

Town of La Conner

Town Council Meeting
May 11, 2021 – 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: Councilmember, Brunisholz, Leaver, Stokes, Chamberlain and Wohleb.

Also present: Administrator Thomas and Finance Director DeGoede, Public Works Director Lease, WWTP Operator Wynn, Planner Davolio, Asst. Fire Chief Avery and Sgt. Willard of the Sheriff's Department.

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

Public Comments:

Resident Rick Dole requested clarification on what the Town is paying on police coverage and if we were paying for Conway and Bayview. Administrator Thomas explained the Town pays the Skagit County Sheriffs a fee for coverage in Town. The deputies' territory includes the West side of I-5 as well as north and south of La Conner. We are not paying for those areas. Mayor Hayes noted the Town is a part of Zone One which extends from Conway to Lake Campbell.

Sgt. Willard explained the deputies are required to be within a ten-minute response time within the zone, that also includes Anacortes, Samish Island and Bayview.

Residents Leann Bushey and Linda Peterson discussed their concerns with the Sheriff's response time and lack of response. Also, the Town is responsible for the safety of a large number of tourists visiting La Conner. Sgt. Willard explained some incidents can be handled by a phone call from the deputy on duty, or a critical issue takes precedence of a call, but that would be relayed to the person who called. There are always eight deputies on duty to respond.

Mayor Hayes stated in the past, the Town had 4 full-time deputies and one halftime sergeant that cost the Town just under \$500,000 annually. In the last fourteen years, costs escalated and the Town could not afford it. Now we are a part of a zone with a guaranteed response time. The Town provides a satellite office for the deputies to work at for increased presence. Resident Bushey suggested a possible tourist tax or some other funding source. Administrator Thomas noted there are other revenue streams for policing, but they involve a vote of the people for raising taxes.

Consent Agenda:

Approval of Agenda

Approval of the Minutes of April 27, 2021

Accounts Payable:	24071 – 24116	\$171,509.83
Auto Payments:	201703 Parking Meter Processing Fees	\$754.64
	<u>201704 CC Payment Processing Fees</u>	<u>\$130.60</u>
	Total May 11, 2021 Claims	\$172,395.07
Payroll of May 5, 2021	Checks 5381 - 5389	\$21,103.81
Auto Payments:	DCP #201700	\$2,291.00
	PERS #201701	\$11,285.17
	PR Taxes #201702	\$6,792.10
	<u>Payroll Auto Deposit</u>	<u>\$20,415.03</u>
	Total Payroll	\$61,887.11

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

Chamber Report:

Chamber Director Carter reported the Tulip Festival went well. Several businesses felt it was the best in fifteen years. The next event is the Classic Car and Boat Show in August. It will be held virtual, but there will be an in-person car cruise on August 7th. She is also planning a Facebook Auction in the fall.

For marketing, La Conner will be in the Seattle Times advertising section called “Out and About.” The Love La Conner sign in Gilkey Square has been popular with tourists. It will remain up through August as long as there is no vandalism.

Revenue and Expenditure Reports:

Mayor Hayes noted Sales Taxes are already over 50%, Hotel Motel Taxes are a bit behind, but everything else seems stable.

Planning:

Planner Davolio noted the Council will have some upcoming considerations. There are some parking issues primarily in the commercial zones and a parking plan is needed in our Capital Facilities Plan.

Fire Department:

Assistant Fire Chief Avery discussed the need for Wildfire Gear. It has already been ordered due to the need for it to arrive before the training in June. He estimated the total cost at approximately \$5,900. The incentive of this training is the Town will be paid rent by the State for the use of the fire engine if they are called out to a wildfire.

Councilmember Brunisholz moved to approve the cost of the Wildfire Gear for the Fire Department. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

Also, both fire engines need new tires. They will be replacing one this year and will include the second in the 2022 Budget.

Sheriff's Department:

Sgt. Willard stated April was a very busy month with a large influx of calls. They were a bit short staffed but all went well for the Tulip Festival.

Administrator:

Dike - Administrator Thomas discussed the outline for the permitting process with Engineer Evan Henke. Due to County permit requirement changes, it was decided to schedule a pre-app meeting with the County before starting the engineering. His meeting is scheduled at the end of the month.

Code Enforcement/Citizen Patrol Vehicle – There have been previous Council discussions on implanting a citizen's patrol made up of volunteers. The first step is to find a vehicle, and unfortunately Skagit County's surplus has extremely high mileage. A car has been surplus by the Federal Government at \$11,300 with 70,000 miles and fully equipped with lights and other policing equipment. This could be used for re-implementing the code enforcement position and used as a decoy for traffic control. After Council discussions, it was decided the car did not meet the needs for code enforcement and they were not in favor of a citizen's patrol.

Mayor Hayes stated the Town has major traffic control problems all over and crime has been on the rise. We are going to have to make some kind of decision. Suggestions were a trailer mounted reader boards, flashing mounted reader boards with cameras and speed bumps and humps. Council instructed Public Works Director Lease to obtain options and quotes for four permanent reader signs, two for Maple Avenue and two for North Third Street. The cost will be a part of a later budget amendment.

There is a camera on the Fire Hall, pointed at the round-a-bout, but the computer to the camera has not worked for quite a while. Both were purchased by a grant years ago. Council requested options and cost for a new computer and a new camera if needed.

State Street and Morris Street intersection has all the signage that is legal. The only other option is a mini round-about, which is in our TIP. However, there have been no recorded accidents at the intersection. It is more of an irritant than a problem.

Sgt. Willard discussed the Neighborhood Block Watch program. The Sheriff's Department meets with communities for educational talks on what is suspicious and what should or shouldn't be a 911 call. Block Watch signs are distributed for free.

Administrator Thomas stated the last element of the Waterfront Park is the gazebo. We currently have \$12,000 in reserve from donations with an estimated total cost from last year of \$25,000. Because of the elimination of all projects for 2021, due to the pandemic, this was not included in the budget. Things are looking better and he would like the Council's recommendation to move forward.

Councilmember Wohleb confirmed the contractor has held firm on the original cost, and is willing to oversee the project done by volunteers to save money. Finance Director DeGoede stated the intention of the Town was to pay towards the project.

It was the consensus of the Council to move forward in obtaining the plans and costs for the gazebo.

Council Committee Reports:

Arts Commission:

Councilmember Leaver stated the next Arts Commission meeting is to hopefully approve the art fence donated by Jean Wharton.

Councilmember Leaver also noted the next First on First in June will be "Eat Your Way through La Conner" involving the participation of the local restaurants, and on June 20th there will be a car show.

Parks Committee:

Councilmember Wohleb shared there will be a Park's Committee Meeting tomorrow. They have formed a new citizen's advisory committee to help shape the vision of the Maple Avenue Park. As a Councilmember, she will help kick it off, but they will be doing the work. Also, they will be voting on the donated wall art.

Resolution 580 – Mining in Headwaters of the Skagit River in British Columbia:

Administrator Thomas explained this resolution has been adopted throughout Skagit County to include the Port of Skagit, the Upper Skagit Tribe, the Snohomish Tribe and PUD. It is in opposition and concern of pollution from mining the headwaters of the Skagit River in British Columbia.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve Resolution 580 in Opposition of Mining in Headwaters of the Skagit River. Motion seconded by Councilmember Stokes. Motion Carried 5/0.

Resolution 581 Appreciation of the Shermans:

Mayor Hayes read the Resolution in appreciation of Chip and Lysa Sherman for all the years of service cleaning the Town facilities.

Councilmember Chamberlain moved to approve Resolution 581 in Appreciation of the Shermans. Motion seconded by Councilmember Wohleb. Motion carried 5/0.

Councilmember Wohleb was approached about concerns of citizens living on Talbott Street. The delivery trucks leaving the grocery store are exiting on Talbott Street rather than Maple Avenue. This is a residential street and they are concerned about their children and dogs. She recommended a residential only sign. Also, the new Maple Avenue Park will be attracting more families and the semi-trucks and speeding cars are a concern there as well as. Mayor Hayes acknowledged we will have to do something about the traffic for the upcoming Maple Avenue Park.

Councilmember Brunisholz shared the Avalon Development is back on the County table. He wants a resolution expressing objection to the project if we don't already have one. Councilmember Stokes stated he was not against it. Mayor Hayes will monitor the issue.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m.



Maria DeGoede, Finance Director



Ramon Hayes, Mayor