

League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

PULLMAN CITY COUNCIL MEETING: MARCH 9, 2021

OBSERVER: Libby Walker LENGTH OF MEETING: 2 hours 20 minutes

ATTENDING: Mayor Glenn Johnson, Council members Brandon Chapman, Ann Parks, Eileen Macoll, Pat Wright, Al Sorensen, Dan Records, and Nathan Weller.

OTHERS: Laura McAloon, City Attorney; Dee Stiles-Elliot, City Clerk; Mike Urban, City Administrator; Gary Jenkins, Chief of Police; Mike Heston, Fire Department Chief; Kevin Gardes, Public Works Director; Art Tarro, Maintenance and Operations Superintendent; Trevor Cook, Wastewater Treatment Plant Supervisor, and Jennifer Hackman, Economic Development Manager.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: MAYOR JOHNSON announced a Comprehensive Planning meeting for tomorrow night, Wednesday, at 7:00 pm. March 2021 is Red Cross month. POLICE CHIEF GARY JENKINS reviewed the **CDC Covid update**. Indoor gatherings are now allowed with a maximum of 5 people and 2 households. Vaccinations will now be given to K-12 teachers and staff and child care workers. 1,000 doses a week are expected for Whitman County. In terms of mental health, there has been a **450% increase in calls to the Police Department regarding mental and other health issues from 2018-2020**. COUNCIL MEMBER SORENSEN expressed his frustration that university faculty and staff were not included in the new group eligible to be vaccinated. COUNCIL MEMBER WELLER asked about outreach to the **homeless regarding vaccinations** and asserted that the Council needs a representative on the Mental Health Task Force. He was referred to the County Health Department regarding his question about the homeless.

PRESENTATION FROM THE CITY COUNCIL ART MURAL SUBCOMMITTEE:

COUNCIL MEMBER DAN RECORDS, Chair of this subcommittee which also includes COUNCIL MEMBERS PAT WRIGHT AND EILEEN MACOLL, gave this presentation. He began with this statement: "This project is a statement about racism and how to address it. Our community is not all on the same page. Everyone has the right to feel welcome here."

COUNCIL MEMBER RECORDS presented the following recommendations from the subcommittee. They were discussed individually and voted on by the Council.

- 1) The siting of the public art installation will be on the Spring Street retaining wall. The motion was amended to say that all business owners, property owners, and residents who live within 300 feet of the proposed site will be contacted and advised of the project. This will be done in the next two weeks. The motion passed 7:0.
- 2) The installation will consist of a series of panels with one to be added each year via a competitive procurement process. Motion passed 6:1 with COUNCIL MEMBER SORENSEN voting nay.
- 3) The City will develop a Request for Qualifications with technical input from the Pullman Arts Commission. Motion passed 7:0.
- 4) A **Town Hall meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 24 at 7:00 pm** to gather feedback on specific elements to be included in the mural. Feedback will also be accepted from emails, letters, and phone calls to City Hall. The Council Mural Subcommittee will host the Town Hall. Motion passed 7:0.
- 5) A survey will be developed to solicit input city wide. Precautions will be taken so that only the comments from city residents are included. Motion passed 7:0.

- 6) All feedback will be considered in developing a Request for Qualifications. The City staff will issue the RFP to qualified artists to create the first panel. Motion passed 7:0.
- 7) The Council has the final approval authority over the design chosen. Motion passed 7:0.
- 8) Juneteenth, the official end of slavery in the U.S., will be the target date to install the first panel. A celebration including vendors, music, and food trucks was mentioned. It was agreed to delay the project's completion if necessary. Motion passed 7:0.

This discussion lasted almost two hours. (*Opinion: COUNCIL MEMBER RECORDS did a masterful job answering questions and addressing concerns. He was exactly the right person to chair the subcommittee and make the presentation to the Council.*) The question of funding was not fully answered. Some Council members expect that funds from the PAC and the City will be used but also there could be a campaign to raise the funds required. There was no final estimate of cost either to pay the artist or to install the art on the wall. COUNCIL MEMBER WELLER expressed his concern that all cultural groups be contacted about submitting proposals. COUNCIL MEMBER RECORDS suggested a preference for artists who belong to cultural minorities and re-emphasized that the message on the panels will reflect the comments from the Town Hall meeting and the survey. It was decided the City Council Art Mural Subcommittee would host the Town Hall.

OTHER BUSINESS:

A resolution rejecting all bids for the **Lawson Garden House project** as too expensive was presented by PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR KEVIN GARDES. He suggested that the City go back to Design West to re-scope the project and put it out for bid in the fall. There did not appear to be great support for this idea. CITY ATTORNEY LAURA MCALOON was asked if the bond proceeds could be designated for another project. The answer is yes with Council approval. The resolution passed 7:0.

A resolution designating Thatcher Group as the sole source provider for **dewatering polymer for the wastewater treatment plant** was presented by ART TARRO, MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS SUPERINTENDENT FOR THE CITY. TREVOR COOK, WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT SUPERVISOR, was also on the call but did not participate. The resolution passed 7:0

A motion to authorize staff to apply for a **USDA Rural Business Development Grant** for \$50,000 related to **tourism assessment** was presented by JENNIFER HACKMAN, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT MANAGER. The goal is to develop a tourism playbook and a marketing plan. Motion passed 7:0.

The 4th quarter finance report was postponed until the next Council meeting due to the lateness of the hour.

Submitted by Libby Walker
Meeting ended at 9:20 PM