

FEBRUARY 21, 2017 MINUTES  
CITY OF WASCO COUNCIL MEETING

*Prior to opening the meeting, Attorney Carey performed the swearing in ceremony for Mayor Carol MacKenzie and Council member Scott Miller.*

PRESENT: Mayor Carol MacKenzie & Councilors' Beth McCurdy, Scott Miller, Carol Olmstead, Eileen Wainright (Absent – Ken DeGrange); City Staff – Clerk Cassie Strege, Maint. Tech. Greg Gosson, Atty. Will Carey; Visitors – Perry Thurston, Tom Lepinski, Gena Arthur, Dave Bergmann

The meeting was called to order at 7:00p.m. with Mayor MacKenzie leading the flag salute. A quorum was present; no news media were in attendance.

No additions or changes to the agenda were requested.

Consent Calendar: Motion, Olmstead/Wainwright to approve the Dec. 20, 2016 minutes; ratify payment of Jan. 2017 bills; and approve payment of Feb. 2017 bills as presented. Aye vote was unanimous – motion carried.

DOWNTOWN IMPROVEMENTS COMMITTEE UPDATE: Mayor MacKenzie reported that although no downtown businesses had shown an interest in doing any facade work at this time, the committee still wanted to put together some kind of application process. She introduced Perry Thurston whom she had asked to come speak to the Council about the program Moro had developed.

Thurston advised that the City of Moro had put up \$15,000, with the County matching that amount for a total of \$30,000 for downtown facade improvements. Of these funds, a cap of \$15,000 would be set for each qualified project – although projects could be for lesser amounts as well. In addition, the City had retained the right to use a portion of these funds.

The program was designed for business owners at an 80% payback, so if someone submitted a \$5,000 project, that would be a \$4,000 return. No one had completed an application as yet, but there had been much interest shown – and the program was in place, with funds available should someone wish to submit a project.

Thurston further explained that the County had set aside \$50,000 to be used for facade improvements throughout the County – these funds were available to all of the towns. At this time, Moro was the only one that had approached the County, and they had been told that if no other cities apply for the funds, the County could decide to give the whole pot to Moro.

Mayor MacKenzie stated that she hoped that the Wasco City Council would eventually be willing to put up something so that we (Wasco) could approach the Court about matching funds – with Thurston advising that, in Moro, it had initially been a grass-roots effort by citizens and business owners getting together, working up a proposal, taking it to the City Council and, then, after much back and forth, the Council and citizens were able to reach an agreement.

Cnc. Olmstead asked if improvements to the school entrance would qualify for this program – with Thurston stating that this would be up to the committee in Wasco. They would need to set up the criteria and guidelines that would need to be followed.

Atty. Carey suggested that the first thing the City should do would be to form a committee – with the Mayor stating that there was already a committee in place and that several improvements had already been made – a bicycle fixit station and drinking fountain had been installed at the Depot; the large planters had been re-painted and additional self-watering planters purchased; and the quilt trail had been started – which was the painted wood squares that were in place around the downtown area.

The Mayor added that the Council had been asked, sometime ago, to consider putting up funds to be used for downtown improvements such as facade facelifts – with these funds to be matched by the County – but the Council had not been willing to do so at that time. With the headway made by Moro, the Mayor felt that it might be a good time to present a proposal to the Wasco City Council again.

**DISCUSS PROPOSAL FOR TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF THE WASCO SCHOOL TO THE CITY:** The Mayor asked to state her opinion first – advising that she was in favor of the City accepting the offer from the County. The School was a landmark for the City – visible from nearly every direction coming into town – and not every city was given a chance such as this, to get a big, beautiful building and to be given money to fix the outside and the roof as well. The City would be getting \$50,000 annually for six years from the County, and we should know within 3 – 4 years whether we would be able to make a go of it – and if not, the City would then have a nice building that could be put up for sale.

Cnc. Olmstead stated that she had heard that if the City did not take the building, the County Court did not intend to put any more money into it – and it would be left to deteriorate and become an eyesore.

The Mayor advised that she had talked with Roger Whitley (the building custodian) to find out if there were any major issues that he was aware of, and she had also looked at the budget printout issued by the County – it showed that it was taking around \$62,000 a year to run the building, and of that, \$32,000 was payroll for Roger Whitley.

Cnc. McCurdy advised that she had several questions – the first being to ask if the City had received something in writing from the County Court? In answer, the Clerk referred to the copy of the Court minutes where the County's offer had been made by formal motion. McCurdy felt that the County should, at the least, present an official offer to the City on County letterhead. McCurdy asked for other documentation, and referred to the various surveys and inspections and analysis that the Court had paid for – she would like to see these findings on paper. She also questioned the type of insurance coverage the County was paying, and whether this would be what the City would be paying as well.

Cnc. Olmstead stated that she was working on a business plan that she would turn over to an advisor in the Small Business Dept. at Columbia Gorge College for input – this was expected to be completed the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in March; in April the City or Committee would meet with the Court to hash out all the incidentals, and the County Budget Committee would review the funding requests; and then with the start of the fiscal year in July, the City would be able to take over the operation of the School – with the first \$50,000 payment from the County to follow.

Cnc. McCurdy returned to the need of a written offer from the County, and stated her

concern that this would place the City attorney in a difficult situation since he represented both entities, which was a conflict of interest -- with Atty. Carey advising that he would not take part in a conflict. He agreed that the offer should be in writing, and stated that although he wouldn't do this himself, there were lots of other people who could help the County write it.

Cnc. McCurdy added that she also wanted to see all facts, inspection results, and findings in writing as well -- with Cnc. Miller stating that he felt the Council needed more than just hearsay.

Cnc. Wainwright stated that from the start of the discussion on the School, the Council had said that we didn't want it to be a decision from only the Council -- that we wanted the citizens to have a voice as well. Surveys were sent out, and came back with many more "yes's" than "no's" -- so, she felt the Council needed to take into account that the citizens had said "yes", and it was our job now to do what they wanted.

Discussion ensued, with multiple suggestions made: for another vote to be held for the citizens of Wasco (Cnc. Miller); for an executive session to be held to further discuss ( Mayor); for a workshop that would allow the public to come and give input (Perry Thurston); for a list of items and property that would be included with the transfer (Dave Bergmann); to request that more information be made available by the County (Gena Arthur).

The Clerk gave an update on the County action taken to date: Last month, when the Council learned that the County Court had not yet approved a formal proposal to transfer ownership, Commissioner McCoy was directed by the City Council to go back to the Court ready to make a formal motion. This was done, with all the points included -- \$50,000 to be received annually for the next six years; \$250,000 to be received to repair and restore the building -- with the County Budget Committee to approve the distribution of the \$250,000 in either a lump sum (which was unlikely) or in annual installments. The motion was approved unanimously.

The Clerk advised that since Cms. McCoy had followed through with all that had been asked of him by the Council, the ball was now in the City Council's Court, with the Council needing to decide what terms and conditions should be included in the agreement -- what has to be done before you can make the final decision to take the school? The Clerk added, that from the discussion tonight, it was agreed that, as one condition, you wanted to see *facts on paper*.

The Clerk stated that Cnc. DeGrange had sent a list of requests that included: ground testing to see if there were oil leaks (and if this has already been done, then to see the written report); and a guarantee that the City will receive the \$250,000 (if not in a lump sum, then to see a written disbursement schedule). Atty. Carey was asked if a guarantee could be given, to which he replied, "Yes. If the Court gives the City a contract in writing stating that they will pay this amount, then, the Court will be legally bound to carry out the terms of the contract".

General consensus that a meeting should be held with the County Court in order to present conditions set by the City, and to confirm that all pertinent information had been received, in writing, from the Court -- with Cnc. Olmstead suggesting a time between the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in March and the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in April to schedule this meeting.

The Clerk referred to the Committee that the Council had requested to be formed, and recommended that the Council formally establish this Committee and adopt directives and guidelines for this group. The Clerk further explained that there was a process to follow through City Ordinance No. 139, An Ordinance Creating Various Committees, Commissions and Boards:

The City Council would first establish the Committee; approve its name, and then approve the Bylaws. (The Bylaws would also be approved by the Committee members). The Clerk presented the draft Bylaws to the Council, and asked them to read through them before the next Council meeting, and then in March, to be ready to discuss and take formal action to approve. Once the Committee was officially recognized, the group would then be able to meet with the Court in April as representatives of the City.

Atty. Carey advised that he had purposely stayed out of the transfer of the School to the City – the Court was aware that he also represented the City – however, they knew his feelings regarding the Wasco School, which was that this was the most majestic building in the County.

Discussion of preserving the building took place, with the Clerk advising that she had talked with Jessica Metta of MCEDD about applying for a grant to restore the entry facade. This was offered through Oregon State Parks and Recs, with up to \$20,000 grant funds available -- with a 50/50 match. Since the deadline to submit the application was May 12, 2017, the Clerk asked the Atty. if it would even be possible to apply since transfer of ownership wouldn't be completed by that time. Atty. Carey answered in the affirmative – even if the City didn't end up taking over the school, the grant (if approved) could be turned over to the County.

ELECT COUNCIL PRESIDENT: Motion, McCurdy/Olmstead that Cnc. Wainwright continue to serve as Council President. Aye vote was unanimous – motion carried.

DESIGNATE COUNCIL ASSIGNMENTS: The Mayor approved the existing assignments to continue, with the exception of the following changes: Cnc. McCurdy to also take over Streets/Sidewalks; and Cnc. Miller to be assigned to Fire Representative/911.

QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORTS: The Clerk presented the Cash Balance Report for all primary funds, and advised that as of 12-31-16 \$138,445.76 was in the City checking account, and \$647,621.03 was in the LGIP account. The Clerk further explained that on 12/31/16, the City's annual SIP payment of \$100,000 from the County had been deposited – which was why there was so much in the checking account. In January, \$90,000 had been transferred from the City checking account to the LGIP account.

MAYOR'S REPORT & COUNCIL UPDATES: The Mayor presented the 2016 Project Completion Report which included: removal of trees on creek bank behind Depot Park; installation of Bicycle Fix-it Station and drinking fountain at Depot Park; remodel of City Hall bathroom and installation of new lights in Council chambers; continued Sewer Line replacement s; installation of quilt trail.

The Mayor also presented a letter she had submitted to Brad Dehart of ODOT, requesting speed reductions in the entrances into town – and advised that ODOT and County personnel would be meeting at City Hall on March 7<sup>th</sup> to discuss solutions to specific traffic issues.

The Mayor praised Tom Lepinski for his assistance with snow removal on the sidewalks and streets, and suggested that a gift certificate be given to him. A \$50 certificate was approved.

CITY STAFF REPORTS: The Clerk referred to the Annual CIS conference that would begin on Thursday – and advised that she had registered to attend. She would be attending through a scholarship that included the cost of one nights lodging and the registration fee. The Clerk added that since the January Council meeting had been cancelled, she hadn't been able to ask for Council authorization to attend beforehand – although she had mentioned it to the Mayor. Approval was given at this time by the Council.

The Maint. Tech. reported that it had been a long winter with snow removal – and advised that he had just taken off the snow blade that afternoon. The Maint. Tech. asked for approval to attend the short school in Pendleton that would be held the first of April – registration would be due prior to the March meeting.

The Council asked if Joe Blunt would be attending the short school this year as well, with the Maint. Tech. answering in the negative – he needed to go himself to keep his credits current. The Maint. Tech. reported that Blunt was taking some courses now, but that the City should be thinking about whether they would be advancing Blunt to the position of certified operator, or would be advertising for someone for this position. The Maint. Tech. stated that if the Council chose to promote Blunt, he would need to be a full time employee for up to one year to be able to apply for certification. With no further discussion, the following action took place: motion, McCurdy/ Wainwright to approve the Maint. Tech. attending the short school in April. Aye vote was unanimous – motion carried.

OTHER: The Mayor asked if the Maint. Tech. would have time to paint the City Hall interior walls before work began on the Sewer Line Replacement Project --with discussion ensuing regarding whether this should be a project for the Maint. Tech. Additionally, the need of replacing the carpet in City Hall was discussed, with options of either laying new carpet or refinishing the hardwood floors considered. General consensus to continue this discussion to an upcoming meeting.

Cnc. Wainwright asked to have the flags in City Hall displayed more prominently, with discussion ensuing regarding the possible hanging of the flags with wall brackets; whether or not to purchase smaller flags; or continuing the use of floor mounts.

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 9:00p.m.