

Town of La Conner
Town Council Meeting
September 27, 2016 – 6:00 p.m.

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 and Public Works Director Lease.

Councilmember Chamberlain 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 13, 2016. Motion seconded by Councilmember Bruch. Motion carried 4-0.

Approval of Accounts Payable:

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve checks 19029 through 19072 in the amount of \$75,960.78 and Electronic Payments 201320, 201321 and 201322 in the amount \$7,515.08 for a total amount of \$83,475.86. Motion seconded by Councilmember Leaver. Motion carried 4-0.

There was discussion on the cleaning fees, bank fees and hearing examiner charges.

Approval of Payroll:

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve payroll checks 4513 through 4518 in the amount of \$6598.45, payroll tax direct deposit 201319 for \$6246.50 and payroll direct deposit of \$17,517.51 for a total of \$30,362.46, as presented. Motion seconded by Councilmember Bruch. Motion carried 4-0.

Community Comments:

No Public Comments.

Administrator's Report:

Administrator Doyle reported the Galleria has re-submitted their application. He has processed it as a new application to go through another round of comments and SEPA reviews. The comment period ends Thursday September 29th. Next Tuesday October 4th the Planning Commission will review the application with recommendations in regards to the historic design review and any comments regarding the project as a whole. The Public Hearing with the Hearing Examiner for the shoreline permits and historical design is scheduled for Thursday October 13th.

There was discussion on citizens approaching councilmembers with questions on the project. Administrator Doyle advised the councilmembers to refer all questions to him to avoid the risk of litigation. The reason the Town went to the Hearing Examiner process was to remove local elected officials from potential litigation, particularly land use.

Mayor Hayes asked for clarification on the 30 foot height limitation. Administrator Doyle confirmed it was one foot from above the flood plain. This can differentiate throughout Town depending on the flood zone. There are two flood plains, one is the storm surge from the Channel and the other is the threat from the Skagit River. The Galleria is affected by the Channel, in which they are right at the eight foot limit giving them a maximum building

height of 31 feet. They are actually building one foot under that, but they are asking for a four foot height variance to retain the lighthouse motif. This is the only variance they are asking for. Everything else is within the Town Code. Administrator Doyle stressed he wants this process to be equitable and for everyone to get a fair review.

Mayor’s Report:

Mayor Hayes discussed the upcoming negotiations for the Sheriff’s contract and requested a Street/Safety Committee meeting before the next Council Meeting. Then we can establish a meeting with the Sheriff’s office.

Attorney Brad Furlong submitted the Town’s formal records request to the Department of Revenue, for information on the tax issue involving the Great Wolf Lodge Decision.

Council Committee Reports:

Art’s Commission - Councilmember Leaver reported the sponsorship for Art’s Alive is down. Many of the out of town contributors from previous years are not participating this year.

Park’s Commission – Councilmember Bruch noted the salmon bridge is almost complete and introduced Jana Gage’s book on the Town Parks. The books are available at the La Conner Weekly News and Tillinghast Postal. Also, the Parks Commission is working on a timeline of various events for the log along-side the First Street restroom.

Next week he should have the bids for the lighting of the bridge. It will be for white LED lights and light on the arches on the Town side only. Councilmember Stokes thought the Town didn’t have the funds for the project and inquired where the funds are coming from. Mayor Hayes stated the funds will be funneled through the Chamber. Attorney Furlong confirmed we could contract the Chamber as the lead in the project and provide funds to them. The Mayor will provide the Council with the specifics on how that will work. There were further discussions on how the lights will be installed on the bridge.

Flood/Dike:

Administrator Doyle shared he has heard from the school and everything is resolved with the stranded property issue. Attorney Furlong will be filing a motion to the courts to begin the process for the Town ownership.

Ordinance 1143 Amending Ordinance 1129:

Administrator Doyle explained Attorney Furlong lifted the language for Ordinance 1129, on Vacation Right of Ways, from the County’s ordinance, which falls after statehood. The Town is actually complying under territorial law prior to statehood. This ordinance removes the erroneous references.

Councilmember Stokes moved to approve Ordinance 1143 amending Ordinance 1129. Motion seconded by Councilmember Bruch. Motion carried 4-0.

2017 Hotel Motel Distribution:

Councilmember Chamberlain reported there were two meetings involving the Hotel Motel distributions. Applicants were given the chance to present their requests at the first meeting. The Committee focused on the ongoing financial needs of the public restrooms, marketing through the Chamber, the support of the Skagit Valley Tulip Festival and events of the museums that attract tourism. The distribution is as follows:

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

Mayor Hayes addressed the need for a roundtable discussion with the Chamber to discuss the Town business vacancies and ideas to draw new business to Town. Councilmember Chamberlain noted the same concern came up in the Hotel Motel Committee meeting, she feels the owners of the new Galleria should maybe come up with some new ideas besides retail shops. Administrator Doyle noted they have been advised of such repeatedly. Councilmember Chamberlain went on to say this is a problem everywhere. Restaurants and services such as salons are making it. Shops, unless they have an online presence, are having a hard time making it.

There were discussions on the Chamber providing their revenue information and marketing expenses. Also, specifying a percentage of the Hotel Motel funds they receive must go to marketing of the Town. Administrator Doyle stated we are a part of the process and we attend the Chamber's meetings where they provide spreadsheets on the finances. We just haven't provided it to Council. Mayor Hayes noted the spreadsheets will be provided to Council.

Councilmember Stokes expressed his disappointment in the increase to the Chamber. Even though the public restrooms received \$4,000 more, he feels the extra money Chamber received should have gone to the public restrooms as well. The Chamber was originally supposed to support the restrooms. He feels the Town should set up its own advertising. Councilmember Chamberlain noted the Chamber does the most advertising and activities than any of the others and it makes sense they get the lion's share. The Hotel Motel Committee also discussed reserving some of the Chamber's increase for new events and activities. Finance Director DeGoede suggested a policy or resolution setting up percentages of disbursements of the Hotel Motel funds towards marketing and events so the Hotel Motel Committee would have a guide.

It was decided Mayor Hayes will meet with Heather, the Chamber Director, to discuss where the marketing dollars are spent and where our brochures are distributed. A few years ago, the brochures were very effectively distributed by the La Conner Weekly News (to the ferries, etc.) but that funding was disputed and rejected. The Mayor suggested the Council think of marketing ideas to share at the next meeting roundtable discussions with Heather. Councilmember Leaver feels Heather should be making monthly appearances at the Council meetings.

Administrator Doyle suggested looking at an analysis done by Tom Beckwith, a very skilled national planner, on what retail businesses the Town is missing, and what types of businesses are needed to fill the gaps. His analysis includes marketing strategies to encourage businesses to locate here. Administrator Doyle will contact him to see if he is available to work with us.

There were discussions on how unique and desirable the Town is for tourists and business. Mayor Hayes suggests we set a percentage of the Hotel Motel funds for marketing and discuss what the marketing should look like.

Council decided to table the approval of the Hotel Motel distributions until the next Council Meeting.

Community Comments:

No Comments.

Mayor/Council Roundtable:

Councilmember Stokes confirmed there will be a Street/Safety Committee meeting to discuss the Sheriff's Contract, the new loading zones and the increase of handicap parking spaces in Town.

Public Works Director Lease brought up the damaged flashing sign (warning beacon) at Caledonia and Maple. It was hit twice by a truck or some kind of heavy equipment causing enough damage that it had to be removed for liability reasons. He estimates the replacement cost to easily be \$30,000. No one knows why it was installed many years ago, but his guess was the high activity at that end of Town from the County putting in the new bridge, as well as the activities from the cannery and the Moore Clark processing fish. Since then, there has been traffic studies done and there was nothing identifying the blinking sign. Technically when you change an intersection an analysis has to be done by a traffic engineer. Because the Town is so small, it is eligible through WSDOT for this to be done at no cost, but it will take two to three months for the process to be finished. Public Works Director

Lease has been monitoring the intersection and feels it will be ok to wait for the analysis. He will start the process for the intersection analysis and will report to Council when he has more information.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Maria DeGoede, Finance Director

Ramon Hayes, Mayor