

WESTFIR CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, January 3, 2022

Audio/Video Teleconference, 5:30 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Melody Cornelius called the meeting to order at 5:31 p.m. Councilors D'Lynn Williams, Edward Johnstone, and Kelly Packard were present. Councilor Nicole Davis was absent.

MAYOR'S MINUTE:

Mayor Cornelius welcomed everyone to the new year and said that she looked forward to upcoming events and exciting news for Westfir in the new year.

CITIZEN COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:

There were no Citizen comments.

COUNCILOR COMMENTS ON AGENDA ITEMS:

There were no Councilor comments.

OAKRIDGE DISC GOLF CLUB RTMP/TRT GRANT REQUEST:

Mayor Cornelius recognized Jason Nehmer, president of the Oakridge Disc Golf Club. Mr. Nehmer had submitted a request for tourism grant funds to help build the 18-basket disc golf course on the mill site and at the Westfir Portal that was approved by the City Council and mill site owners. He estimated the cost of the project to be \$7,000, including \$700 of in-kind labor. Mayor Cornelius asked if Mr. Nehmer had researched other grant options. He replied that he had done a little research with Travel Oregon, and that he would consider "hole" sponsorships, which were generally \$300 and covered the cost of the basket. Councilor Williams stated that the project cost seemed high to her, but there was \$2,000 in unused bridge lighting funds. Councilor Johnstone stated that the local disc golf courses brought a lot of tourists to the area, and the grant would be a good return on investment. Councilor Packard asked about fees to use the course, and Mr. Nehmer replied that use of the course would be free. Councilor Packard said he was very supportive of the project but didn't want to overspend tourism funds, not knowing what other opportunities might arise during the year.

Mayor Cornelius made a motion to award \$3,000 from the RTMP fund to the Oakridge Disc Golf Club for development of the Office Bridge Disc Golf Course. Councilor Johnstone seconded, and the motion carried, 4-0.

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

SUBCOMMITTEE FOR SPECIAL DISTRICT FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES:

Mayor Cornelius recognized Oakridge City Council President Chrissy Hollett. Ms. Hollett made a presentation to the City Council in which she requested that the City of Westfir appoint a subcommittee of their Council to discuss the feasibility of a special district for emergency services. She proposed that the subcommittee would then be a part of a joint committee with the City of Oakridge and Hazeldell Rural Fire District. Ms. Hollett explained that the special district would be a new entity under the State of Oregon, and that fire and EMS would no longer be the sole jurisdiction of the City of Oakridge. She stated that under the current system, the financial burden of providing public safety falls to Oakridge even though it serves the entire area. At the same time, citizens outside of the City are disenfranchised by having no say in the operation and funding of emergency services. She explained that the advantage

of a special district is that emergency services are its sole purpose, separate from the demands of City budgets. Ms. Hollett stated that there are few City-run fire and EMS departments in Oregon. She said that it made sense to follow a model already widely used in the state. Mayor Cornelius asked if Oakridge had formed a subcommittee, and Ms. Hollett replied that they had, but that she had not yet met with Hazeldell RFD. The Mayor asked about citizen participation. Ms. Hollett replied that once the joint committee was formed, it would be tasked with recruiting citizens. Councilor Williams asked about the timeline for implementation of a special district. Ms. Hollett stated that she had prior experience working for Lane Fire Authority when it merged with Lane County Fire District. In that case, she said the process took a couple of years. However, she stated that our area would have an advantage in that no merging of organizations was necessary since Oakridge already covers emergency services for Westfir and Hazeldell. Ms. Hollett stated that the first step was to see how much each entity could contribute to funding a feasibility study, which would determine what would be required to form a special district, including the amount of tax revenue. Mayor Cornelius expressed support for exploring the option of a special district. She stated that a solution to the problem of funding emergency services had to be found and a special district seemed a possible solution.

Mayor Cornelius moved that the Council form a subcommittee for a special district for emergency services. Councilor Packard seconded, and the motion carried, 4–0.

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

The Council decided that Mayor Cornelius and Councilor Johnstone would serve on the subcommittee, with councilor Packard acting as a backup.

REQUEST FOR WATER BILL REDUCTION:

The Council received a request for a water bill reduction from resident Raul Enriquez because of a major leak in his waterline that necessitated replacement of the line at significant cost. The water bill Mr. Enriquez referenced was around \$103; at the time his letter was written, he had not received the December bill for \$4,586.54. Mayor Cornelius stated that standard procedure was for the Council to forgive 50% of the overage for leaks. However, she said that she would have a hard time charging over \$2,000 for one month of unintentional use. She listed extenuating considerations: the City did not incur the cost of processing the water through the sewer system because it went into the ground; the residents were senior citizens; they acted quickly to have the leak fixed; and they had always paid their water bill on time. City Operator Robert Archer reported that the leak had started at the end of November and was located under a large Douglas Fir tree, making a repair impossible without removing the tree. He stated that the waterline was rerouted by the plumber, and the work had been completed. Mayor Cornelius asked City Recorder Nicole Tritten to look for a file documenting two water leak incidents at the same household to see how the Council had decided in the past. Nicole found the file in question under the name Scheffler. The second incident was 50% forgiven, but it wasn't clear how much of the first leak incident was forgiven. The Mayor also asked Nicole to look at Mr. Enriquez's water bills and usage for the past year. The highest bill prior to the leak was 7,585 gallons, billed at \$52.93. The Council decided on no reduction to the November bill and a charge of \$100 for the December bill.

Mayor Cornelius made a motion to forgive \$4,486.54 for the December 2021 water bill for Raul Enriquez. Councilor Johnston seconded, and the motion carried, 4–0.

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

APPROVE MINUTES:

Councilor Johnstone made a motion to approve the minutes for December 6, 2021, and December 20, 2021. Mayor Cornelius seconded, and the motion carried, 4–0.

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

WATER / SEWER REPORT:

Robert Archer presented the water and sewer report. There were no problems at either plant. Councilor Williams asked if Robert had to turn on the generators during the recent power outage. He reported that the valves were turned off at the water plant and there was plenty of water in the tank, so the generator was not necessary. He said that he confirmed that the generator at the wastewater plant started automatically.

POLICE REPORT:

The City had not received the police report at the time of the meeting. Mayor Cornelius asked Nicole to email the report to the Council when she received it.

PORTAL RENTAL APPLICATION:

The Council reviewed an application from the National Interscholastic Cycling Association for a Women's Gathering on July 28–July 31, 2022. Mayor Cornelius stated that she would like to table the decision because not enough of the required materials were submitted, particularly a site plan. The Mayor asked Nicole to reserve the dates for the event and send the applicant a checklist of the required materials; and the Council would consider the application for approval when it was more complete.

TMDL ANNUAL REPORT:

Nicole submitted a draft of the TMDL Annual Report to the Council. The report was due to be submitted to Oregon DEQ by February 1. The report gives the status of various benchmarks that are required of the City of Westfir to improve water quality along the 1.7 miles of the North Fork of the Willamette River that runs through the City. Nicole reviewed items on the report, including the community cleanup in the Fall; City participation in a river cleanup on October 9, 2021; a meeting with Ka-Voka Jackson of the Middle Fork Willamette Watershed Council to plan a riparian planting for March or April 2022; information on septic tank best practices published in the monthly newsletter; and the Council's plan for improvements to the boat launch park. Nicole reminded the Council that there were revised EPA standards for mercury abatement that had to be met by the City, and that the next TMDL implementation plan was due September 2, 2022. Nicole reported that she had not yet discussed the mercury issue with her contact at DEQ.

CITY RECORDER REPORT:

Nicole Tritten presented the report and addressed these items:

- She reported that she contacted Carrie Connelly at Local Government Law Group to ask whether Westfir could levy System Development Charges (SDCs) as adopted by City Resolutions 279 and 280, even though the City had not collected them for the past decade. She stated that Ms. Connelly said there was no problem with Westfir levying the charges again unless not doing so was the result of a Council decision. Nicole said that she agreed with Ms. Connelly's assessment, that because there are so few developments in Westfir, SDCs had been forgotten. Nicole reported that LCOG said they would help with the process of collecting SDCs for the Westfir developments they work on. However, for more minor developments, LCOG referred Nicole to Steve McGuire and Alyssa Baz of Lane County Land Management Division since SDCs are generally charged as part of the permit process.
- Nicole asked the Council whether she could give Lane County the go-ahead for permitting a development approved for Matt Meske by the Council in October 2018. She reported that Mr. Meske submitted a revised site plan for a smaller building in November 2021, which she

approved with the Mayor's input, believing it did not need to be reviewed by Council. [The Council confirmed that they approved of the revised site plan without further review.]

- She asked the Council to review an email message from Joe Potoczak providing an outline of the photo-journalism article he would write about Westfir tourism, and for which Westfir paid him \$700 from RTMP funds. [The Council decided to revisit the outline at the work session.]
- Nicole said that Mayor Cornelius had forwarded an email to her from former Councilor Thalia Lerin asking whether the City was interested in purchasing the *westfir.com* domain name, if the price was right. Nicole had asked IT volunteer Ken Grimsby for his assessment, and he explained his opposition in an email that she provided to Council. [The Mayor said she was in agreement with Ken that there was little utility in purchasing the domain name.]
- She stated that she would make a claim with CIS insurance for the ashtray damaged by a car at the Portal if the cost of the damage was higher than the deductible. She also said that she would add the new bike hub at the Portal to the CIS schedule of covered property.
- Nicole reported that the Mayor had approved the letter she wrote to a resident about an extension for an occupied RV that was approved by Council, and that she would send the letter by certified mail the next business day. [Councilor Packard asked to see a copy of the letter. Mayor Cornelius asked Nicole to email a copy to the Council, saying it was important for the Council to be aware of the communication between the City and the resident.]
- She reported that offsite backups were still pending, but that she hoped Ken would be able to start cloud backups the coming weekend.

CITY FINANCIAL REVIEW:

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

- She reported that the City's former auditor, Mark Housen of Emerald CPA, had filed for an audit extension because she had failed to terminate his services. She informed the new audit firm, and they said it wasn't an issue that they would also be filing for an extension. Nicole stated that she sent an email to Mr. Housen terminating his services.

Nicole noted that there might be additional expense for the audit because the accounting information was not in the auditor's preferred format and might require more work by the accountant.

- She stated that she would update the Council on the supplemental budget at the next work session on January 10.

Mayor Cornelius made a motion to approve expenditures for January 2022 in the amount of \$56,737.38. Councilor Williams seconded, and the motion carried, 4-0.

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

CITIZEN CONCERNS NOT ON AGENDA:

There were no Citizen concerns.

COUNCILOR CONCERNS NOT ON AGENDA:

There were no Councilor concerns.

RECESS REGULAR MEETING FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO ORS 192.660(2)(i):

At 7:22 p.m. Mayor Cornelius called for an Executive Session to review and evaluate the job performance of a chief executive officer, other officers, employees, and staff.

[Due to an incorrect script given to the Mayor, ORS 192.660(2)(f) and 192.660(2)(a) were cited instead of ORS 192.660(2)(i).]

ADJOURN EXECUTIVE SESSION, RECONVENE AND CALL COUNCIL MEETING TO ORDER:

Mayor Cornelius adjourned the Executive Session at 7:41 p.m. and reconvened the Council meeting.

COUNCIL CONCERNS NOT ON AGENDA:

Mayor Cornelius stated that she was upset and concerned about residents flouting City ordinances despite having been cited by the City. Nicole reported that one defendant with multiple citations would not answer their phone or leave room for voicemail, making it impossible for the court to set a trial date. Councilor Williams requested that Nicole contact the Oakridge Municipal Court to ask what recourse Westfir has when defendants evade trial. The Council agreed that Nicole should contact the City’s attorney if she didn’t receive a clear response from the Oakridge court.

ADJOURN MEETING:

Mayor Cornelius moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilor Williams seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:01 p.m.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Melody Cornelius, Mayor

ATTEST:
Nicole Tritten, City Recorder

DATE