League of Women Voters of Pullman Observer Report

Name of Agency: Pullman City Council Date: September 14, 2021
Observer Reporting: Anne Lewis Length of Meeting: 7 pm- 8:49 p.m.
Members Present: Mayor Johnson; Councilmembers Weller, Macoll, Parks, Records, Sorenson, Wright
Members Absent: Brandon Chapman (Excused)
Others Present (e.g., media, public): A few (I watched the recording on You Tube)

Business pertaining to League Positions or topics of interest:

League Priority: Public Safety; Education

Mayor Johnson's Announcements focused on discussions he'd had with others (below) re: Covid/Schools:

- PPS Superintendent Maxwell– Students masked & enjoying being back in the classroom. Clubs and sports functioning.
- WSU President Schulz- Students happy to be back, complying with masks.
- Hospital- Prioritizes Pullman residents; have had patients from other hospitals. Better shape than last year due to vaccine.

No local league action recommended.

> League Priority: Open Government, City Livability

Public Hearing on Annual Capital Improvement Plan 2022-2027

No questions by Council. No public comments.

No local league action recommended.

Public Hearing on Transportation Improvement Program 2022-2027

Councilman Weller commends department for reaching out to public with detail. No public comments.

No local league action recommended.

Public Hearing on Update of City's Comprehensive Plan

- Last Comprehensive Plan 1999. Neighborhood meetings started in 2014, draft available June 2020, presented to planning commission & City Council in 2021.
- LWV of Pullman among groups, individuals identified as having submitted comments. 😊
- Citizen Climate Lobby/Palouse division expresses thanks for work done (input sought, received and incorporated).

No local league action recommended. Alternatively, seek input from Bobbie Ryder if action appropriate.

>League Priority: Bond Use, Parks

Lawson Garden House:

Motion to Adopt. (And then all this discussion occurred, with the motion—to adopt revised plan/pavilion- never being made/adopted)

History:

- **2018 bond approval**. **Initial bids all over budget** (budget approx. 1.3 million, lowest construction just over 2 million). Open Air option, 1.6 million.
- **2 weeks ago, sought guidance from council**: Which project are they interested in advancing? Will they direct staff to look for additional project funds? Need to immediately prepare redesign contract amendment to be ready to bid for construction in Feb 2022 timeframe (best time of year or costs expected to increase even more).
- **Last week, *Lawson Gardens' Committee Parks & Rec Commission*** *unanimously recommended to advance open air pavilion, provided additional funding could be found*. Retains original footprint, could be enclosed at later date, meets requirements of what voters expected, etc.

Tonight:
Attorney Laura McAloon responds to question re: **availability to use bond proceeds if you don't use project?** Response: Can use on other Parks or Paths projects (because a P & P bond), could prepay the debt (save interest),

Council reaction (to everything):
Macoll- Not convinced this is the right project at the right time. Suggests residents' leisure and activity time and needs have changed A LOT since the bond vote (ie. Covid).

Wright brings up point that Lawson Gardens bond was attached to City Hall and Parks & Rec/City Center- uncertain how attached residents were to the LG portion. Has heard from residents that they want $ spent on existing parks, facilities.

Sorenson notes that it was to be covered, really wants bathrooms at Lawson Gardens. Stresses they had commitment from Lodging Tax to match. If we don't do project, funds go back to LT as unrestricted. 100K+ has already been spent for Design West.

Weller concerned with the "shell game"- Residents voted for "this" and will get something else. Sees potential in open air pavilion. Once clear not pursuing pavilion, Weller stresses need to be open, transparent, communicate to residents. Also asks if $$ can go back to taxpayers. Attorney says the way to do that is to reduce debt service (passed along in reduced property taxes).

Records is troubled that people voted with specific idea (covered) that is now not possible (financially). Significant $ to keep project "alive." Sees use in pavilion, but still higher expense. In favor of other options for the bond $- ie. Pay down debt service; $ toward other parks. Acknowledges that we have already spent $ on this project.

Parks struggles with residents having approved one thing and not getting it. However, feels residents understand (pandemic). Prioritizes rest rooms at Lawson Gardens.

Multiple councilors note that significant time has passed since the bond. Prices continue to go up.

More Attorney input:

- Parks project (LG) meant for tourism. To "keep" Lodging Tax match, project must have a tourism aspect.
- Attorney also notes/reminds that bond $ was only intended to be partial funding for the project.

Motion Request Options (at least I think these were options)

1. Select (original) project
2. Direct P & R staff to return a funding package to Council for approval (that stays within funds remaining ($592 K) bond funds.
3. Prepare a redesign contract amendment with DW to initiate design work and return amendment to Council for approval. Note: I believe this is what P & R expected to happen at this meeting.

Records makes Motion to direct Parks & Rec staff to bring back project proposals for use of the bond funds. Motion passes unanimously.

Plan: Allow for public input on the proposed projects (which are in lieu of LG pavilion).

League Action? Perhaps. Seems worth discussing this at next Board meeting. Input re: how to use the $? Any distress/concern with not pursuing the original (or modification of original) project?

NEW BUSINESS

Dan Records: **Art Mural subcommittee**- concerns about the mural project/where they are at. Currently **only 2 members on Arts Commission.**

City supervisor suggests refocusing scope from mural and emphasize diversity, equity, inclusion. Records seems to agree- focus on DEI, will be rebuilding arts commission, later project focus.

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