



**CITY OF LA CENTER COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING ~ RETREAT**

August 27, 2016

SPECIAL MEETING ~ RETREAT:

Mayor Thornton called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m.

ROLL CALL:

Council:

Councilmember Birdwell-Currey	Excused
Councilmember Luiz	Present
Councilmember Williams	Present
Councilmember Valenzuela	Present
Councilmember Cerveny	Present
Mayor Thornton	Present

Staff:

Jeff Sarvis, Public Works Director
Suzanne Levis, Finance Director
Naomi Hansen, Administrative Assistant

Guests:

Lloyd Halverson, Facilitator
Steve Workman, Planning Commissioner
Doug Boff, Planning Commissioner

Introduction

Mayor Thornton briefly welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending the retreat. He introduced the meeting facilitator, Lloyd Halverson. Mr. Halverson, Mayor Thornton, City Staff and each of the Council Members collaborated and discussed the following topics throughout the day. The following is a summary of the items discussed and the key components/action items that were identified.

Expectations and Perspective

Mr. Halverson summarized that the City has a lot of ambitious goals and an evolving vision for the community. There is a lot of work to be done to accomplish our goals. Mr. Halverson encouraged the Council and staff to have patience if there is some slippage in our timelines.

Construction Update

Director Sarvis summarized the work being conducted at the La Center Interchange along with construction timelines and traffic impacts to the community and KWRL busses. A general discussion ensued regarding what the City could do with the old 31st Avenue Road. Some ideas presented were a visitor center, park and ride or RV park. The City Council and staff will continue to consider our options

regarding this property. In addition, the City will continue to working with the Port of Ridgefield to install conduit for future dark fiber internet.

Status of Financing and Construction of Sewer Conveyance

Director Levis reported that the financing for up to 5 million dollars was approved by Columbia Bank. The bank is going to hire their own engineering firm to conduct a separate cost estimate to protect their interests. Director Sarvis is concerned that he has not received the construction costs from the engineering firm. The City received 90% design drawings last week and is currently reviewing the SEPA documents. The goal is to start construction this year with completion in February.

Clark County Public Health conducted a work session to discuss the impacts to the aquifer due to the deep well injection. Next steps include meeting with Paramatrix to discuss this further. The City is keeping a very close eye on this evolving situation and Mayor Thornton agreed to keep the Council apprised.

4th Street and Pacific Highway Roundabout Update

Director Sarvis reported that the City has hired Universal Field Services for the construction access easements and to separate City owned property and right-of-way. The City anticipates having the plans complete in October and bid the project in November. Construction will start in the Spring of 2017.

The project will impact the New Phoenix Casino's stairs and sign. The Chips and Casino will lose access to their driveway and 4th Street entrance. The City has discussed this with the card room owners and Universal Field Services will negotiate that with them as required by law. The City needs to obligate funding by the end of November in order to maintain our TIB grant. There are concerns about the length of time it will take to construct a concrete roundabout. Director Sarvis is going to do a life cycle cost analysis to determine if it would be better to use asphalt instead of concrete.

Economic Development

Council Member Valenzuela reported that the Planning Commission and Mr. Eisemann are working hard to establish new development standards in the Commercial, Mixed Use, Downtown and Light Industrial/Employment Campus areas. Mayor Thornton and Director Sarvis have been meeting with representatives from CREDC and the Port of Ridgefield. The Port of Ridgefield has acknowledged that they need to collaborate with La Center. Mr. Thornton encouraged the City Council to become more engaged with the Port and attend their council meetings.

The City is in the process of sending out an Statement of Qualifications (SOQ) to address the zoning regulations at the I-5 Junction. This SOQ will take a comprehensive look at the interchange area and will address design standards, signage, return on investment, buildable land etc. We are going to utilize expert help to create a comprehensive working plan for the interchange area.

In addition to the SOQ, the City is excited to report that the CREDC has reviewed over a hundred sites in Clark County as part of their Land to Jobs Initiative. Through this process they identified three Tier I site at the La Center Interchange and selected nine parcels zoned light industrial/employment campus for

further detailed analysis at no cost to the City. The City is going to use the information from CREDC's efforts to steer the zoning for the entire light industrial and employment campus.

The City continues to build relationships with the Tribe and our local cardrooms. The Cowlitz Tribe has hired Christine Meyer as their Planner and the City plans to collaborate our efforts. Mayor Thornton and Council Members Cerveny and Valenzuela have had a few meetings with George Teeny to discuss his plans for his business and succession planning. The conversation was very positive and they will continue to conduct monthly meetings. The cardrooms received good news from the State Gaming Commission; they are now allowed to remain open for business 24 hours a day.

City Staff has also met with Steve Michaels to discuss his business and the possible redevelopment of the Chips Casino. Mr. Michaels believes that one cardroom will survive. He expressed interest in redeveloping his property in the downtown core area.

The important thing is the City is rebuilding relationships and working together to redevelop La Center and diversify our economy.

La Center River Trail

Director Sarvis presented the conceptual drawing of the future park. There has been a lot of behind the scenes progress done on this project including; survey work, conceptual drawings and a cultural analysis. The next steps include going through a shoreline hearing and other environmental review. The project will be phased due to the budgetary constraints.

In addition, the City will also look into funding sources for the restoration of historical Pollock Road.

Annexations & Residential Development

Mayor Thornton provided a summary of the new construction trends going back to 2013 as well as future subdivision updates. So far this year the City has received permits for 12 SFR homes, 7 multi-family units and 2 modular buildings for the school totaling 21 new units. There are 58 lots readily available in three subdivisions. Next year the City anticipates that four subdivisions will be ready to break ground totaling 268 lots. This is very encouraging as we need more homes to help support our current business owners and to attract more commercial development into the downtown core.

Improving the budget process

The budget advisory committee has met three times and as a group they have reviewed the revenue and expenses. The next step is to bring these preliminary numbers to the City Council. A budget work session is scheduled for September 1st. Director Levis has been analyzing the potential of additional revenue streams through various taxes. This budget session is going to be a collaborative process with the Council and Budget Committee working together. Director Levis is working on three-five year forecasting for three different financial scenarios.

The Council concurred that they are happy with the progress made with the budget process this year and feel they have met one of the major goals identified in the previous retreat in February.

Collaborate with Neighboring Cities, County, Legislators and AWC

One of the goals identified in the previous retreat was to better network and collaborate with regional partners. Mayor Thornton reported that he along with other Council Members and staff have been attending more meetings with CREDC, AWC, Port of Ridgefield, etc.

Mayor Thornton is going to work on developing a three month calendar; identifying meetings throughout the community. He would like other council members to start attending the meetings with various associations. There are a lot of partnerships that can be established to help guide our community and gain perspective on the issues other communities are facing.

Council Comments

Randy Williams

- Liked the open conversation format of the retreat.
- Would like the City to actively work on investing in becoming a wired community similar to what was described in the recent AWC magazine. La Center is a relatively compact community and could implement it relatively easily. In addition, he reported that there are grant opportunities the City could leverage.
- Would like to see the City encourage a wide variety of restaurants, brew pubs and other quality businesses that would be supported by the community.
- Would like the City to consider instituting a hotel tax.

Liz Cerveney

- Would like to see more marketing of La Center to draw people and businesses into the community.

Joe Valenzuela

- Believes the City Council needs to identify what we want La Center to be and look like as we grow. He believes the City needs to work on our strategic planning.

Al Luiz

- Believes this is a pivotal year for La Center. This budget season is going to be challenging. The City will need to be frugal but we still need to maintain a level of service that will continue to draw people into La Center.

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 2:31 p.m.