

Town of La Conner
Town Council Meeting
January 10, 2023 – 6:00 p.m.

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

Present: Councilmembers Taylor, Carlson, Dole, Chamberlain and Wohleb.

Also present: Administrator Thomas, Finance Director DeGoede, Public Works Director Lease, Planner Davolio, Fire Chief/Code Enforcement Officer Reinstra and Sgt. Montgomery of the Sheriff's Dept.

This was a hybrid meeting held in person and electronically on Zoom. Information to join was posted at Town Hall, the published Agenda in the La Conner Weekly News, and on the Town Website.

Public Comments:

Resident Sandy Stokes of 410 Caledonia Street shared her experience during the recent flood and expressed her gratitude for the response from Public Works, the Fire Department, Councilmembers and the Mayor. Her home is uninhabitable from the flood damage, but it can be repaired. However, there were two residents that were unable to come to the meeting whose homes were a total loss. Her concern was their area of Caledonia turned into a lake and remained underwater for over 15 hours with no outlet for the water.

Resident Stuart Welch of 314 Caledonia Street was also a victim of the flood and discussed the problems with disaster tourism driving through the flood water, causing waves of water into the homes and taking items that floated from his garage. He also noted Dunlap Towing sponsored the publishing of the tide tables, but since they closed, the local paper has not published them. He would like a coordinated emergency flood response to be implemented. Also, he hopes the Town is lobbying heavily for disaster relief of low interest loans for those whose homes are uninhabitable.

Resident Gary George of 403 Center Street recognized the Mayor and Public Works for coming to his home during the flood. He also discussed climate change and expected future flooding. A 100-year flood is now a 10-year.

Resident Kathy Shiner of 216 N. Third Street stated there is another high tide of 11.8 on the 22nd of this month that will last about four days, which is higher than the tide of the flood. She would like to know the Town's plans for the immediate future.

Resident Jim Matthews of 310 N. Third Street also discussed future climate change and the probability of a flood like this last one happening again. Prevention needs to take place; he encourages the Town to look into the flood walls Mount Vernon installed. He suggested advising residents to check under their homes for water damage and questioned all the lights on at night at the school. Also, a contributing factor of his area of flooding was the La Conner Retirement Inn pumped their basement of water that went down State Street.

Resident Gary Nelson of 403 Morris Street shared his shop flooded and he would like to raise his shop 18 inches, but under the current building codes for the Historical District, there are restrictions. He suggested a change to the building codes to allow raising homes and shops.

Resident Bill Stokes of 410 Caledonia Street shared his losses from the flood and stated the Council has discussed many flood protection processes through the years that have been shot down. Counting on volunteers for sandbagging happens too late and the amount of man hours and area to cover is unrealistic. He feels automatic flood walls should be installed. Also, we need to complete First Street on the South end and install flood walls there, but the Moore Clark building sits seven feet on the right of way, which has prevented us using our street. He acknowledged Public Works and the Fire Department.

Resident Linda Talman of 202 N. Fifth Street suggested utilizing local meteorologists and had ideas on notifying the citizens for advance planning to move their items and park their cars. It was noted people did park their cars at the church on 2nd street and at Pioneer Park.

Resident Debbie Aldrich of 415 Center Street suggested an emergency cell phone AP like Code Red to alert people.

Councilmember Carlson is researching notification options and feels it is absolutely possible to predict this.

Mayor Hayes stated we are meeting with the legislature at the end of the month on La Conner's situation. Also, he advised impacted citizens to complete the Damage Report to the County. There is no guarantee there will be disaster funds there, but if there is, we want to be in line.

Administrator Thomas recommended citizens also check out the EDASC website for disaster programs that are in the works and also the State DOE website. As for notifying citizens, we are looking at a number of vehicles to get the word out.

Presentation: La Conner School District:

Superintendent Will Nelson and Director of Operations and Planning Bobby Vaughn discussed the recent budget cutbacks of Federal funding and low enrollment resulted in a decrease of the School funding of about a million dollars. There will be two budget meetings for public input on what they value most. The first meeting will be at the Swinomish Youth Center on January 26th and the second at Maple Hall on February 8th. Also, they miss the Reader Board and encouraged continued discussions on bringing it back.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of Agenda
 Approval of the Minutes of the December 13, 2022 Council Meeting.

Accounts Payable for the December 2022 Closeout:

	Checks 25674 - 25700	\$159,413.00
Electronic Payments:	#2018070 – Leasehold Taxes	\$1,971.99
	#2018071 – US Bank Fees	\$46.57
	#2018072 – Invoice Cloud Fees	\$166.40
	Total December 2022 Closeout	\$161,597.96

Accounts Payable for January 10, 2023:

	Checks 25701 - 25721	\$172,356.76
	Total January 10, 2023	\$172,356.76

Payroll of January 5, 2023	Checks	5662 - 5668	\$3,270.23
Electronic Payments:	#2018065	AWC Benefit Trust	\$14,004.22
	#2018066	Deferred Comp	\$2,241.00
	#2018067	PERS Retirement	\$9,996.84
	#2018068	Teamsters Benefit	\$6,972.80
	#2018069	Payroll Taxes	\$8,994.77
		<u>Payroll Auto Deposit</u>	<u>\$29,158.57</u>
		Total Payroll	\$74,638.43

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

Department Head Reports:

Revenue and Expenditure Reports:

Mayor Hayes noted there has been a decline in Sales Tax in the last two months, but Hotel Motel continues to come in higher.

Public Works:

Councilmember Carlson noted the upcoming tides in January will be worse than the one that flooded. Public Works Director Lease reported all the infrastructure of the drainage system has been cleaned and inspected since the flood and everything is in good condition. He did discuss his concern with citizens removing manholes and catch basin lids during the flood. It is extremely dangerous and it caused issues with the pumps. La Conner Weekly News will include the risks and issues in the next paper. Council also discussed resurrecting the Charrette Report from 2017, and formalizing the current Flood Committee to a Flood Commission for addressing flooding issues from the Skagit River as well as the Channel.

Fire Department:

Chief Reinstra acknowledged the flood efforts of Public Works, the Sheriff and volunteers that showed up and filled over 30 pallets of sand bags. Also, he thanked the Fohn Farm for bringing their front loader, Dike District 12 brought an automatic sandbagger and the Mesmans brought in their flatbed truck. Chief Reinstra also requested a

variance on the time events have to shut down at Maple Hall for the March 18, 2023 Fireman's Ball. Council instructed him to notify the neighbors it would impact in advance, and if there are no issues, it can be brought before Council on the next Agenda for approval.

Sheriff's Department:

Mayor Hayes acknowledged the Sheriff's Department for responding to the extra needed patrolling during the flood.

WWTP:

Mayor Hayes and Public Works Director Lease discussed the issues at the Plant during the flood. The main problem was the water coming in from Sullivan's Slough. For an immediate temporary plan, they will be building an ecology wall, one ecology block high, around ¼ of the Plant. Additional sand bags will be used until the ecology wall is done later this year. Also, for the upcoming event this month, he and Fire Chief Reinstra have been evaluating the waterfront on where and how high sandbags will be needed. The sand bagging will primarily be done by Public Works. There will be an agreement with David Evans and Associates on the next Agenda, for a survey of the full water front to identify needed flood protection in all areas of Town.

Planner's Report:

Planner Davolio suggested waiving the fees for permits due to the flood damage. He also explained the three phases of the Comprehensive Plan process, in which he has already received two Development Reviews for this year. One issue that needs to be addressed is the Town has no regulations for adult businesses. If we don't have regulations put in place when they apply for a business license, then we can't regulate them. Also, there will be a parking inventory of every private and public parking space in Town.

Council Committee Reports:

Flood Committee: Councilmember Dole reported they have been meeting since the flood and plans to formalize to a Commission.

Communication Ad Hoc Committee:

Councilmember Chamberlain noted they have been meeting to plan for the January 21st forum on communication.

Center Street Project:

No updates

Jenson Property:

No updates, however the Mayor noted there is a new housing committee in our State Legislature. The Town may be required to accommodate more affordable housing in the community. In response to this and the addition of a very vocal call from the public for affordable housing, the Town acquired the Jenson Property adjacent to Channel Cove. There are no definite plans for the property at this time.

7:23 p.m. Council recessed for a break.

7:26 p.m. Council resumed the meeting.

Resolution 615 - Sick Leave Policy Update:

Administrator Thomas explained there was a need to update the use of accruals. One update was more for staff protocol on abuse of accrual use, but the other addresses newly hired employees that have not accrued sick leave or vacation in time during emergency conditions or unexpected illness. He requested the Council to approve the Resolution retroactive to December 1, 2022, to cover a new hire use.

Councilmember Wohleb moved to approve, retroactive to December 1, 2022, Resolution 615 Amending the Sick Leave Policy. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement – David Evans & Associates/Water System Plan Update:

Public Works Director Lease explained Evan Henke did the last two and has historical knowledge. The goal is to have the draft to Council by September or October of this year.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve the Mayor to sign the Agreement with David Evans and Associates for the Water System Plan Update. Motion seconded by Councilmember Dole. Motion carried 5/0.

Purchase of the Public Works Truck:

Public Works Director Lease provided documentation showing there are no available trucks to purchase through the State Contract. Blade Chevrolet has been very accommodating with holding the only one they have until the Town decides to purchase it. It was for \$62,000 and they reduced the cost by almost \$12,000, which is only a \$1,300 difference if he was able to purchase one through the State Contract. Administrator Thomas explained this is an item that normally would go to bid, but due to unavailability, it is considered a sole source.

Councilmember Dole moved to approve the purchase of the Public Works Truck through Blade Chevrolet as a sole source due to market conditions and to waive the bidding process. Motion seconded by Councilmember Taylor. Motion carried 5/0.

Resolution 616 – Recognition of Hunter Tautvydas:

Mayor Hayes read the Resolution in appreciation of drafting a Citizen’s Guide of the organization, structure and governmental operations of the Town of La Conner

Councilmember Wohleb moved to approve Resolution 617 in appreciation of Hunter Tautvydas. Motion seconded by Councilmember Chamberlain. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement – Frontline Cleaning:

Public Works Director Lease noted this is for the cleaning of the public restrooms.

Councilmember Taylor moved to approve the Mayor to sign the Agreement with Frontline Cleaning. Motion seconded by Councilmember Carlson. Motion carried 5/0.

Agreement - Cintas:

Tabled for the next meeting.

Agreement - EDASC:

Administrator Thomas explained this is an annual agreement for County partnership.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve the Mayor to sign the Agreement with EDASC. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

2023 Tribal Rates:

Tabled for the next meeting.

Mayor Roundtable:

Mayor Hayes stated there has been a group meeting on the flood short-term and long-term needs. Items of discussion are staging areas for sand bagging, identify equipment to have ready to go, a volunteer call list, providing training, utilizing local meteorologists, increase emergency command training, warning systems, implement an emergency operation center at Town Hall, and form a Flood Commission. They are also evaluating what the Town needs to present to the legislature at the end of the month.

Council suggestions were to refer to the 2017 Charrette document for ideas and tapping other jurisdictions on ideas and funding. Also, during the flood Maple Hall was ready as an emergency shelter. Red Cross was going to setup cots and other needs, but was called off as the water had receded and no one was at Maple Hall. Red Cross did come the next day going door to door taking inventory and provided cleaning supplies.

Public Works Director Lease requested the purchase of items needed for flooding, such as poly sandbags and pallets for storage. It would not exceed \$5,500 and will not require a budget amendment.

Councilmember Wohleb moved to approve Public Works Director Lease to move forward with the purchase of flood related items. Motion seconded by Councilmember Taylor. Motion carried 5/0.

Mayor Hayes opened for Public Comments:


Tanya Bieche of North Sound ACH has a team going door to door as peer counselors to help the flood victims in Town. She also suggested Hamilton as a good resource for flood information.

Resident Mark Greaves submitted his Damage Report Form online and asked what happens next. Administrator Thomas explained the information will be compiled County wide for a bigger number. Their goal is to extend the due date to the end of the year, for a better chance of getting assistance from State and Federal disaster funding. Administrator Thomas will check to see if the County information will be available to the public.


Resident Jim Matthews questioned who would be providing the funds. Administrator Thomas explained the Town would not be distributing funds; it could come from a number of government agencies.

Councilmember Wohleb announced she will not be at the next meeting.

There being no further business the meeting ended at 8:06 p.m.



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor