

***Town of La Conner***  
Town Council Meeting  
October 11, 2016 – 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 Leaver, Stokes, Chamberlain and Bruch.

Also present: Administrator Doyle, Finance Director DeGoede, WWTP Operator Wynn, and Sergeant Howell.

**Councilmember Leaver moved to excuse Councilmember Brunisholz. Motion seconded by Councilmember Stokes. Motion carried 4-0.**

**Approval of Agenda:**

**Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion Carried 4-0.**

**Approval of Minutes:**

**Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the Minutes of September 27, 2016. Motion seconded by Councilmember Bruch. Motion Carried 4-0.**

**Approval of Accounts Payable:**

**Councilmember Stokes moved to approve checks 19073 through 19111 in the amount of \$97,766.79 and Electronic Payment #201324 in the amount of \$169.75 for a total of \$97,936.54. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion Carried 4-0.**

**Approval of Payroll:**

**Councilmember Bruch moved to approve payroll checks 4519 through 4529 for \$25,564.01, payroll tax deposit #201323 of \$6,667.48 and payroll auto deposit of \$19,619.83 for a total amount of \$51,851.32 as presented. Motion seconded by Councilmember Stokes. Motion Carried 4-0.**

**Community Comments:**

Resident Dan O'Donnell of 328 N. Third, La Conner, submitted his expense report on the Anacortes water reconciliation. His figures show a reconciliation of \$294. Mayor Hayes noted it would be reviewed by staff. There was further discussion on the water charges to the Town.

Krista Sunday owner of the Rehab Station and Kim Broadhead owner of Doc Holliday's Guns & Mercantile in La Conner, questioned why Morris Street was excluded in the Christmas lighting of businesses on First Street. Mayor Hayes confirmed they are not leaving out Morris Street. This project was started privately by two merchants on First Street who are raising funds for the project. The Town decided to help in the effort and sent out letters to all the merchants on First Street for permission to attach lights to their buildings. To keep costs down, we have asked Public Works to put up the lights. 65% of merchants responded back positively but 35% declined permission. We can't attach lights to a building without permission. The Chamber is hiring a contractor to determine how many lights are needed to light up First Street and what that cost will be. This is the first year, but intentions are to light all businesses along Morris and First Streets. If we all get together for a large fundraiser to light all of the businesses within the time frame, Mayor Hayes is all for it. Businesses can light their own buildings, and for consistency information on the selected lights will be available. Krista stated Morris Street is the entrance to Town and the first impression for visitors. She stressed how imperative it is to draw people to La Conner for Christmas shopping, and suggested inviting the Dickens Carolers from Seattle. Krista and Kim are planning a vendor oriented Christmas market in the old Pub building on Morris and would like it to be an annual event.

**Chamber Report:**

La Conner Chamber Director, Heather Carter commented on the Town Christmas decorating. There have been several meetings to discuss issues with L&I, in which the business owners cannot hang their own lights. Morris Street does have the hanging candy canes and First Street doesn't.

Currently they are busy with Brew on the Slough scheduled for this Saturday. Most of the recent marketing has been specific for this event, but she will begin marketing for the Christmas Holiday and the La Conner Daffodil Festival very soon. Dining Guides for the Town restaurants have been updated and distributed. For the Month of September, they had 216 walk-ins, 95 phone calls and 10,039 visits on the website with 84% unique.

**Finance:**

Mayor Hayes noted the Sales Tax is not doing as bad as previously anticipated, Hotel Motel is doing well.

**Public Works:**

Public Works Director Lease reported there was an attempt to break into the parking lot meter. He does not know why as it is a credit card only machine. It has been inspected and is in good working order, but he is waiting for the costs of repair to the machine.

**Sheriff's Department:**

Councilmember Stokes questioned the weapon offense calls. Sgt. Howell indicated several things fall under that category. He believed it was fireworks.

**WWTP:**

WWTP Operator Wynn discussed the status of the new tribal meter. The flow values have stabilized, but further monitoring is needed.

**Mayor's Report:**

Mayor Hayes reported Fire Chief Fohn has resigned from his position do to personal time restraints. He remains committed to the Fire Department and will continue as a volunteer for calls. The Fire Department members are meeting tomorrow night to decide on who will resume the position. The Mayor will report to Council who the new Fire Chief will be. Josh Morrison has attended the Council meeting on behalf of the Fire Department.

La Conner Yacht Club has proposed an agreement with the Town requesting to utilize a Town dock at a reduced rate for reciprocal yacht clubs. By reducing the first night moorage to \$5.00, it would promote visitors to stay in the Town. Any night after the first one would be at the regular rate. Councilmember Stokes stated he is a member of the La Conner Yacht Club so he has a conflict with this decision. Mayor Hayes confirmed it will be reviewed by administration and represented to Council at a future meeting. It is still very preliminary.

The Mayor shared the live feed webcam budgeted for \$9000 will not happen this year due to Public Works staffing issues. He would like to redirect the money to a visitor's guide. He is still researching the costs but estimates it to be approximately \$15,000 to \$20,000. His goal is to coordinate with the La Conner Weekly News and the Chamber for the project and focus on marketing along the I-5 Corridor, in Seattle, airports, hotels and the ferries.

Chamber Director Carter stated pamphlets/print advertising is very important but also costly. The social media and online presence is needed as well but requires a lot of time and effort to create a dynamic campaign, as well as monitoring it. She will check on the distribution of Skagit Publishing. She believes it is along the I-5 Corridor as well but feels the distribution should include South Seattle, Portland and Canada. The news stations are another avenue but it is not easy to get them here unless it is for an unusual or quirky event. Evening Magazine will run old clips in their advertising instead of annual footage.

Mayor Hayes spoke on the lighting of the bridge. The Town does not own it and we have no authority. Anything we do on the bridge will have to be done through an interlocal agreement with the County. But, bottom line is we

want it lit for the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary next year. The County has assessed the bridge and does not feel it needs to be painted, but maybe a power washing is possible. The Mayor is committed to making this happen through fundraisers and Councilmember Bruch has been working through the issues. The reality is we have limited funds, but we will do the best we can.

**Art’s Commission:**

Councilmember Leaver reported sponsorship funds are coming in slowly. Rebecca Strong of the Art’s Commission shared the art sculpture Crabs & Fiddle has been purchased by a resident and will be donated to the Town. It may have to be relocated as it is on private property. Also, Administrator Doyle confirmed the art sculpture “Fossil” by Milo White was sold as well.

**Finance Committee:**

Councilmember Stokes reported on the Finance Committee Meeting. There is a CD Rollover with Skagit Bank. Interests are low but they had the highest of all the banks contacted.

**Streets & Safety Committee:**

Both Councilmembers Stokes and Chamberlain attended the Streets & Safety Committee Meeting to discuss the additional handicap parking needed in the Town and the upcoming Sheriff’s contract negotiations. There will be further discussions on the Sheriff’s contract. It was agreed to add new handicap parking and additional loading zones. Public Works Director Lease noted the two new handicap parking spots in front of Amelia’s and Nell Thorn are usable, but the new loading zones are not in effect until it is passed by ordinance at the next Council meeting.

**Bridge Lighting:**

Councilmember Bruch reported on the status of the lighting costs. He received a verbal estimate of no more than \$50,000 per arch. The Town is only going to light one arch, facing the Town. The estimate includes removing the existing old materials, the LED Lights, clamps to attach the lights, installation of the lights on the bridge and the boom truck rental. Administrator Doyle asked if it included the necessary electrical upgrades to supply power to the lights, as the current service does not have the capability. Councilmember Bruch confirmed it did. Also, Skagit County is on board for the bridge’s 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Ceremony. Mayor Hayes proposed a major fundraiser through the Chamber for the lighting of the bridge. There has already been a few contribution offers. Chamber Director Carter stated she would tag the anniversary year on everything they have for marketing.

Councilmember Stokes stated the bridge needs to be pressure washed before any lights are hung. Also it would be nice to have at least the rails painted to cover the graffiti. Councilmember Bruch confirmed he is working with Commissioner Wesen on this issue. There are no current plans to paint the bridge.

**Flood/Dike:**

Administrator Doyle confirmed Attorney Furlong has filed with the court for the ownership proceedings. Also, he is working on the easement agreements with the Lervick family. When both are done, we will be able to start the permitting.

**Hotel Motel Distribution:**

Mayor Hayes presented the Hotel Motel distribution recommendation by the Hotel Motel Committee.

La Conner Chamber	49,000	Public Restroom Supplies	14,000
Skagit Valley Tulip Festival	2,500	Skagit Artists Together	250
Skagit County Historical Museum	1,000	Lincoln Theater	250
La Conner Quilt Museum	1,000	Skagit Community Band	250
Museum of NW Art	1,000	Audit/Advertising	500
La Conner Art’s Commission	250	Town Bonds	53,000

Total Hotel Motel Distribution                      \$123,000.00

There was discussion with Chamber Director Carter regarding the marketing of the Town, as well as encouraging new businesses to La Conner. Rental space for businesses is really high, comparable to Seattle. She is consulting with EDASC for advice on how to pursue economic strategies to promote the empty spaces and recruit businesses.

There are approximately 14 empty spaces in Town to date. Councilmember Bruch shared the possibility of Wave moving in the Chamber's old spot with a retail store. It is still in the works. Also, Wave is looking into an \$80,000 remodel of their existing building on Maple.

The Mayor discussed the grant for Fiber Optic from the County. It has been approved for \$500,000, but he is working on the legalities of a public private partnership with Wave, to include the Port as well. If successful, the fiber optics will be fully implemented in Town for residents as well as commercial.

Councilmember Stokes recognized the \$4000 increase for the public restrooms, but recommended continued increases of the Hotel Motel Funds until they are fully funded. It is coming out of the General Fund as well as huge infrastructure costs for the next few years and the Sheriff's Contract. The Town cannot afford all of it. Public Works Director Lease confirmed last year the restrooms, located on First and Morris Streets, cost \$38,000.

Chamber Director Carter stated it is great to have the restrooms for our visitors, but they need to be kept clean and fully functional. The Chamber office receives many complaints regarding the conditions of the restrooms and people sleeping in them. Also, she noted marketing continues to increase, so her requests will continue to increase.

**Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve the Hotel Motel Distribution as recommended by the Hotel Motel Committee for the total amount of \$123,000. The Motion was seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion carried 3-1 with Councilmember Stokes voting nay.**

**Yard Waste Agreement with the City of Mount Vernon:**

WWTP Operator Wynn presented the agreement. The City of Mount Vernon will pay the Town \$35,000 a year to take their yard waste. This is a two year contract with an option to increase by the CPI rate. By taking yard waste, the Town will save on the purchase of amendment for the composting. Administrator Doyle recognized WWTP Operator Wynn on his innovated approach to the Wastewater Treatment Plant. He has received notoriety by the Waste Managers Association as being an innovative organization and setting examples for other cities.

**Councilmember Stokes moved to approve the Yard Waste Contract with the City of Mount Vernon. Motion seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion carried 4-0.**

**Community Comments:**

No public Comments.

**Mayor/Council Roundtable:**

Merchants of the Town discussed the "La Conner Live" event. They received \$2500 from the Port and \$500 from the Town in Hotel Motel funds. The concerts in Gilkey Square were a success except for the decimal complaints. They chose Sunday afternoons when people have time off and the stores are open, to accommodate the merchants and the Port who are contributing the money. The time of 1pm to 4pm was set to avoid meal times for the restaurants, but draw in the visitors to eat either before or after the concerts. Also, Saturdays conflicted with other long term events. They want to expand it next year to have music or other activities in other locations throughout the Town, such as Dirty Biter Park. Administrator Doyle did emphasize they will have to complete event applications for all scheduled activities.

Chamber Director Carter requested the Council to promote the Chamber to businesses in Town, to become sponsored members. A few of the complaints tonight were from businesses that were not Chamber members. It is difficult to create a vision for the Town when individuals are doing their own thing and causing conflict.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:38 p.m.

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Maria DeGoede, Finance Director

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Ramon Hayes, Mayor