

Palouse City Council
Regular Council Meeting via ZOOM teleconferencing
August 25, 2020

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Cook called the Council Meeting to order at 7:04 PM.

ROLL CALL: Council members present: Mary Welcome; Bill Slinkard; John Snyder; Jim Fielder; Steve Alred; Katie Cooper. Councilmember Cooper **MOVED** to excuse Councilmember's Sievers absence. Councilmember Fielder seconded. Motion carried. Staff present: Police Chief Jerry Neumann; Public Works Supt. Mike Wolf; City Administrator Kyle Dixon; & Deputy Clerk Ann Thompson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Councilmember Slinkard **MOVED** to approve the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting of August 11, 2020. Councilmember Welcome seconded. Motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT: Supt. Wolf submitted a written report. Public restrooms are still closed. Another irrigation line broke at the cemetery. We will see more of this as time goes on because the pipes there are thin-walled PVC and 40 years old. PW will replace this broken line and will continue to fix and replace with better pipe as we go.

POLICE REPORT: Chief Neumann submitted the police log.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORT:

We have hired two new employees to join our Public Works team: Taylor Redman has accepted our offer for the Public Works Assistant position. Her first day will be next Monday, August 31st. Evan Weagraff has accepted the newly created Entry Level Public Works Assistant position and his first day was August 17th. We are excited to have both aboard and to get the crew settled into their new roles.

We are finalizing agreement with WSDOT to relocate one of their speed signs on northbound HWY 27 at south end of city limits to accommodate the radar feedback sign currently installed at the railroad crossing.

The Palouse Native Plant Park was trimmed up last week with the help of Chief Neumann and resident Monty Nearing. A big thanks to both for their work improving the appearance of the park.

The Port of Whitman has officially partnered with Ziplly Fiber (formerly Frontier) to build fiber to the home in Palouse. The agreement maintains an open-access network, where other providers will still be able to lease the fiber infrastructure and give customers more service options. According to the press release, buildout will begin this year and continue into 2021. They will pass along a more definitive timeline once those details are finalized. Jim Kuznir of NW Fiber, LLC has submitted a proposed franchise agreement similar to the agreement we have with First Step internet to build out fiber infrastructure in Palouse as well. It is with Atty Hanson for review.

Every year we pass resolutions authorizing the county to place on the November ballot excess property tax levies for the swimming pool and arterial (project-based) street levies. Due to an oversight by CA Dixon, those resolutions were never prepared for council consideration, and the deadline to file for the November ballot has since passed (August 4th). Last year, Palouse voters approved the pool levy for \$34,000, and the arterial streets levy for \$44,000 for collection in 2020. 2021 Levy amounts would have been reduced significantly for both. We likely would not have had enough information by our 2nd meeting in July to provide an accurate forecast of needs for the pool in 2021 due to the pool closure this year. Similarly, TIB denied our funding request this year to turn the remainder of West Whitman street to Fir street from gravel to a hard surface street. We also did not proceed to construction on the Palouse Cove Sidewalk, so a large portion of the levy collected this year for Arterial Streets would be held over for next year. The next opportunity to place these levies on a ballot will be in April of 2021. This affords us time to put together a much more accurate assessment of need for each of these levies. Another option would be to roll these smaller amounts into our yearly levy forecast for the ballot next November. In either scenario, current reserves and 2020 levy collection will be able to cover normal operations in 2021. Our proposed General Levy for 2021 is \$196,011 and proposed EMS Levy is \$32,381. Both include the 1% increase from the prior year. Levy information is available upon request. CA Dixon has started working on the 2021 budget and will provide regular updates leading up to budget adoption in November.

OLD BUSINESS:

Wastewater Facility Plan update: John Patrouch of Varela, the city's principal engineer on the project, submitted a summary update. Since the last meeting on July 27, they have reviewed the latest ECY comments and discussed

strategy to revise the WWFP. Approach is to construct seasonal storage lagoons on city-owned property to meet both temperature and nitrogen effluent limits. ECY requested a resubmittal by Sept. 1, 2020 but Varela isn't going to have it ready until around Sept. 11. ECY funding apps are due by October 13, 2020. Mayor Cook met with Art Jenkins of ECY to get his take on city's direction and to confirm ECY would support the timeline for improvements should 3rd parties seek to exploit compliance issues. Art Jenkins acknowledges Palouse has a documented history of trying to solve this problem and he is very supportive of Palouse's efforts. The city would like to perhaps try to deliver our revised facility plan combined with our funding application at the same time.

COMMITTEE REPORTS/REQUESTS:

Budget, Finance, & Major Acquisitions, Chair Welcome- Councilwoman Cooper inquired about the executive order regarding payroll tax. CA Dixon discussed his concern with implementing this until something more formal was put in place. At this time, it would be considered a deferral, which indicates any payroll tax payments suspended now would become due in a lump sum when employees file 2020 income taxes. CA Dixon will consult with employees and provide updates when more information becomes available.

Joint Fire Board, Chair Fielder-

3 fire calls in July: 1 assist on car wreck, 1 garage fire in city, 1 smoke detector alarm in city.

3 fire meetings in July - Wildland training, pump operations, on-scene structure fire scenario, and station night.

Fire department will be adding some reserve firefighters to the roster for summer wildland fire responses, three of whom are former Palouse firefighters with experience.

15 EMS calls in July: 9 Pullman ambulance transports to PRH, 2 Pullman Ambulance transfers to Colfax, 1 Private transport, 1 no transport, 1 fire standby, and 1 non-resident Pullman Ambulance transfer to LifeFlight to Sacred Heart. Rural fire had 0 calls. 85 calls total for year so far.

2 EMS trainings in July.

MAYOR'S REPORT:

As a gesture of good will, the city paid our lifeguards for the entire month of July even though the pool closed on July 6th. Today, the city received an email from resident Andres Sena. He wants the city lifeguards to be paid for the entire season, through August 15. The city tried to strike a balance between doing right by lifeguards but also right by the taxpayers. Lifeguards were well-informed of the potential of pool not opening/staying open prior to the start of the season. Council is satisfied with the city's actions already taken on this matter.

Planning Commission vacancy. Letters of interest can be submitted to City Hall.

The Palouse chamber of Commerce emailed council requesting the city's help to ensure and communicate public safety measures in regards to the state's COVID-19 response and requirements (enforcing masks & social distancing). Chief pointed out that businesses have the right of refusal of service; if someone refuses to leave, call police and he will support the businesses wishes. Chief will meet with businesses if they want, but businesses need to self-regulate and enforce. Chief said the pop-up music performances around town need to stop; those are strictly prohibited under the governor's guidelines. Councilmember Cooper asked that a message about mask requirements be put on the reader-board. Mayor Cook brought up that a lot of this is compliance issues; people are aware but just don't want to comply. At the heart of the matter is there are folks who have their views. Councilmember Cooper asked Chief to meet with chamber to see how they can work together to make people comply. Perhaps showing solidarity between the city and the businesses will go a long way in aiding.

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

The following checks are approved for payment:

Claims Paid 8/25/2020 Ck. #11064-11074 & EFT \$5,622.70

ADJOURN: Councilmember Slinkard **MOVED** to adjourn. Councilmember Welcome seconded. The motion carried. The council meeting adjourned at 8:02 PM.

APPROVED: _____ ATTEST: _____