

**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; Libby Akin; Katie Cooper. Staff present: City Administrator Kyle Dixon; Deputy Clerk Ann Thompson; Police Chief Jerry Neumann; Public Works Supt. Mike Wolf.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Councilmember Cooper **MOVED** to approve the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting of March 23, 2021. Councilmember Sievers seconded. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:** Supt. Wolf submitted a written report. The city is soliciting applicants for a part-time, seasonal (approx. May – Aug), public works assistant for mowing, weed-eating, etc. Those interested can contact City Hall for an application.

**POLICE REPORT:** Chief Neumann submitted the police log. Council discussed the various types of police reports available and which report style council wants in the future.

**CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:**

The city received a response from ECY last week addressing the letter we sent them back in February. They will authorize the \$100K forgivable loan to conduct a value planning review, which is a combination of a brief overview of work done to date as well as identifying any potential alternatives yet to be considered. We will invite our wastewater engineers Varela, and possibly some contacts from ECY to our next council meeting, as they will be acting as partners in this process.

As part of the latest round of pandemic-related federal stimulus legislation, cities are slated to receive direct payments as early as next month for the following: Responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, covering costs incurred from the public health emergency, addressing negative economic impacts on local businesses and nonprofits, and making necessary improvements in critical local infrastructure. Palouse is estimated to receive \$234,000 in total, with payments coming in two separate installments from the State Treasurer's Office. Unlike the previous round of pandemic-related funding last year which had to be spent within months, cities have three years to spend these dollars. Councilmember Welcome will address this further in her report.

Palouse Cove Sidewalk Project engineer Munir Daud has created two options for us to proceed with soliciting bids for this project. 1) Proceed with block wall along sidewalk as originally proposed last year, and 2) introduce fill material to reduce the slope and eliminate the block wall. If a bid comes within the budget, the first option is preferential. Bids will be presented to council for consideration in May.

On April 16<sup>th</sup> Whitman County will move back to Phase 2 of Gov. Inslee's phased approach to reopening after failing both metrics for case counts and hospitalizations. Businesses are reduced to 25% capacity. A full list of Phase 2 guidelines can be found on [www.coronavirus.wa.gov](http://www.coronavirus.wa.gov). The next evaluation for counties is scheduled for May 3<sup>rd</sup>.

DC Thompson has been actively recruiting and advertising for lifeguards for the pool this summer. Staffing the pool has become a challenge for the past few years. This issue is much larger than Palouse, as surrounding towns, including Pullman are also experiencing a staffing shortage for lifeguards. Assuming we are eventually able to hire a full staff, the pool will be open as normal. However, if we enter the pool season short-staffed, days and hours may need to be cut accordingly. Anyone who is interested in becoming a lifeguard for us this summer is encouraged to contact City Hall and we can guide them through the process of getting certified.

City council candidate filing deadlines are coming up in May. Entities looking to place excess levies on upcoming ballots must now establish "for" and "against" committees in an effort to provide additional information to voters.

CA Dixon has accepted an offer from the City of Liberty Lake to be their Finance Director beginning May 3<sup>rd</sup>. His last day in a full-time role with Palouse will be Friday, April 30<sup>th</sup>. The city has posted this position and will be scheduling interviews in the next week.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

Luke Antonich & Michelle Bly, engineers from TD&H Engineering - update on our water main reconstruction/upgrades on West Church and Culton Streets as well as the H Street Looping main.

WSDOT has reviewed the plans for the main. They need an internal review. CA Dixon reported that we need the project reports completed soon because our PWTF funding expires in June. Michelle is hoping for some council direction on pursuing funding on the water main projects. CA Dixon said the city needs to see an estimated project cost before deciding on how to move forward.

Ongoing discussion on Civil Service Commission (CSC): Councilmember Sievers has continued to look into the CSC and our present position. It appears that the CSC has operated outside its own rules and regulations from the beginning (not deliberately or with malintent). They haven't enforced their own term limits; meetings have been irregular, spontaneous, and without public knowledge. They are exercising enormous influence and power over an important area where we already have a council personnel committee that has been charged with handling these responsibilities. The city needs a fresh start when it comes to the CSC. Councilmember Sievers wants to put some policies and procedures in place that we can follow and come up with a new path forward. Councilmember Fielder added that the Personnel Committee has taken an active and large role in the review and interview of police officer candidates. Councilmember Snyder brought up due process measures that are in place. If we assume those due process measures go through the Personnel Committee, then Councilmember Snyder supports this Resolution. We need to move forward with a balanced and fair process for all employees. Council thanked the CSC for their service and efforts over the years. Councilmember Sievers **MOVED** to adopt Resolution No. 2021-05 (from prior council meeting) which affirms that a CSC has never been established by the city and repealing the act of appointing commissioners to serve on a purported Civil Service Commission. Councilmember Fielder seconded the motion. Councilmember Snyder opposed. Motion carried.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Resolution No. 2021-04 – setting a date to hear the street vacation proposal for all of North K St. west of lots 2,3,4,5 & 6, Block 1, Johnston's Addn. This is just a procedure to set the date for the hearing at a council meeting. Councilmember Sievers **MOVED** to adopt Resolution No. 2021-04. Councilmember Fielder seconded. Motion carried.

Humane Society contract renewal: This is essentially a continuation of our contract but they have now included cats and three "trap and release" events annually. The cost is \$1,200 a year and is split 50/50 with Garfield. This contract will be from April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022. This will be a trial run for one year and if all parties are satisfied, it may become a three-year contract moving forward. Councilmember Cooper **MOVED** to accept the Humane Society contract. Councilmember Welcome seconded. Motion carried.

Ongoing development and business opportunities report: Local resident and realtor Connie Newman reported on the real estate market in the county right now. There are currently only 40 homes for sale in all of Whitman County which is a drastically low supply. County-wide out of the 40 homes for sale the average price is \$340,000. In Pullman, there are only 28 single-family homes for sale and they are going for an average price of \$413,000. As a result, more people are wanting to move to Palouse. Currently there are only two homes for sale in the Palouse zip code. There is ongoing construction in the new developments at Amber Ridge and Harvest Loop. Those listings will be opening up in a couple days.

State Bank and Pullman Regional Hospital have both signed leases with the owners of the old gymnasium building on Main Street in Palouse. Both businesses will be on the first floor. The owners are still looking for additional potential lessees.

### **COMMITTEE REPORTS/REQUESTS:**

Budget, Finance, & Major Acquisitions, Chair Welcome- Councilmember Welcome is working with CA Dixon on the disbursement of the American Rescue Plan Funds. She is working on distribution recommendations that she will bring to committee for discussion. The money will come in two payments; the first one coming in June. She wants to push the money back into our community immediately to assist our local businesses. When the second payment comes in, we can reevaluate need and shift the focus to local infrastructure.

With Whitman County going back to Phase 2 (in regards to COVID), mask-wearing is just as important as ever and we need to set good examples.

Streets, Properties, & Facilities, Chair Sievers- Committee met a couple weeks ago with CA Dixon, Chief Neumann, and PW Supt. Wolf, WSDOT, UTC and the rail owners to discuss repairing and improving the signage at the railroad crossing by grain bins. Also discussed the large retaining wall at the back of the RV Park. It needs cleaned up, repaired, reinforced, and/or replaced. WSDOT also performed a preliminary inspection of the Bridge Street

Bridge and indicated it's another area that needs attention. All of these are currently ongoing discussions with WSDOT.

Personnel, Chair Snyder- Anticipating another resolution to resolve the Civil Service Commission issue.

Policy & Administration, Chair Cooper- Still working on a way to get cats addressed in the Palouse Municipal Code that makes sense.

**MAYOR'S REPORT:**

Scott Adams, the CEO of Pullman Regional Board, has informed Mayor Cook that at this time they aren't moving forward with combining Palouse into Pullman's taxing district. In the future, if it comes up again, Palouse and its surrounding district will be able to decide for themselves if this is something they want.

School Supt. Johnson thanked Mayor Cook and the city for assisting them with acquiring no-touch sinks at the Palouse School using COVID relief dollars last year.

Mayor Cook met with Councilmember Akin regarding the Palouse Youth Advisory Board. They've come up with an application.

The city received a thank you letter from John and Chris Bofenkamp for helping install the speed sign coming in from Pullman, along with two other issues they would like to see addressed:

1) loud semi-truck compression brake noise by their house on the highway. Chief Neumann explained that when we dealt with WSDOT, they are concerned with removing safety equipment from semis. Chief has a highway below his house as well and hears the jake brakes. Its just something he accepts living near a highway. Compression brakes are loud in general and annoying but we need to learn to live with it living in a farming community with heavy equipment and many trucks.

2) vehicle speed when leaving Palouse at city limits. The Bofenkamps appreciate the flashing speed sign coming into Palouse. However, they are requesting the following: a) another flashing sign placed heading out of town; b) the outgoing 55 mph sign was placed incorrectly and should be moved farther down the highway outside of the city limits; c) increased patrols/visibility by the Palouse PD. Chief Neumann reminded all that WSDOT put the signs up and has the final say.

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

The following checks are approved for payment:

Payroll Paid 3/31/2021	Ck#11508, 11525-11544 & EFT	\$48,449.39
Claims Paid 4/13/2021	Ck# 11545-11571 & EFT	\$29,971.89
Void	Ck #11568	

**ADJOURN:** Councilmember Welcome **MOVED** to adjourn. Councilmember Sievers seconded. The motion carried. The council meeting adjourned at 8:39 PM.

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

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

Bradley D. Coughenour  
City Administrator