

City of Rainier
Regular City Council Meeting
October 4, 2021
6 p.m.
Rainier City Hall

Mayor Jerry Cole called the Regular Council Meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

Council Present: Scott Cooper, Mike Kreger, Levi Richardson and Jenna Weaver

Council Absent: Connie Budge and Robert duPlessis

City Attorney Present: No

City Staff Present: Sarah Blodgett, City Recorder; Pete Manning, Police Sergeant; W. Scott Jorgensen, City Administrator; Sue Lawrence, Public Works Director

Flag Salute

Additions/Deletions from the Agenda: There were no additions or deletions from the agenda.

Mayor's Address: Mayor Jerry Cole read proclamations declaring October Domestic Violence Awareness Month and honoring Rightline Equipment for its 50th anniversary of being in business.

Visitor Comments: Dan Graham asked if the culvert on First Street is going to be fixed. Cole said it is. The Geotech study has been done and bids are being put together for the project. Public Works Director Sue Lawrence said she expects to receive quotes back the following week. Graham asked if the sewer and storm lines in the area are broken. Lawrence said they are not. Kirk Nord from Comcast said that the city had reached out about having local public access channels available to the company's subscribers. Rainier's Comcast subscribers were receiving public access content from Portland. Three channels are being changed from Portland to Longview. They will be channels 11, 28 and 29, and there will be high-definition options for all three. The change should be in effect in the next couple of days. The November council meeting should be broadcast live on cable. Cole said that public access has been a priority for him.

Consider Approval of the Consent Agenda:

Consider Approval of the September 13, 2021 Regular Council Meeting Minutes-Council President Mike Kreger moved to approve the consent

agenda. That motion was seconded by Councilor Scott Cooper and adopted unanimously.

New Business

- a. Appointment to Council Position #3—Cole said there were four candidates and council had put together four questions for all of them. City Administrator W. Scott Jorgensen asked Denise Watson to tell the council about herself. Watson said she's lived in town for over a year and is semi-retired. She's done a lot of outreach and grassroots campaigns and work with different organizations. Her strengths include budget oversight, public safety and emergency protocols. Nic Gratzner said he's lived in town for almost 30 years and Rainier has potential. He worked as a mortgage banker on the east coast and in management and construction. His family has deep roots in the community and he wants to be more involved. John Lewis has lived in town for four years, worked for the school district and wants to give back to the community. Jeremy Howell said he's lived in town for 34 years and helped put together the baseball and soccer fields. He's currently a member of the city's budget committee. Jorgensen asked the applicants what they think the city is doing right and what it could be doing better. Gratzner said the city is doing a lot right and has really turned the corner. He cited the A Street project and Highway 30 as examples. The city is clean and beautiful and there aren't many problems. Parking enforcement could be better. He wants to be part of the continued trend in the right direction. Lewis said the city is keeping its small-town environment and working to attract more tourism. He wants to see more use made of the river. Howell said he likes A Street and the riverfront trail. The park is well-maintained. But the city needs to improve its infrastructure, update its sewer plant and do more on code enforcement and nuisance abatements. Watson likes the improvements that the Parks Committee is considering and would like to see more tourism. Jorgensen asked the applicants what drives the city issues that they want to see addressed. Lewis said the city has a lot of small, easy fixes that could be made. Howell said some areas in town are clean but others have vehicles on blocks and overgrown grass. He'd like to see some crosswalks repainted. Watson said the sewer system needs improvement and mentioned that there had been concerns about the REDCO budget. Gratzner said there are no glaring issues that are going unaddressed, but the infrastructure needs work. A Street looks good and the river should be a focal point for the city. Jorgensen asked the applicants to name one item, issue or problem related to the city and how they would address it. Howell said he has experience with code enforcement. Watson said she would like to see more financial stability for business owners and residents and infrastructure improvements. Gratzner said the C Street bridge is a one-lane road. It should be replaced and widened, with curbs and sidewalks added. Lewis said he wants stricter code enforcement with bigger fines. Cole said he was glad to see four

applicants for the council position. Cooper said his top candidates were Howell and Watson. Councilor Jenna Weaver said the applicants have experience with committees and that will be valuable. Councilor Levi Richardson said he was impressed with the candidates' qualifications and ideas. Some have volunteered for other positions. Kreger cited the applicants' diverse backgrounds and strengths. Cooper moved to appoint Howell to Council Position #3. That motion was seconded by Kreger and adopted on a 3-1 vote, with Richardson opposed. Howell took his oath of office and was seated at the council dais.

- b. Planning Commission Update—Jorgensen told the council that the commission is working on updating the city's flood plain ordinance. The new ordinance should make it easier to develop the commercial and industrial properties on the west side of town in the city's urban growth boundary. Once the commission passes the ordinance, it will make its way to council probably early next year. The Planning Commission will also be considering an annexation ordinance with the direction staff received from council. A public hearing will be held at Planning Commission at some point for the text amendment that would allow the Rainier Oregon Historical Society (ROHS) to construct its building using metal. The city's Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) has not been changed but includes many areas that are not developable due to geography. This may be a potential barrier to growth, so Jorgensen is going to have the commission and the city planner take a look at that. Maybe the UGB can be altered to take those properties out of it and include some that actually are developable.
- c. Code Enforcement Position---Cooper said he and Councilor Connie Budge introduced this as an agenda item. They met with city staff for input. The consensus is that it needs to be addressed. He would like a motion to move forward with looking into the position and asked Al Guist to provide his perspective as a citizen. Guist said it's an important issue. After he retired from working for the city, he has kept an eye on code violations and reported them to the city. It needs to be addressed and updated. The city needs to be cleaned up and has to have someone to enforce its codes so it looks nice and not run down. Not all of the ordinances are enforceable and that's a problem. Cooper said he wants to direct staff on how to fund a position. Cole said he wants to know what the options are. Should the police department have a set number of hours dedicated to code enforcement? Should the city contract with another agency for it? Council should have that information to make an informed decision. The police department addresses code enforcement now, so it's reactive. He wants to see what the numbers are. Any code enforcer should work with citizens instead of trying to generate revenue for the city through fines. He wants there to be resources available to those citizens on the back end to help them. Kreger said the city should look at its codes to update them for better enforcement. Police Sergeant Peter Manning said the call load for nuisance complaints increases in the spring and summer due to more

vegetation and higher fire danger. During the fall and winter, there are more responses for abandoned vehicles and for handling complaints at the marina. The code enforcer's duties could include updating ordinances. The position should be under the police department because officers have the most recent information on court rulings and other legal matters. Some of the ordinances don't have fines. Others haven't been updated, so the fine amounts in them are too low to be any kind of a deterrent. Some code enforcement processes take a long time, which frustrates residents. But they have to be in place because of due process. The code enforcer can do meetings with stakeholders. He and Jorgensen currently handle those. That person could also serve as the harbormaster to enforce regulations at the marina. Jorgensen asked if there are specific ordinances that need to be updated. Manning said they can discuss it at a staff level. Cole said those ordinances should be fixed before anyone is hired or contracted to do code enforcement. Council needs to know how many abatements the police department currently does. Kreger moved to direct staff to look into options for a code enforcement position. That motion was seconded by Weaver and adopted unanimously.

- d. MOU for Rainier Oregon Historical Society—Cole said he loves history and advocated letting the ROHS use the space they currently occupy at city hall. But an MOU is needed. He wants to see it as a community room once the ROHS has its permanent home. If the ROHS stops working towards fundraising towards its permanent location, it will have to vacate city hall in a reasonable timeframe. The ROHS can address its concerns in the MOU too. Jorgensen said the ROHS has provided him with its insurance information. The requirement for insurance should be included in the MOU. He went to their last meeting to talk about it. They discussed timeframes and agreed to have the MOU up for annual renewal. He asked council if they want the ROHS to verify that background checks have been conducted for its volunteers. Cole said he wouldn't want the city to be responsible if anything were to happen. Background checks are required for library volunteers. Having those in place protects citizens from harm. Cooper said he needed to do one to volunteer at the senior center. Cole said background checks are not all that expensive. Jorgensen asked if the council wants to charge the ROHS rent for its use of the space. Council agreed by consensus that it should not.
- e. Wastewater Treatment Plant Valve Actuator---Lawrence said the quote has been updated to reflect its higher cost at around \$45,000. She explained what the actuator is and what it does. Having it will help mitigate the issues the city has had with violations relating to discharge. Cooper asked how often that happens. Lawrence said it occurs during significant rainfall events. Callouts to respond require a minimum of two hours of staff time. Cole said the city doesn't really have a choice when it comes to achieving regulatory compliance and that the bid has gone up \$5,000 since March. Lawrence said

purchasing the actuator would be considered positive by the state Department of Environmental Quality. Cooper moved to approve the bid for the actuator. That motion was seconded by Weaver and adopted unanimously.

Unfinished Business

- a. Riverfront Trail Update—Jorgensen said he has a meeting scheduled with the Oregon Department of Transportation and the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments to make sure that the city receives the grant funds it was awarded for the project's third phase.
- b. Fox Creek Update---Jorgensen said he and Lawrence are working to submit paperwork to the state Department of Administrative Services for the \$100,000 grant funding the city was awarded for the feasibility study.
- c. Senior and Multigenerational Housing
- d. D Street Loop Update—Lawrence said the bid has been awarded for the project. It should be completed by November 18.
- f. Moorage Agreement Update—Cooper said he talked with staff about having different rates for annual and monthly leases. The yearly lease would have a discount and the rate would be slightly higher for the monthly ones. Council agreed by consensus to continue the discussion at its November meeting, with Police Chief Gregg Griffith present.
- g. Award Bid for Demolition of Nuisance House at 516 East E Street—Lawrence said she received one bid from a contractor and looked at what it would cost for her staff to do the work. The amounts were pretty similar. The city would still incur costs for renting equipment and disposing of material. That would cost around \$9300. With staff time included, the total would reach around \$16,000. Cole said the bid from Servpro was around \$19,000. The city attorney will put a lien on the property to recover the cost. When the property sells, the city will receive the lien amount. Cooper asked if the house contains hazardous material. Lawrence said it will have to be tested for that. Jorgensen said it's less liability for the city to have the demolition work contracted out to a third party. Lawrence said it's easier to obtain a lien if there's a bill than it is to quantify staff time and include that. Jorgensen said Servpro has been great to work with. Kreger moved to award the bid to Servpro. That motion was seconded by Cooper and adopted unanimously.

Staff Report—Lawrence said the smoke testing has been done. Many cross connections were found and this should help develop plans to better separate water from the storm and sanitary sewer systems. Manholes were discovered that aren't on any of the city's maps. Lead and copper testing was done, and the amounts were below the allowable limits. The new park gazebo has been ordered and is scheduled to be delivered March 15. Removal of the tanks at the old water plant building should start soon and will free that facility up

for use as storage. The filter rehab at the water plant should also be happening soon and bids for the work on First Street will be due October 14. City Recorder Sarah Blodgett said that septage customers pay with credit cards, the city incurs a 2.7 percent charge. Staff is proposing passing that fee on to those customers for transactions above a certain amount and recommends the amount be \$1000 or \$1500. Cooper said he agrees. Cole said many of the septic haulers are for-profit entities. He said the city wouldn't be implementing the charge to make money, but to cover the costs it incurs by making the transactions. Weaver said another merchant services company may charge a lower rate to the city. Jorgensen said he's been working with the Department of Land Conservation and Development on the new flood plain ordinance and with representatives of Servpro for the demolition of the nuisance house on E Street. The senior center held an ice cream social and he and Cooper attended it. He provided the annual REDCO reports to all the taxing districts that fund the urban renewal agency. An oral board was held to interview a candidate for the vacant police officer position and he was among the participants. He, Lawrence and the city attorney put together the donation agreement for the new park gazebo. On September 22, he was in a meeting about possible grant funding opportunities for the city due to the closure of the Trojan nuclear facility. He, Cooper, Budge and Griffith met to discuss the potential code enforcement position and he began advertising for the police officer position. Along with Lawrence, he took a trip to North Plains to look at an emergency operations trailer that city is hoping to donate.

Council Reports—Richardson said the parks committee released a survey of city residents to see what improvements they would like to see made.

City Calendar/Announcements—

Executive Session— The council entered into executive session at 7:59 p.m. It entered into executive session at 8:03 p.m. The executive session was adjourned at 8:18 p.m. The regular session resumed at 8:18 p.m.

Cole adjourned the meeting at 8:18 p.m.

Mayor Jerry Cole

W. Scott Jorgensen, City Administrator