

**Town of La Conner**

Town Council Meeting  
April 14, 2020 – 6:00 p.m.

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The meeting of the La Conner Town Council was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Hayes.

Present: Councilmembers Brunisholz, Leaver, Stokes, Chamberlain and Wohleb.

Also present: Administrator Thomas, Finance Director DeGoede, Public Works Director Lease, and Planner Manville

**This meeting was held by a Zoom meeting. Information to join was provided on the Town Website.**

**Public Comments:**

No Public Comments

**Consent Agenda:**

Approval of Agenda

Approval of the Minutes of March 24, 2020

**Accounts Payable – April 14, 2020:**

Checks	23065 - 23112	\$109,585.14
Voided Check	23021	
Electronic Pmts:	201606 – Parking Meter Fees	\$134.00
	<b>Total Accounts Payable</b>	<b>\$109,719.14</b>

**Payroll of April 5, 2020:**

Checks	5183- 5191	\$20,428.31
Auto Payment	201596 - DRS	\$2,291.00
Auto Payment	201597 - PERS	\$10,553.71
Auto Payment	201598- Payroll Taxes	\$7,266.63
Auto Payroll Deposit		\$23,643.21
	<b>Total Payroll April 5, 2020</b>	<b>\$64,182.86</b>

**Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.**

**Revenue and Expenditure Reports:**

Mayor Hayes noted we have not seen the hit on the revenues from the Sales and Hotel Motel taxes yet.

**Public Works Report:**

To discourage visitors coming into Town, a “Limited Access” sign was placed at the round-a-bout. Both public restrooms in Town were closed over the weekend, but because of a public health concern, there will be one bathroom open next weekend. It was suggested to keep the restroom access doors open to reduce public handling, as well as signage reminding of social distancing and washing of hands.

Another issue is a growing camp of homeless at the end of Caledonia Street. Although Council leaned towards compassion of the homeless, our Town Code does give a 72 hour limited parking within the Town. It was the consensus of the Council to post with an immediate order to vacate.

The Maple Hall Elevator had a pre-app meeting a few weeks ago. The holdup is the subcontractors are not working due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Planner Manville noted the County is currently working on the permits.

**Mayor’s Report:**

Mayor Hayes stated the Town is very vulnerable and has experienced theft and break-ins. He found a local security company to patrol the Town from 10pm to 7am until May 4<sup>th</sup>. They are willing to patrol the Town’s parks and

neighborhoods as well at no extra cost. It was the consensus of the Council to extend the patrolling through the parks and neighborhoods.

There were discussions regarding certain businesses in Town not complying with the Governor's order of essential only and safe distancing. Councilmembers expressed concerns on tables outside establishments selling ice cream that encouraged people to sit and eat rather than pickup and take out. The tables are not 6 feet in distance and were not wiped down between usages. Also, Pioneer Market has not established a safe distance plan. Mayor Hayes will talk with them. Administrator Thomas suggested the County Health Department handle the businesses that are questionable as noncompliant.

**Ordinance – Amending Ordinance 1169, Restrictions on Plastic Bags:**

Administrator Thomas explained the new State Bill on plastic bag restrictions will take effect in June. It is more stringent than the ordinance the Town passed and supersedes it. This ordinance cancels the Town's Ordinance 1169. The intention is to clear it from the books so there is no confusion. Councilmember Chamberlain asked if we could keep it on the record. The Town was the first to pass the restrictions on plastic bags in the County. It was the consensus of the Council to table this until the June 9, 2020 meeting.

**Declaration of COVID-19 (Ratify):**

Administrator Thomas explained this Declaration was signed by the Mayor and recommends approval and ratification of Council. After discussion, Council approved the ratification of the Declaration with the addition of the recommendation of wearing a mask.

**Mayor/Council Roundtable:**

Councilmember Stokes discussed the Port of Skagit's easy access for transport and feels they should partner with a large company involved in the production of masks.

Administrator Thomas explained the difference between Citizen Patrol and Neighborhood Watch. He spoke with Chad Clark of the County Crime Prevention. To initiate a Neighborhood Watch, a meeting would be held by the County with all involved, and they are not doing this right now with the COVID-19 restrictions. The Citizen Patrol is completely different and usually involves training, which the County does not do, but WCIA does have an eight hour class. It usually would involve the need for a car as well. Administrator Thomas will look into setting up a team for a Citizen Patrol, but he is not sure how the COVID-19 restrictions will affect it.

Mayor Hayes updated Council with the Hedlund Property purchase. He received a letter from them stating they needed confirmation, either way, on the Town's position to purchase their property by next week. The first interest payment of \$37,000 is due in May. The Town would have to make the interest payment to secure their position to purchase the property. May of 2021 the second interest payment would be due if we still wanted the property. After that, financing would be needed to finalize the purchase.

There was concern with the upcoming economic decline and the loss of \$37,000 this year if the Town's budget couldn't afford the interest payment in 2021. However, there were also concerns of the chance of losing the property to a contractor. If the Town purchases it, the 20,000 square foot park will be a part of the plans, with the remainder plotted for residential construction.

Councilmembers and the Mayor have not heard any negative or positive comments from the community after the article in the La Conner Weekly News. Planner Manville stated the developers are still moving forward with projects and she has had no retractions, so construction looks favorable if the Town purchased it. Mayor Hayes suggested a public meeting, but with the current State restrictions, that would be difficult. Councilmember Stokes was concerned as the tax payers were not made aware of the cost of this purchase and the inevitable upcoming recession; \$37,000 is a lot of money for the Town to lose.

After discussions it was decided to move forward with the \$37,000 interest payment contingent on an appraisal no less than the purchase price and option of first refusal.

**Councilmember Leaver moved to approve the Mayor to move forward with the interest payment \$37,000 contingent on an appraisal no less than the purchase price and the option of first refusal. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion carried 4/1 with Councilmember Stokes voting nay.**

Administrator Thomas discussed a letter received from a resident complaining the senior exemption for the utility bills are for owners of the property, and she as a tenant does not qualify. Currently we are not charging penalties on delinquent accounts or shutting anyone off during the COVID-19 State restrictions.

**There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.**



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor