

DECEMBER 20, 2016 MINUTES
CITY OF WASCO COUNCIL MEETING

PRESENT: Mayor Carol MacKenzie, Cnc's: Sharon Chard, Ken DeGrange, Beth McCurdy, Carol Olmstead, Eileen Wainwright; City Staff – Clerk Cassie Strege, Maint. Tech. Greg Gosson, Atty. Will Carey; Visitors – Joe Dabulskis, Mic Dabulskis, Megan Jensen, Gail Macnab, Dave Bergman, Bill Holland, Gena Arthur, Len & Danee Rankin, Terry Fassbender, Tom McCoy, Perry Thurston

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.

Consent Calendar: Motion, Wainwright/Olmstead to accept the consent calendar. Aye vote was unanimous – motion carried.

DISCUSS PROPOSAL ISSUED FROM SHERMAN COUNTY REGARDING TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP OF THE WASCO SCHOOL FROM THE COUNTY TO THE CITY OF WASCO: Tom McCoy gave an overview of the County's proposal – should transfer of ownership of the Wasco School occur, the City would be given \$50,000 a year for six years (for the remainder of the SIP agreements) along with \$250,000 to be used for repairs such as replacing the roof, and painting the exterior. The goal would be to transfer ownership by July 1st of 2017, with the first \$50,000 issued in the 2017-18 fiscal year, and annual payments continuing through the 22-23 fiscal year.

The \$250,000 would need to be approved by the Sherman County budget committee who would be meeting in March or April -- there was a possibility that, rather than receiving the full amount in the 2017-18 fiscal year, moneys would be issued in installments -- \$150,000 to pay for the roof, and then another installment to be used to pay for exterior repairs and painting.

McCoy stressed that this was a proposal that had been put together by he and Com. Smith – and that it still had to be formally approved by the County Court, with an agreement drawn up and approved by both parties – the City and the County Court.

The Mayor called upon Gail Macnab who gave an update from the Wasco School Committee who had last met on December 8th to discuss what direction should be taken in order to move forward with saving the Wasco School building. It was the consensus of the group that the best option, *still*, would be for the City of Wasco to take ownership of the building. The process of forming a non-profit would be time consuming, costly, and the end result would not be in the best interest of the committee and the building. The Committee, then, focused on moving forward in Phases – **Phase I** would be for the City of Wasco to acquire the building from the County, major repairs would be made, and the Committee would form a Board of Directors for management of the building; **Phase II** would be to market the building, establish fees for use of the building, update and clean the downstairs areas, join The Dalles Chamber of Commerce to promote the facility, and update the security of the building, which would be a top priority – it was felt that too many people now had keys or knew the entry codes; **Phase III** would be to seek grants and other funding to complete building updates – with emphasis on the upstairs areas – and energy efficiency upgrades. Macnab concluded by stating that the Committee felt the school building was an asset to the community and should be preserved – and was hopeful that the City Council would vote “Yes” to Save our School.

The Mayor asked the City Clerk to present the results of the surveys that had been distributed, with the Clerk explaining that two methods had been used to get responses – the first was a petition that had initially been set up at the Wasco School during the School’s Centennial Celebration in September – with the question posed, “Do you feel the Wasco School is an asset to the community and should be rehabilitated?” A total of 66 signatures were collected on this petition. The second method was a survey that had been sent out with water/sewer bills the first of November and again in December with the question asked, “Are you in favor of the City of Wasco taking ownership of the Wasco School and property?” Approximately 169 questionnaires had been sent out to households and businesses – with 63 questionnaires returned. Of those, 51 were in favor of the City taking ownership of the school; 7 said “no”; and 5 said that they needed more information. Combining both methods, 129 responses had been received, with 117 stating “Yes”.

The Mayor opened discussion to the public with multiple comments heard and questions posed – what would it cost to operate the school; where would revenue come from; why did the County want to give up the school, etc -- with Com. McCoy, Mayor MacKenzie and Cnc. Olmstead trying to provide answers to the questions. Lengthy discussion ensued.

Cnc. McCurdy stated that she had posed many of the same questions months before, with still no answers. It appeared to be at a catch 22 – the Court needed to decide whether they would go along with the proposed plan; and the budget committee needed to decide whether or not to approve the funds; and the Save Our School Committee needed to provide a management plan – but none of these could proceed until each had an understanding of what the other was proposing Cnc. McCurdy suggested that the Committee work with the County over the next few months to get some answers and details to see what’s going to happen.

Mayor MacKenzie felt that the Council first needed to decide whether they were interested in taking the Annex over before the Committee would be able to move forward to approach the Court – with McCurdy stating that there were still too many unanswered questions for her to be able to say yes on that – another catch 22.

Com. McCoy agreed that a decision couldn’t be made because the City hadn’t yet seen the proposal – the County hadn’t even made the proposal formal yet, but at the next Court meeting, he would see if he could get the Court to approve the proposal. He would then draw up a transfer agreement for the City to look at that would have all the details and the amount of money involved –and finally, the proposal would need to go to the Sherman County budget committee. With all these steps, none of this would be finalized until after April.

Mayor MacKenzie stated that in listening to Com. McCoy, it sounded like the City Council needed to decide if we were interested in taking over the School, before it could be moved on to the next step. And then, it may be in April that we decide we *don’t* want to do it, but at least at this point we can make a decision to move in that direction. The Mayor asked the members of the Council to each state their opinion at this time:

Mayor MacKenzie felt that the City should take over ownership of the School – we have an opportunity to get it spruced up to the point of marketing it so it is a real asset to the City -- if it became obvious, after five years, that it wasn’t viable financially, the City could then sell it.

Cnc. McCurdy stated that she had mixed feelings going forward, but that she realized that

we can't go any further until we inch ahead. No contracts are going to be signed right away; she was hesitant about putting a financial burden on the City and although we have some numbers, she thinks there's still a lot in between those white spaces. With that said, she would vote to cautiously go forward.

Cnc. DeGrange stated that as a contractor, he understood the costs that a public entity was required to pay for any construction project as opposed to costs for a private entity– the costs (such as prevailing wage) would easily be triple compared to what a private entity would pay. Considering the age of the school, it could be expected that major maintenance projects would be needed, and if the City was responsible, the costs would be high. He felt that it made sense for a private entity to be in charge and to take over the school. He could not vote to burden the City with taking on the expense.

Cnc. Wainwright felt the Council should vote "Yes" tonight to move forward, and by the time the final decision needs to be made, we would be ready with answers.

Cnc. Chard stated that she was in favor of it too – the school is an asset to the City, the community, and all the people who are currently using it – like Potlatch, and the Library and all the private events that have been held in the school. She felt it was the responsibility of the Council to stand up for what the people want – and from what she heard, those in favor of keeping the school out-numbered those who were against it.

Cnc. Olmstead stated that she wanted to back up to finish a point -- that if it ends up that the City doesn't take the School, and no repairs were done on it, then it will become an eyesore that would be hard to sell – and it would simply sit, deteriorating more and more.

Olmstead referred to the suggestion made earlier (that the Committee begin working with the County, and put together a plan) and stressed that the Committee didn't want to spend hours, weeks, and months putting together a piece-by-piece business plan, when possibly, it may never happen. She would like to see the Council vote on it tonight and take it on a contingency basis, and then by April, with more facts available, the Committee would then have a plan ready to present.

At this time, Attorney Carey summed up the action to take: the Council would vote on whether or not the City has an interest in pursuing facts with the County to consider entering into an intergovernmental agreement regarding ownership of the school; and acknowledging that the ultimate decision would be contingent on whether or not funding would be approved by the Sherman County Budget Committee – with repair of the roof a major factor, as well as inspection of the heating system and fuel tank.

With assistance from Attorney Carey and Com. McCoy, the following motion was presented: motion, Olmstead/McCurdy that the City Council is expressing an interest in the County Court developing a proposal to bring to the City for further review that would allow the City to take over the Wasco School. Voting aye: MacKenzie, Chard, McCurdy, Olmstead, Wainwright Voting Nay: DeGrange Motion carried.

2015-16 FISCAL YEAR AUDIT: The Clerk presented the audit booklet that had been completed by Oster Professional Group, and suggested that after the Council has had a chance to look at it, discussion could be held at the upcoming Council meeting.

Page 4 (12-20-16 minutes)

RECEIVE MAYORS REPORT AND COUNCIL UPDATES: The Mayor acknowledged Deputy Brian Hulke (who had arrived during the meeting), and asked him to respond to citizen concerns of excessive speeding through town, and the increasing number of trucks driving through town.

Deputy Hulke stated that the Sherrif's Dept. was aware that the increase of truck traffic to/from Scott Canyon was becoming a problem – in fact, he was late to the meeting because he had just ticketed a truck as he was coming into Wasco.

The need of having a speed survey/investigation done was discussed, with Council consensus that the ODOT be contacted to learn what the process was.

Perry Thurston referred to the electronic speed signs that had been installed in Moro, and advised that the City had paid for these signs. Initially, a group of citizens had signed a petition requesting that a speed survey be done – with this petition forwarded on to ODOT.

The Mayor advised that Luciano Tree Trimming had gotten in touch to apologize for not getting back to do the work they had bid on – they had been swamped, but would get this work done for the City in the Spring.

The issue of overhanging trees that impaired visibility in the City right-of-ways was again discussed, with the Mayor advising that she had received several more complaints.

No further business was discussed.

ADJOURN: The meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

City Clerk