

Anacortes City Council Minutes – November 9, 2020

Mayor Laurie Gere called to order the Anacortes City Council meeting of November 9, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers Jeremy Carter, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Carolyn Moulton, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall and Matt Miller all participated in the meeting in absentia via video conference.

Announcements and Committee Reports

COVID-19 Update: Mayor Gere shared current case statistics for Anacortes, Skagit County, Washington State, and the nation. The mayor compared Skagit County case counts to the metrics required to move to Phase 3 of the Safe Start Washington Plan.

Port/City Liaison Committee: Ms. Cleland-McGrath reported from the committee meeting held November 3, 2020. She summarized the topics discussed including COVID-19 impacts, hosting Race Week June 21-25, 2021, the Depot restroom project, progress on Port major capital projects, a development agreement for the Port's NW basin plan, and the outfall project.

Fiber Committee: Mr. McDougall reported from the committee meeting the prior week. He briefly summarized progress in the aerial expansion areas, then shared statistics on customer counts and market share by area. Mr. Walters added that the committee had also discussed a dark fiber leasing policy.

Lodging Tax Advisory Committee: Mr. Miller reported from the committee meeting the prior week. He summarized funds distributed against the 2020 awards and shared highlights from new applications.

Housing Affordability & Community Services Committee: Ms. Cleland-McGrath reported from the committee meeting earlier in the evening. She noted that Anacortes Family Center (AFC) Executive Director Dustin Johnson had joined that meeting. Ms. Cleland-McGrath summarized topics discussed including the tri-county housing consortium and the AFC community resource manager.

Planning Committee: Ms. Cleland-McGrath reported from the committee meeting earlier in the evening. She summarized the discussion of the Comprehensive Plan amendment cycle and of meeting Comprehensive Plan level of service targets for police and fire protection.

Public Comment

Mayor Gere noted 58 members of the public attending the virtual meeting. She asked each speaker to limit their remarks to 3 minutes so everyone who wished to would have a chance to speak.

Erin Welsh read a prepared statement expressing her opinion that a social worker or counselor should never take the place of a trained and armed police officer. She urged councilmembers not to follow suit with the very progressive movement of defunding police but rather to further fund police to continue to adequately meet the needs of society. Ms. Welsh's statement was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

Robin Pestarino spoke in support of the Anacortes Police Department and in favor of funding whatever needed to be funded in the police department. She said she was not opposed to the badges or slogans on their vehicles.

Bob Anderson, 1004 7th Street, spoke regarding the weekly demonstrations at 12th & Commercial where people express their political views. Responding to one of the public comments from the November 2, 2020 City Council meeting, Mr. Anderson said there is no such thing as Hate Speech, only hateful speech but that's protected under the first amendment. He expressed concern about any plan to limit free speech in Anacortes. Mr. Anderson supported Anacortes police officers supporting Thin Blue Line and Blue Lives Matter.

Kayla House responded to Mr. Anderson that she had been subjected to multiple death threats and that she did not think the city should be idle about that. Ms. House also addressed the hiring process for police officers, suggesting that those selections should be subject to public hearing.

Drake Elliott reiterated his position stated at the November 2, 2020 City Council meeting that political affiliations of any type should not be displayed on publicly owned vehicles. Mr. Elliott was interested in a lack of official position by the City Council on this topic and asked when the citizenry could expect this to be addressed.

George Cudworth requested that the city institute a strong policy against displaying Thin Blue Line symbolism on city vehicles. Mr. Cudworth also said that the three vacant positions in the Anacortes Police Department would be better filled by social workers.

Billy Smith shared a list of occasions when the Anacortes Police Department had responded professionally and compassionately to his family. Mr. Smith spoke against defunding the department.

Chuck Spaeth spoke in total support of the Anacortes Police Department. Mr. Spaeth said he'd never found the officers to be anything but helpful and couldn't believe people weren't in total support of the department.

Matthew Stevenson spoke against defunding the Anacortes Police Department and against unverified accusations. Mr. Stevenson commented on the decorum at the corner of 12th and Commercial over weekend and encouraged the entire Council to attend the following weekend.

Trish Bradley said that the Anacortes Police Department was an extremely professional and vital part of the town and spoke against fixing something that is not broken.

Corey Joyce said he could not believe defunding the police was even being discussed.

Rochelle Kealoha said the three unfilled police positions would be better filled by social workers to serve the community in conjunction with the police. Ms. Kealoha also demanded a city policy against displaying Thin Blue Line symbolism on publicly owned property.

Juliet Paramor denied that anyone wanted to defund the police. She supported addressing police reform in Anacortes by working with and around the police budget. Ms. Paramor demanded that one of the three open police positions be filled by a social worker and referred to 911 call statistics for domestic, drug and other call types that she said would be well served by a social worker.

Karen Gallardo agreed that no one was asking to defund the Anacortes Police Department but rather to hire a full-time social worker to fill one of the open positions in the department. Ms. Gallardo said that out of 7000+ 911 calls, over one third were cases that would have benefited from a social worker including domestic disturbances, suicides, runaways, and child abuse.

Kate Clark commended the City Council and mayor for removing Blue Lives Matter imagery from APD equipment. Ms. Clark said that religious and political imagery did not belong on public assets and that such a prohibition needed to be adopted as policy. Ms. Clark also echoed that no one wanted to defund the police but rather to support the community and the officers by filling one of the three open police department positions with an embedded social worker.

Evan Saxton agreed that no one was asking to defund the Anacortes Police Department and added his voice to the community demand that the city hire at least one social worker to work alongside the APD. Mr. Saxton cited examples of communities that had added embedded social workers and urged Anacortes to join that trend.

Douglas Thurber said that first responders are on the front line of risk and danger and that it is quite proper to publicly support police with Blue Lives Matter statements on uniforms and official vehicles. Mr. Thurber also argued against diluting police effectiveness and weakening law enforcement by hiring counselors in lieu of police officers. Mr. Thurber described events at 12th and Commercial weekend demonstrations.

Will McCracken supported doing away with Blue Lives Matter memorabilia on city property, and also supported hiring a full-time social worker to fill one of the open positions in the Anacortes Police Department. He said adding trained mental health professionals to Anacortes community safety programs is of utmost importance.

Kenneth M. Pie___ urged third party follow up to see if the police are actually doing their job and doing it well. He supported removing Blue Lives Matter paraphernalia. He urged hiring more than one social worker given the number of domestic calls to 911. He also suggested that construction noise hours should not be allowed to begin until 8 or 9 a.m. rather than 6 a.m.

Ben B said social workers may have a place but that real-life problems require real life solutions. He suggested people to listen to police scanners or ride along with police officers and said that would show that a social worker is not a realistic solution as a first response.

Carol Bordin addressed the need for shelter for the homeless immediately as cold weather sets in, requested setting aside some funding for environmental education in the community, suggested hiring half social workers and half police officers, and thanked the Anacortes Fire Department for excellent response to EMS calls.

Rob Leetz, President of the Anacortes Police Services Guild, addressed the Thin Blue Line flag and explained it was a symbol of the sacrifice and courage of law enforcement officers around the world. Mr. Leetz also said the three vacant positions in the Anacortes Police Department needed to be filled ASAP with police officers. He referenced the education and training of police officers. Mr. Leetz said the department could add a social worker, but that full officer staffing was necessary.

John Richards spoke in support of the Anacortes Police Department and thanked the department for making Anacortes a safe, desirable place to live.

Sheila Tomas said that having a social worker on the Anacortes police force would be an excellent idea. Ms. Tomas, a nurse, described how social workers and the notion of trauma informed care was transforming patient care. She recommended two TED talks on this topic to councilmembers.

Leslie Richards spoke in support of law enforcement officers. She said Thin Blue Line is not a symbol of racism but a symbol of support for first responders. She encouraged people to go on a ride along with officers and not to succumb to the trend to cancel out the men and women in blue.

No other participants in the virtual meeting indicated a desire to address the Council.

Mayor Gere invited the public to submit any additional comments to the City Clerk for distribution to the Council. She noted that close to 40 written public comments had been received prior to the meeting and that those would be added to the final record packet for the meeting.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Miller moved, seconded by Mr. Young, to approve the following Consent Agenda items. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- a. Minutes of November 2, 2020
- b. Approval of Claims in the amount of: \$267,002.31

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:
EFT numbers: 98561 through 98607, total \$133,220.17
Check numbers: 98608 through 98634, total \$118,502.73
Wire transfer numbers: 274433 through 275969, total \$15,279.41

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Continued Public Hearing: 2021 Budget

Mayor Gere invited members of the public to address Council on the proposed budget.

Bob Anderson said that with 17 unfilled city positions, 2021 would be a good time to consider adding a mental health aspect to the police department but urged prioritizing the patrol and records positions right away. Mr. Anderson suggested additional training for existing officers rather than adding a social worker position.

Kayla House demanded that at the very least one of the three unfilled positions at the Anacortes Police Department be filled by a social worker with a degree in social issues. Ms. House repeated her analysis of call statistics in support of her position.

Drake Elliott said he was not asking to defund the police, but was asking that one of the three proposed police positions should be used to hire a social worker.

Karen Gallardo questioned line item 396 in the proposed budget, \$15,567 for Patrol Office and Operating Supplies. Ms. Gallardo said she would prefer to see that budget allocated for de-escalation and non-firearm-based training rather than for guns and ammunition. She asked that the line item be removed or reduced.

No one else wished to address the Council on this topic. Mayor Gere advised that the public hearing would remain open for the regular City Council meeting on November 16, 2020.

OTHER BUSINESS

Contract Award: Learn to Sail Program #20-216-PRK-001

Parks Director Jonn Lunsford requested City Council consent to award a contract in the amount of \$25,000.00 plus 75% of all revenues collected from the “Learn to Sail” program fees to The Anacortes Waterfront Alliance. Mr. Lunsford, Recreation Manager Dustin South, and City Attorney Darcy Swetnam responded to Councilmember questions about the historic participation in the program and the details of the proposed agreement.

Mayor Gere invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item. No participants wished to address the Council.

Ms. Moulton moved, seconded by Mr. Walters, to approve the contract as presented. Vote: Ayes – Young, Walters, Cleland-McGrath, Moulton, McDougall, Miller and Carter. Motion carried.

Contract Award: Storage Spaces Direct Solutions Ready Nodes #20-214-ITS-001

Administrative Services Director Emily Schuh and IT Manager Jose Cervantes requested Council approval to issue a Purchase Order in the amount of \$187,516.80 to DavenPort Group for the purchase of storage spaces

direct solutions ready nodes and engineering block hours. Ms. Schuh and Mr. Cervantes provided background information on the server infrastructure refresh project, referring to their slide presentation which had been included in the packet materials for the meeting. They responded at length to councilmember questions about the project and the funding for same.

Mr. Young moved, seconded by Mr. McDougall, to authorize the Mayor to sign a Purchase Order 20-214-ITS-001 with DavenPort Group in the amount of \$187,516.80 for the purchase of storage spaces direct solutions ready nodes and engineering block hours. Vote: Ayes – Walters, Cleland-McGrath, Moulton, McDougall, Miller, Carter and Young. Motion carried.

Contract Award: Hydrothermal Processing of Wastewater Biosolids #20-217-SEW-001

Public Works Director Fred Buckenmeyer requested City Council consent to award a contract in the amount of \$274,360.00 to Brown and Caldwell to prepare an engineering report and conduct a feasibility study for the HYPOWERS Hydrothermal Processing System to determine suitability as a treatment solution to convert biosolids into a renewable energy source in the production of a biocrude oil and biogas. He summarized the rationale for the contract, referring to the packet materials for the meeting.

Councilmembers expressed concern as to whether there would be a market for the resulting biocrude and biogas and indicated that they wanted an evaluation of multiple options to determine the best technology to replace the current incinerator, not a feasibility study of one predetermined technology.

Mayor Gere asked Mr. Buckenmeyer to bring the contract back for consideration at a future meeting with additional information. Mr. Buckenmeyer agreed.

Continued Closed Record Decision Hearing: LPS-2020-0001 - The Crossings Cottages Preliminary Plat & Site Plan

Planning Manager Libby Grage recapped her presentation of this application from the November 2, 2020 meeting.

City Attorney Darcy Swetnam reminded that the current matter was a closed record decision hearing before City Council and that the record had been closed at the conclusion of the previous process before the Planning Commission. She clarified that any additional written materials submitted at this point must not be taken into account by councilmembers in arriving at their decision, and that parties of record could refer to their previously submitted materials but that no new information could be introduced.

Mayor Gere invited any parties of record to address the Council.

Tom Glade, speaking on behalf of Evergreen Islands, said that earlier in the day he had submitted a written summary of comments previously submitted for the record. He argued that the project was entirely surrounded by the R2 zone and that the project would negatively impact surrounding property values. He also expressed concern that the units would become short term vacation rentals.

Cherie Goyer reiterated her concerns expressed at the November 2, 2020 closed record public hearing about increased traffic and pedestrian safety surrounding the project.

Susan Lavell Warm said that the guest parking provided by the project, while meeting code requirements, would not be adequate and predicted guest parking would routinely spill over into surrounding neighborhoods which were not built to absorb that.

Carol Bordin urged that the project be put somewhere else, not in a critical wetland. She urged Council to take its time considering the application and gathering the additional studies required to make a good decision.

Shawn Patrick reiterated his opposition to the density of the project which he said was out of character with the surrounding neighborhood. Mr. Patrick predicted traffic problems and inadequate parking if the project were to be built.

Mayor Gere invited Council to continue its deliberation.

In response to councilmember questions, Planning Director Don Measamer and Mr. Walters clarified Council's potential actions in response to the subject application, which Mr. Measamer confirmed met all the code requirements for cottage housing in the R2 zone.

Gere invited the applicant to address the council.

Applicant Nels Strandberg responded to Councilmember questions about the potential selling prices of the cottages and the variables that made that hard to predict.

Mr. Walters moved, seconded by Mr. Miller, to approve the application as presented, with the Planning Commission's recommended conditions. Vote: Ayes – Cleland-McGrath, Moulton, McDougall, Miller, Carter, Young and Walters. Motion carried.

There being no further business, at approximately 9:23 p.m. the Anacortes City Council meeting of November 9, 2020 was adjourned.