

City Council Minutes – September 10, 2018

At 6:00 p.m. Mayor Laurie Gere called to order the regular Anacortes City Council meeting of September 10, 2018. Councilmembers Eric Johnson, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Brad Adams, Liz Lovelett and Matt Miller were present. Councilmember Bruce McDougall was absent. The assembly joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mr. Walters moved, seconded by Mr. Johnson, to excuse the absence of Mr. McDougall. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

Announcements and Committee Reports

Port/City Liaison Committee: Mr. Johnson reported from the committee meeting the prior Tuesday. He described discussion of the following topics: implementation of the recent MOU regarding Cap Sante uplands redevelopment and comprehensive planning for the entire north basin area including the Depot, the W.T. Preston and connections to the central business district; ongoing work to incorporate public comments into the draft Maritime Strategic Plan; ongoing study by the Anacortes Housing Authority regarding potential use of the Olson Building as a mixed use property; possible re-evaluation of the 1997 petroleum coke agreement with Shell to allow coke transport at night; and an Integrated Planning Grant for the Guemes Channel Trail focusing on the 9th & D Avenue area.

EMS Transition Update: City Attorney Darcy Swetnam reported on the ongoing discussions with Skagit County and the cities of Burlington, Mount Vernon and Sedro-Woolley to reconfigure emergency medical services countywide to a fire-based model featuring patient transport by fire departments. Ms. Swetnam said that Skagit County hoped to implement the transition beginning January 1, 2019 so the parties were attempting to get an interlocal agreement in place by the end of September to allow for hiring and budgeting by each agency. Finance Director Steve Hoglund then reported on discussions to date regarding allocation of EMS levy funding among the jurisdictions. Mr. Hoglund explained that the city's 2018 EMS budget was funded by \$628K of general fund tax revenue, \$885K of EMS levy funding, and \$850K in patient billing revenue. He said the County's current proposal was to increase EMS levy funding to Anacortes in 2019 to \$1.31M. Mr. Hoglund said that increase would not be sufficient to cover the six additional firefighter/paramedics required for optimal staffing to cover the city's expanded service area and target response times under the new model and that hiring even four additional firefighter/paramedics, plus associated additional equipment costs, would likely require allocation of an additional \$300K of the city's general fund tax revenue. He added that the levy fund allocation would not include any funding to expand Fire Station 3 but that staff felt the existing leased station could be modified to serve for 24/7 coverage there. Mayor Gere confirmed councilmember concern that the six-year EMS levy just approved by the voters did not include sufficient funding to cover all costs of the fire based model now being pursued by the county. She agreed that the fire-based model was the best and most cost effective but indicated it would require creative implementation for the first six years due to the inadequate levy funding. Administrative Services Director Emily Schuh reported that the parties were investigating a consolidated civil service selection process and that the intention was that the paramedics currently employed by Central Valley Ambulance Authority would have the opportunity to test for positions at each of the four cities. She confirmed that Anacortes would continue to hire and train so that all of its EMS staff were also firefighters. Mayor Gere explained that given the available funding, Anacortes would likely have to staff Station 3 only 12/7 or 24/7 with possible brown outs if sufficient staff were not available; she said that staffing level could affect response times to the city's expanded service area beyond Fidalgo Island. The mayor indicated that the cities were meeting with the County Commissioners the following morning and expected to have more information then. Mr. Miller suggested that BLS integration, smart dispatching, part time paid staff and other measures could result in cost savings. Mr. Johnson requested that when the interlocal agreement came to Council for consideration and approval staff would provide a full cost analysis of the system.

Public Comment

Mike Bobka, 3912 Copper Pond, asked about a referendum to remove fluoride from the public water system. Mr. Bobka said fluoride is a neurotoxin and that Whatcom and Island Counties do not add it to their water. Mr. Bobka expressed concern about the health of his daughter, who had accompanied him to the meeting. He said consumers can choose toothpaste with or without fluoride but have no choice what comes out of the tap. He asked that removing the fluoride be considered. Mayor Gere referred the question to the Public Works Committee and invited Mr. Bobka to follow up with the Public Works Director or her own office. Mr. Johnson confirmed that the Public Works Committee would consider the request. Ms. Lovelett noted several recent public comments questioning the safety of potentially controversial city practices and suggested more public education to address those concerns. She noted that she had asked about fluoride in the past and that staff had consistently reassured her that the fluoride used in the water is not a neurotoxin.

Sara Holahan, 1511 38th Street, thanked the city for all its effort on behalf of urban bicycle travel. She said Anacortes is a wonderful place to cycle, noting the bike racks downtown and bike lane striping downtown and now on M Avenue. Ms. Holahan suggested that on wider streets parking might be allowed on one side only to provide continuous bike lanes in both directions. She cited the example on M Avenue in front of Island Hospital where the bike lane configuration is not consistent and she noted that particularly on the southern end of M Avenue parking is never full on both sides of the street.

Shelly Parfitt, 1417 17th Street, asked about starting an organized Block Watch program through the police department. She said she had discussed that proposal with Police Chief John Small and with Community Service Officer Karl Wolfswinkel. Ms. Parfitt cited two examples of drug houses that had been shut down and said that a more organized, coordinated effort involving neighbors and the police could have been more effective. She cited Mount Vernon's Neighborhood Block Watch program as an example. She asked Council to consider budgeting for that in 2019/2020.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Young removed Item 5b, Approval of Claims from the Consent Agenda. Mr. Johnson moved, seconded by Mr. Young, to approve the following Consent Agenda items. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- a. Minutes of August 27, 2018
- c. Contract Modification: March Point Road Shoulder Widening Construction Management 15-006-TRN-003
- d. Contract Modification: WTP Chlorine Conversion - Engineering Services 18-036-WTR-001

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:

EFT numbers: 90436 through 90467 and 90509 through 90537, total \$875,289.50
Check numbers: 90468 through 90508 and 90538 through 90558, total \$94,678.66
Wire transfer numbers: 236725 through 237573, total \$3,040.25

- b. Approval of Claims in the amount of: \$1,049,473.27

Mr. Young asked that staff examine Amazon purchases in light of their effect on local and regional businesses. He referenced AWC guidance indicating cities can make local purchases under a threshold amount established by ordinance, citing Redmond as an example, and asked staff to look into that. Ms. Swetnam said staff had investigated that topic. She described the strict limitations on a city's giving local preference in violation of bidding laws. Ms. Swetnam indicated that the draft purchasing policy that would come back before Council for adoption would consider allowable means of evaluating extenuating economic impacts of purchasing decisions, such as sales tax revenue received for local purchases. Mr. Young moved, seconded by Ms. Lovelett, to approve Consent Agenda Item 5b, Approval of Claims. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

OTHER BUSINESS

Potential 4-way Stop at 4th Street and Commercial Avenue

Public Works Director Fred Buckenmeyer asked Council to approve adding two stop signs at 4th Street and Commercial Avenue to make that intersection a four-way stop. Mr. Buckenmeyer indicated that the Public Works and Traffic Safety Committees had both reviewed the request. He noted that 4th Street is a truck route and cited enhanced pedestrian safety at 4-way stops. Mr. Buckenmeyer indicated that the mayor's office had received comments in support of the 4-way stop and no comments against it but that many commenters also wanted a flashing red light at the intersection, similar to the 6th and 8th Street intersections with Commercial Avenue. Mr. Buckenmeyer said a flashing signal would cost \$30-50K. He recommended proceeding with stop sign installation pending allocation of funding for a light. Ms. Lovelett cautioned that "stop for pedestrian" signs have caused confusion for drivers at other locations, suggesting that plain stop signs were preferable, and emphasized the importance of clear sight lines to the stop signs, particularly during hanging flower basket season. She also suggested longer yellow no parking zones around the intersection to aid visibility for those wishing to cross. Councilmembers generally reported support from constituents for a four-way stop at that intersection but urged a flashing light for both consistency with other 4-way stop intersections in that corridor and for pedestrian safety. They also urged strong initial enforcement of any traffic changes.

Mayor Gere invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item.

Cynthia Richardson, 315 V Avenue, expressed support for a 4-way stop at 4th and Commercial but concurred that the intersection should include a flashing red light, noting that consistency among intersections is very important. She said the 4-way stop was a good idea but not urgent so she suggested keeping the intersection the way it is until the city can afford the light. She warned that travelers would very likely be confused otherwise since every other 4-way stop on Commercial Avenue has a light.

No one else present wished to address the Council on this matter.

Mr. Walters agreed with Ms. Richardson. He advocated budgeting for the light and changing the intersection to a 4-way stop only when that funding was made available. However, he questioned why Council was being asked to take action. He said public comment on the matter was useful but suggested that intersection configuration was up to mayor and staff. Mayor Gere concluded that if the rest of the Council was in concurrence, she and Mr. Buckenmeyer would address the intersection configuration and report back. Ms. Lovelett voiced support for including a flashing light. Mr. Johnson encouraged funding the light in the 2019/2020 budget.

Mr. Buckenmeyer then offered an update on the 32nd Street/D Avenue roundabout project. He reported that the IOUE 302 strike had prevented paving of the roundabout by the scheduled completion date. He said the city's contractor, SRV, had laid a first course and opened the roundabout for school bus traffic only and that the roundabout was now closed until the end of the week to allow concrete curing. He indicated that SRV's subcontractor, Lakeside Industries, would need to lay the final asphalt course but that the backlog of paving projects statewide once the strike was concluded made estimating a completion date impossible.

Broadband Business Plan Policy

Mr. Buckenmeyer provided a status report on the potential broadband network and requested Council direction on business plan development. Mr. Buckenmeyer recapped the history of the broadband analysis, beginning with the head nod from Council in January 2018 to issue RFP for ISPs, through ISP presentations to Council in April 2018 and subsequent work by the ad hoc Fiber Committee to develop a business plan and evaluate the feasibility of a municipal broadband network. Mr. Buckenmeyer explained that the model considered by the RFP and the committee had been a subcontracted ISP model but that the Fiber Committee had recently been exploring financial and operational models for another option, an internally managed broadband system. Mayor

and staff sought Council feedback on which and how many models the committee should evaluate moving forward: a subcontracted ISP model, a city managed model, a hybrid model, or some subset of those options.

Councilmembers discussed the merits of wider vs. more focused evaluation and raised a number of variables to be considered including rate of return, risk and the level and mix of services to be offered. Councilmembers remained firm in their previously stated position that the network would need to be self-sustaining in a relatively short amount of time to be viable. Most councilmembers supported evaluating multiple models in order to find one that was financially viable with an acceptable level of risk. Councilmembers asked if a contracted ISP model could convert to a city managed model over time. Mr. Walters referenced Resolution 2013 adopted by Council in May 2018 directing preparation of the business plan, reviewed its provisions, and suggested that construction costs should be recovered in 20-25 years although that was not specified in the resolution. Mr. Miller agreed. Mr. Walters and Mr. Miller reported on the committee's meeting earlier in the day with Rock Island, the ISP in the San Juan islands and one of the respondents to the city's RFP. Mayor Gere encouraged thinking strategically to determine how the city could best provide Anacortes homes and businesses access to high speed fiber over the next 20 years in order to support a strong economic future and quality of life, given that private companies were not going to construct such a network.

Mayor Gere invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item.

Ward MacKenzie, 1302 7th Street, said he would dearly love a robust high speed internet connection but didn't think it was appropriate for the city to invest in providing services already available from private providers. He said the city had an opportunity to be visionary and put infrastructure in place that would allow businesses and consumers to acquire high speed connections. He observed that new technologies, such as 5G, might make fiber to the home unnecessary but might well depend on fiber being available in each neighborhood. He didn't support the city offering services beyond a high speed connection, including content service and tech support beyond ensuring the fiber connection was hot.

Patrick Gallagher, 1406 Portalis Court, said he was a strong believer in the city providing fiber right up to the house but not inside it. He said all utilities all treat the home as an island and provide service to the outside wall of the structure. Mr. Gallagher suggested that private enterprise should provide the services inside the home. He urged the city to keep it simple and just build and provide fast internet. He reminded that fast internet was not necessarily synonymous with fiber.

Cynthia Richardson, 315 V Avenue, agreed with the previous two speakers. She said municipal broadband should be a utility and the city's job would be to provide the utility, not the services on the utility. Ms. Richardson also observed that if the city hired an ISP, it could fire the ISP if it didn't perform or if it became advantageous to change the business model, whereas a city staffed model would be subject to personnel management rather than contract terms. She also cautioned that fiber may not remain cutting edge technology over the 20 years ahead.

Mr. Johnson urged the committee to undertake a SWOT analysis of whichever model or models were evaluated. Mayor Gere said the committee would include that in a future presentation. Ms. Lovelett urged careful, quantified risk analysis as well. Mr. Walters and Mr. Miller commented on both political and financial risks and the role of the pilot neighborhoods to help evaluate that. Mr. Adams asked that retail price points be addressed as well.

There being no further business, at approximately 7:41 p.m. the Anacortes City Council meeting of September 10, 2018 was adjourned.