

Palouse City Council
Regular Council Meeting
June 9, 2020
Via Zoom Videoconferencing

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cook called the Council Meeting to order at 7:01 PM.

ROLL CALL: Council members present: Mary Welcome; Bill Slinkard; Tim Sievers; John Snyder; Jim Fielder; Steve Alred; Katie Cooper. Staff present: Police Chief Jerry Neumann; City Administrator Kyle Dixon; & Deputy Clerk Ann Thompson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Councilmember Alred **MOVED** to approve the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting of May 26, 2020. Councilmember Slinkard seconded. Motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT: Supt. Griffin submitted a written report.
Supt. Griffin thanks the Palouse FD and residents Jeremy Hodson and Monty Nearing for their assistance with storm cleanup.

POLICE REPORT: Chief Neumann submitted a written report.

-Chief Neumann also thanks those who helped out with storm cleanup.

-Chief has ordered the speed reader radar sign to be placed on HWY 27 coming in to town from Pullman. It will have the capability to record and monitor all speeds detected over a period of time. It will have customizable and changeable messages.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

While we originally believed that the Wastewater Facility Plan that was submitted back in March would have a fairly quick turnaround time, we received word yesterday that it is still a few weeks out. Based on that conversation, we are not expecting comments back from them until sometime in July. They have a long window to review and provide comments. No specifics on their review thus far has been reported.

Our project engineer MD&A is concerned with the cost of materials for the Palouse Cove Sidewalk Project. We are working through these overages and vetting alternatives. We will present the bid documents to council once we have a more palatable budget.

We have received several complaints regarding the appearance of the Native Plant Park. In spring of 2019 [April 23 & May 14, 2019 minutes], resident Jamie Gaber asked City Council for authorization to introduce additional native plants to the area, add bark and other improvements, and to perform maintenance. Council granted her approval provided additional support was not required of our PW Staff. While we have seen some sporadic activity at the park, regular maintenance and upkeep have not happened. CA Dixon spoke with Jamie today and she reported that she has partnered with the Palouse Conservation District to finalize improvements to the Native Plant Park. On Thursday, June 11th PCD will be out laying material and spreading bark on the pathway. They will also finish clean-up of the overgrown portions of the park. She reports they have planted roughly 100-150 plants. PCD is currently working on plant signage. A portion of the park has been dedicated to a blooming garden. CA Dixon will follow up with Gaber and PCD regarding progress and will report to council. If improvements do not proceed as planned, council may authorize an alternate solution. A huge thank you to Dennis and Vickie Griner who resigned in March from their years of volunteering time, labor, and equipment keeping the Native Plant Park looking nice. Our PW Staff cannot take this project on. If there is anyone in town that would like to lend their time to maintaining this area once it has been cleaned up, please contact City Hall.

We had originally planned to have the updated Wastewater Operator Interlocal Agreement with Garfield ready to review and sign tonight. Our Attorney has been on National Guard duty, so we do not have a timeframe yet on when that will be presented. The deadline to have an agreement in place is in August so the timeline will not be an issue.

Water/Sewer committee met last week to continue the discussion regarding updating/increasing water and sewer hookup fees. These updates will be presented to council for further discussion when finalized by the attorney

The Personnel Committee are in the process of reviewing applications for the PW Superintendent position.

Whitman County has transitioned into phase 3 of reopening. Part of phase 3 allows gatherings of up to 50 people. Mayor and Council will need to determine if/when it is safe and appropriate to resume in-person council meetings. CA Dixon will continue to assess how and where council meetings will be held moving forward. Masks will likely be required if/when we go back to in-person meetings. City Hall will open to the public on Tuesday, June 16th and will resume normal business hours. Public restrooms at the parks will open tomorrow.

NEW BUSINESS:

Ordinance No. 992: Budget amendment for Coronavirus Relief Funds and Palouse Cove sidewalk project: Affects Current Expense Fund and Arterial Streets Fund. The coronavirus relief funds administered by the Dept Commerce will reimburse any costs related to COVID-19 prevention and costs associated with economic shutdown. The Palouse Cove sidewalk project is funded by a \$200,000 dollar grant from TIB, which was moved from an ending balance to an expenditure line item for construction. Councilmember Cooper **MOVED** to adopt Ordinance No. 992 as written. Councilmember Fielder seconded. Motion carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REQUESTS:

Streets, Properties, & Facilities - Chair Sievers:

-We've been working with FastSigns for signs at the pool. Councilmember Sievers is working on getting their bid more in line with our needs and budget.

-Chair Sievers met with city staff to discuss how we will move forward at the pool this summer with regards to allowing out of town patrons. Maximum capacity at the pool is normally 112, so at 50% it will be 56. From data gathered last year, having more than 50 patrons was rare (3 instances), and was not seen at all in June. If current trend holds, Whitman County will transition to Phase 4 of reopening allowing for full capacity at the pool before the end of June. We will monitor usage closely as the pool opens and evaluate daily. At this time, the pool will open as normal, but if we see unexpected usage and wait times due to max capacity, pool committee will reevaluate and propose appropriate restrictions.

Personnel – Chair Snyder: Committee has two big things coming up: 1) vetting process for employee review/salaries/raises/etc. & 2) hiring Supt. Griffin's replacement.

Water & Sewer – Chair Slinkard: Committee met to finalize the ordinances for the cost increase to hook-up fees for water and sewer as well as the code change to year-round charges for service, regardless if active or not. This was introduced in November but due to Covid, we've pushed the effective date from July to September. There will be a public hearing prior to voting on proposed changes. The ordinances are with the attorney for review.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

For years the Palouse Lions Club has hung the US flags on Main Street for Memorial Day, Flag Day, Veterans Day etc., About five years ago they wanted to add flags to honor those who protect & serve so they added the flags of our five military branches and flags to represent our first responders: fire, EMS, and police. The Thin Blue Line flag was added as a memorial to police officers. This particular flag has unfortunately been adopted by "Blue Lives Matter" a national countermovement to "Black Lives Matter" and now represents a lot of hurt and harm to people of color. The city recently received letters from four residents asking that the "Thin Blue Line" flag be removed. The city would like to find some kind of mutually agreeable solution that upholds the 1st Amendment but also looks out for and is sensitive to people of color. Palouse wants to honor the police but also want to make it known that prejudice and hatred are not tolerated here. CA Dixon offered to have the city purchase an alternative police flag to replace the Thin Blue Line flag. Agreement for potential alternatives could not be reached. Lions Club "see no reason to remove a flag that honors our local and national law enforcement officials". Council discussed in-depth the situation.

Flag Day is this Sunday. The city wants to come up with a resolution to address this in the interim and one in the long-term. Ultimately, the city has no flag policy in place. Without a policy we're walking dangerous ground. There's no legal obligation to fly any flags so until there is a policy, we can opt to not hang any but no one wants to see that. This is a very complicated and sensitive issue. The city is responsible for creating equitable policy; the city does not just represent the majority.

Councilmember Alred **MOVED** to suspend any flags being flown until there is a flag policy adopted by the city. Councilmember Sievers seconded. Motion failed.

Councilmember Slinkard **MOVED** that city council respectfully ask the Lions Club to only fly the US Flag, the Washington State Flag, and the POW/MIA flag for Flag Day as per *RCW 1.20.017*, until a policy is adopted by the city. Councilmember Alred seconded. Motion carried. CA Dixon will contact the Lions Club. This will now go to Policy Committee.

ALLOW PAYMENT OF BILLS: Councilmember Sievers **MOVED** that the bills against the city be allowed. Councilmember Fielder seconded. Motion carried.

The following checks are approved for payment:

Payroll Paid	5/31/2020	Ck. #10881-10896 & EFT	\$41,137.23
Claims Paid	6/09/2020	Ck. #10897-10916 & EFT	\$20,207.94

ADJOURN: Councilmember Welcome **MOVED** to adjourn. Councilmember Cooper seconded the motion and the motion carried. The council meeting adjourned at 8:46 PM.

APPROVED: _____ ATTEST: _____