **MOVED** to accept the agreement as written. Councilmember Fielder seconded. Motion carried.

Ord. No. 999 - adopting property tax increase for collection in 2021: The dollar amount of the increase over the actual levy amount for the previous year shall be \$1,940.70 which is an increase of 1%. Councilmember Welcome **MOVED** to adopt Ord. 999. Councilmember Slinkard seconded. Motion carried.

Ord. No. 1000 –adopting the property tax increase for EMS services for collection in 2021: Excess levy specifically for EMS services. The dollar amount of the increase over the actual levy amount for the previous year shall be \$305.24, which is an increase of 1%. Councilmember Snyder **MOVED** to adopt Ord. 1000. Councilmember Welcome seconded. Motion carried.

Ord. No. 1001 – setting the regular and special levy amounts for the Budget Year 2021: the regular and special levy amounts as follows:

- Voted Regular EMS Levy - \$31,233.35
- General Levy - \$198,574.92

Councilmember Sievers **MOVED** to adopt Ord. No. 1001. Councilmember Fielder seconded. Motion carried.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS/REQUESTS:**

Streets, Properties, & Facilities, Chair Sievers- Thanked city staff for getting the Sgt. Jacob Demand street signs ordered and put up.

Water & Sewer, Chair Slinkard- Committee met with Kyle to discuss some potential changes to sewer and water rates effective in January. With the upcoming major wastewater improvements, we couldn't let a year go by without increasing the rate. Being proposed will be a \$2 increase to the base sewer rate, and a \$2 increase to sewer reserve fund. Also being proposed will be a .25 cent increase to the water overage rate.

Policy & Administration, Chair Cooper- Committee met to discuss a possible ordinance addressing the feral cat problem in Palouse. They have been looking at various ordinances from other cities. Committee is looking for something that would limit the number of outdoor cats that are allowed.

Joint Fire Board, Chair Fielder- On behalf of the Joint Fire Board, he thanked the council for approving the Pullman EMS Interlocal Agreement.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Mayor has had some ongoing conversations with Garfield about the possibility of a contract to split 50/50 our 4<sup>th</sup> public works employee Evan Weagraff. This would allow him to stay full time between both cities and possibly get benefits.

The City of Palouse has authorized an expenditure of up to \$5,000 from its emergency COVID funds to the Palouse School for the purchase of touchless faucets to mitigate potential virus spread on high touch areas.

The Congress is up for liquor license renewal. No police concerns. No council objections.

**ALLOW PAYMENT OF BILLS:** Councilmember Sievers **MOVED** that the bills against the city be allowed. Councilmember Slinkard seconded. The motion carried.

The following checks are approved for payment:

Claims Paid 11/24/2020 Ck. #11258, 11270-11289, & EFT \$38,464.97

**ADJOURN:** Councilmember Fielder **MOVED** to adjourn. Councilmember Welcome seconded. The motion carried. The council meeting adjourned at 7:43 PM.

APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_