

# WESTFIR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, August 2, 2021

In-person meeting at Westfir City Hall, 5:30 p.m.

## MINUTES

### **CALL TO ORDER:**

Mayor Melody Cornelius called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Councilors D'Lynn Williams and Edward Johnstone were present. All stood and recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **MAYOR'S MINUTE:**

The Mayor commented on the active forest fires in the area. She encouraged everyone to be prepared to evacuate if necessary. She stated that residents would be notified by reverse 911 calls and door-to-door by the police in the event of an evacuation order. Mayor Cornelius shared a complimentary email from a resident thanking the Council and City staff for their work.

### **CITIZEN COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

There were no citizen comments.

### **COUNCILOR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:**

There were no Councilor comments.

### **PROTEST OF HAZARD TREE ABATEMENT ORDER:**

The Mayor recognized resident Rob Tarr. Mr. Tarr had notified the City Recorder, Nicole Tritten, that he did not have the funds to remove the dead tree on his property, about which the City had received a citizen complaint. He reported to the Council that he contacted the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF), Oakridge Air and Lane Electric for assistance. He said that Lane Electric removed part of the tree that would impact the power lines. He was told by the ODF that they wouldn't have funds for tree removal until November or sometime next year. Mayor Cornelius suggested that Mr. Tarr call back ODF in November. Mr. Tarr asked whether the City could help with the removal if ODF could not cover the entire cost. Councilor Williams recommended that the Council discuss the issue when they had more information, and Mayor Cornelius tabled the matter until the November meeting.

### **COMMUNITY MOVIE NIGHT:**

The Mayor recognized resident Chris Patterson. Mr. Patterson reported that he researched movie licensing fees with a distributor called Swank and learned that the minimal fee was \$450, which was for a group of up to 50 people. The Mayor expressed surprise at the high cost. Mr. Patterson said the other option was to show a copyright-free movie, but he said the titles tend to be seasonal ones, such as *It's a Wonderful Life*. Mayor Cornelius expressed enthusiasm for the copyright-free, seasonal movie option. She said that if Mr. Patterson was willing to coordinate, the Council would support the event. The Council and Mr. Patterson set a tentative date of Saturday, October 30 for a Halloween or Fall Festival movie night.

### **CHAMBER OF COMMERCE REPORT:**

The Mayor recognized Chamber President Lynda Kamerrer. Ms. Kamerrer reported that the Chamber had an in-person strategic planning session to set goals for the next year and for 2–5 years out. She stated that the Chamber had been present at local events to see what was going on locally and to support the event organizers. She reported that the Chamber met with the marketing team from Travel Lane County for ideas on how to promote fall and winter activities in the area.

**APPROVE MINUTES:**

Councilor Williams made a motion to approve the minutes from July 12, 2021. Councilor Johnstone seconded, and the motion carried, 3–0.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

**WATER / SEWER REPORT:**

Jackson Stone presented the water and sewer report. He noted that the City used nearly 60,000 gallons of water a day in July. He stated that he was in the process of cleaning one of the sand filters, which he had delayed in case firefighting helicopters needed to take water from the river. He said that he had mornings free from Oakridge for the next two weeks and planned to use the cooler time of day to install the gate at the water plant. Jackson requested that the City purchase a chainsaw sharpener, and the Council authorized \$250 for the expense. Councilor Williams asked about the water level in the river, and Jackson stated that the level was two feet above the intake. Jackson reported that the local shortage of chlorine had resolved with a plant coming back online, and that the City had about a two-month supply. The Council decided to include a chlorine purchase on the September expenditure sheet.

**REVISION OF PORTAL RENTAL APPLICATION:**

The Council reviewed the changes to the Portal rental application and rules that they had requested at a work session, as well as the changes recommended by the City’s insurance company. Nicole pointed out that the Security and Traffic Control section should apply to groups exceeding 50 persons rather than 100. The Council agreed with the change to 50 persons. Mayor Cornelius asked Nicole to provide a checklist to groups of more than 50 people to help both the applicant and the Council keep track of the various requirements in the application.

Mayor Cornelius moved to adopt the updated Portal Rental Information and Rules and application, effective that day, August 2, 2021. Councilor Williams seconded and the motion carried, 3–0.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

**NEW FORM: WATER SERVICE TERMINATION FOR RENTALS:**

Councilor Williams requested that Jackson Stone review the document, and he didn’t have any changes to suggest. Mayor Cornelius made a motion to adopt the Water and/or Sewage Service Termination for Rentals form. Councilor Johnstone seconded, and the motion carried, 3–0.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

**POLICE REPORT:**

The police report was not available at the time of the meeting. Mayor Cornelius requested that Nicole email the report to the Council.

**CITY RECORDER REPORT:**

Nicole Tritten presented the report and addressed these items:

- Nicole reminded Council of her vacation days, August 17–23, and stated that the new Relief Recorder, Arron Cobb, would cover August 18, 20 and 23 during her absence.
- She asked the Council whether they thought two dumpsters were needed for the annual Community Cleanup since the second dumpster was not filled the prior year. [Mayor Cornelius commented that she thought a second dumpster would be well used both because people

stayed home during the COVID restrictions and because donation centers had been closed.]

- Nicole reported having internet connection problems in the office for the past couple of weeks, but that Emerald Broadband told her there was nothing more they could do to improve the connection because of trees interfering with the signal. Nicole stated that she called the property owner, Bill Newland, and he was not opposed to the tree removal, but he wanted to check with the potential buyer of the property. She reported that she also called Spectrum Internet and learned that service was available at City Hall and would not require any construction costs. She said that Spectrum charged \$70 per month for a 200-Mbps connection bundled with phone service, for the first two years. [Mayor Cornelius noted that the cost was less than the City was currently paying just for phone service at City Hall. The Council decided to proceed with installation of Spectrum broadband and phone service, pending a review of available plans. Councilor Williams stated that a Council vote should not be necessary since they were not increasing expenses, just changing services. Mayor Cornelius agreed.]
- She asked the Council whether a separate business license was required for Trans Cascadia Excursions and the Log Scale Café, which are owned by the same people but are separate LLCs. [Mayor Cornelius stated that each required a separate license.]

Further, Jessi Gibson, co-owner of Trans Cascadia and Log Scale Café, had asked at City Hall whether a business license was necessary for Oakridge Pop-up or a monthly farmer's market to be held on the Trans Cascadia property. [Mayor Cornelius stated that she did not think Oakridge Pop-up needed a business license if they were a group of individual vendors and not a registered business. She stated that since the markets would be held on private property, the City might not have jurisdiction as long as all City ordinances were being followed. Mayor Cornelius said that the Council was supportive of the idea as long as the City didn't receive complaints.]

- Nicole asked how to handle citizen complaints about noxious growth now that mowing dry grass was prohibited by ODF. [Mayor Cornelius stated that the noxious growth should have already been abated by the City per public notice made three times in the paper of record.] Nicole stated that she didn't realize that the City always abated noxious growth after the published deadline but thought it was complaint driven like other nuisance violations. [Mayor Cornelius directed Nicole, that in the future, after the second notice was published, she should have Jackson or Robert check residences for noxious growth. She said that Nicole should then send out personal notifications to abate and property owners would have 10 days to comply. After that, the City would take action to abate but still be within the time frame when mowing of dry grass is allowed by ODF. Mayor Cornelius stated that given the current restrictions on mowing, she did not think the City had recourse to abate noxious growth. She instructed Nicole to keep track of the notices she had sent this year, and the City would follow up when mowing was allowed.]
- Nicole reported that she received a letter of interest in the vacant Council seat from Nicole Davis. [Mayor Cornelius noted that Nicole Davis had been involved in volunteer work for the City and had sat on the Council in the past. Councilor Johnstone stated that he would be happy to have Nicole Davis on the Council. Mayor Cornelius asked whether Nicole could be appointed in absentia. Chris Patterson volunteered that in his experience on various boards that a decision could be made in absentia, based on the letter of interest. Mayor Cornelius stated that she had been appointed to an executive committee in absentia when she was late for the meeting.]

Councilor Williams made a motion to accept the application of Nicole Davis for City Council Seat 3 (vacated by Randy Stark) and to add her to the bank signature card. Mayor Cornelius seconded, and the motion carried, 3–0.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

**CITY FINANCIAL REVIEW:**

Nicole submitted the bank statement, cash deposits and expenditure sheet, and addressed these items:

- She discovered that she had underbilled a resident \$318 for sewer fees since June 2020. She said that his account varied from month to month between using water and having zero usage. The sewer charge did not get applied when she failed to switch his account back to both sewer and water service. [Mayor Cornelius stated that it wasn't necessary to change the account to water usage only, that there was a button to check in the billing software to suppress the sewer charge. The Council decided that it would be unfair to impose a large bill on the resident unexpectedly, and because his water usage was low, that they would waive the unbilled sewer charges. Nicole suggested that she bill the \$53 for June this year. The Council agreed and directed Nicole to send a letter to the resident explaining that he had been under billed but that the charges would be waived, except for June.
- Nicole reported that she read information from the U.S. Treasury that seemed to indicate that Westfir may not have an allowed use for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, also known as the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund. Investments in water, sewer and broadband projects were required to be planned or started by March 3, 2021, but costs not incurred until after that date. [Councilor Williams suggested that the City might be able to fund a feasibility study of bringing the sewer line to the other side of the river.] Nicole asked the Council if she should apply for the funds despite the uncertainty since there was only a short window in which to claim the funds. [The Council said that Nicole should apply for the funds, which could be repaid in the absence of an allowable use.]

Mayor Cornelius made a motion to approve expenditures for August 2021 in the amount of \$24,922.54. Councilor Williams seconded, and the motion carried, 3–0.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

**CITIZEN CONCERNS NOT ON AGENDA:**

Mayor Cornelius reviewed a letter from resident, Dennett Marlow, requesting a reduction in her water bill because she accidentally left a hose on overnight while watering a tree. Mayor Cornelius stated that in cases of leaks or accidents, the Council generally forgives fifty percent of the overage.

Mayor Cornelius made a motion to forgive \$21.77 of the Ms. Dennett's water bill. Councilor Johnstone seconded, and the motion carried, 3–0.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

A resident had asked at City Hall whether the City preferred that she save water by not watering her lawn or reduce fire danger by keeping her lawn irrigated. The Council preferred that the resident keep the lawn irrigated if she could afford it, with fire being the greater danger and the City having sufficient water supply.

The Council reviewed an anonymous letter of complaint from a resident. Mayor Cornelius stated that the letter referred to a house that had long been a source of problems. The Mayor said that the dog complaint in the letter was her immediate concern because the City had cited the owner last year for an incident with the dog, only to have the court case in limbo due to COVID-19 closure of the court. She expressed concern about the City's responsibility in knowing about a dangerous dog but being unable to mitigate the threat to residents and their dogs. The Mayor listed City ordinance violations associated with the house: vicious dog; dog at large; noxious growth; junk in the back and front of the house; and people living in multiple recreational vehicles on the property. She stated that the problems were so extensive that it seemed futile to continue sending ordinance violation letters and issuing citations, only to have the problems continue for years. Councilor Johnstone asked whether the matter could be escalated to the County level of jurisdiction. Mayor Cornelius agreed that the City didn't have the capacity to deal with such an extensive hazard. She wondered whether the County would have jurisdiction over the many junk vehicles on the property that were leaking contaminants into the environment.

The Council directed Nicole to cite the dog's owner for vicious dog; dog off leash; and public nuisance animal, and the City would pursue removing the dog from City limits through a second municipal court case. With regard to other problems at the residence, Mayor Cornelius suggested that the Council reconvene at a work session after researching the City's abatement options.

**COUNCILOR CONCERNS NOT ON AGENDA:**

Councilor Johnstone stated that he had difficulty finding clear evacuation and fire information on the internet. He asked about posting links on the City's website for residents. Mayor Cornelius suggested the County evacuation page. Nicole stated that IT volunteer Ken Grimsby had posted a link to the Middle Fork Complex Facebook page on the City's website, as well as other links related to the wildfires.

Mayor Cornelius reported that Mountain Bike Oregon (MBO) and the Oakridge Disc Golf Tournament, both held at the Westfir Portal and mill site, were successful events. She said that she volunteered at MBO for one day and found it well attended and positive. She was favorably impressed by the event's fire awareness and precautions, including having their own fire truck onsite. In addition, they left the site immaculately clean. Councilor Williams suggested sending a thank you note to the organizers, and the Council agreed.

**ADJOURN MEETING:**

Mayor Cornelius moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Williams seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

**AYES:** Cornelius, Williams, Johnstone    **NAYS:** 0    **ABSTENTIONS:** 0

Respectfully submitted,

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Melody Cornelius, Mayor

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ATTEST:  
Nicole Tritten, City Recorder

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DATE