

**Palouse City Council**  
**Special Council Meeting**  
**June 18, 2020**  
*Via Zoom Videoconferencing*

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

**ROLL CALL:** Council members present: Mary Welcome; Bill Slinkard; Tim Sievers; John Snyder; Jim Fielder; Steve Alred; Katie Cooper. Staff present: City Administrator Kyle Dixon

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**Resolution 2020-04 Rescheduling June 23<sup>rd</sup> City Council Meeting**

Whitman County transitioned into Phase 3 of Gov. Inslee's Safe Start Washington plan earlier this month which allows for gatherings of up to 50 people. Under normal circumstances, city council meetings usually fall within this threshold. However, accounting for the continued social distancing guidelines still in place, city council chambers (City Hall) are not large enough to accommodate council meetings. CA Dixon reached out to the Palouse Community Center to inquire about moving the meeting to that venue. Red Cross is sponsoring a blood drive the day of our regularly scheduled council meeting so it would need to be rescheduled if in-person meetings were to resume. An additional condition for in-person meetings would be the requirement for everyone in attendance to wear facial coverings. This is for everyone's protection, but especially those at higher risk of complications from COVID-19. As of this evening, Gov Inslee extended 23 proclamations, one of which was the waiver of the OPMA (Open Public Meetings Act) laws and requirements until July 1<sup>st</sup>. This gives council the ability to continue virtual meetings and/or require additional safety restrictions as a requirement to attend council meetings in the interest of preventing the spread of COVID-19. Council discussed pros and cons of transitioning meeting to the community center on Thursday June 25<sup>th</sup> versus holding another virtual meeting at the regularly scheduled time. A concern was raised that prior commitments would preclude those wanting to participate in this discussion if the date was changed. Councilmember Welcome proposed the idea of keeping the meeting on the same date and time but moving the location to in-person at the city park. It seems to allow the desired platform for discussions while keeping everyone properly socially distanced. Current weather forecast for next Tuesday in Palouse is 80 degrees and sunny. An additional special meeting for the week after, if needed, was also discussed. CA Dixon read the amended Resolution aloud.

Councilmember Cooper **MOVED** to approve Resolution 2020-04 **relocating the June 23<sup>rd</sup> regularly scheduled city council meeting to Hayton Greene Memorial City Park**. Councilmember Snyder seconded. Councilmember Slinkard will not be voting on this resolution or attending the next council meeting due to potential recent exposure to COVID-19. Motion carried.

**CITY ATTORNEY REPORT:**

The Policy and Administration Committee met with Atty. Hanson earlier this week to begin discussions and continue research into the formal adoption of a flag policy. Atty Hanson reviewed the history of the flags flown on city-owned street lights and provided guidance on how the city may craft a flag policy. City property such as parks and sidewalks are considered traditional forms of "Public Forums", where people are free to express themselves in a manner of their choosing. Alternately, city property such as city-owned buildings or street lights are not considered public forums unless they have been designated as such. By allowing the Lions Club to hang flags on city-owned street lights, the city 'designated' those street lights as public forums, whether intentional or not. Atty Hanson outlined some options for a flag policy going forward. One option would be to 'close' the public forum by addressing it specifically in a policy. The city would then be solely responsible for determining what flags would be hung, and by authorized city personnel. Another option would be to leave the designated public forum 'open', whereby a permitting process would be initiated by policy to designate a time, place and manner restriction on what flags would be flown at what times. The city would not be able to regulate content of flags in any form. A third option would be to leave the public forum open without restrictions whereby anything could be posted or hung by anybody at any time. Issues of aesthetics and safety were discussed. City council expressed interest in receiving public comment on this matter prior to adoption of a formal flag policy. Those wishing to speak publicly on the matter would be invited to do so at the next council meeting held at the city park next Tuesday at 7PM. Those wishing to submit written public comment for consideration during the next council meeting may send an email to CA Dixon at [cityclerk@palouse.com](mailto:cityclerk@palouse.com), or drop it off in person at Palouse City Hall. Those comments will be read into the city minutes of the next council meeting.

**ADJOURN:** Councilmember Sievers **MOVED** to adjourn. Councilmember Welcome seconded the motion and the motion carried. The council meeting adjourned at 8:00 PM.

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