

May 18, 2009

The Chehalis city council met in regular session on Monday, May 18, 2009, in the Chehalis city hall basement meeting room. Mayor Ketchum called the meeting to order at 4:30 p.m. with the following council members present: Terry Harris, Robin Fuller, Dr. Isaac Pope, Chad Taylor, and Dennis Dawes. Councilor Lund was absent (excused). Staff present included: Merlin MacReynold, City Manager; Judy Schave, City Clerk; Glenn Schaffer, Police Chief, Joanne Schwartz, Economic Development Administrator; Peggy Hammer, Human Resources Administrator; Bob Nacht, Community Development Director; Becky Fox, Court Administrator; Rick Sahlin, Street Superintendent; and Judi Smith, Public Works Office Manager.

1. **Work Session – Presentation of Chehalis Renaissance Implementation Plan.** City Manager MacReynold introduced the subject, noting two years ago they started talking about how to get their arms around the future growth of the community with reference to community development, what they wanted the community to look like, and how they could move the city into the future in a positive way. He reported it was a very comprehensive plan that the city would be working on over the next 20 to 25 years.

City Manager MacReynold thanked Joanne Schwartz who ran the city through the process by forming a committee, and provided the support necessary to make it happen. He thanked Gail Shaw, who stepped up to the plate very early, who saw the importance of the plan and what it would mean for the community. City Manager MacReynold also thanked Tom Beckwith, the consultant hired by the city, adding he turned out to be the right guy to do the job for this community. He reported Mr. Beckwith stuck with the city through some tough times, including three major disasters, and managed to keep those involved with the process focused.

Tom Beckwith gave the council a brief review of the 'Action Plan' and talked about how the city would transition it into a community plan. Mr. Beckwith reported on Chapter 3: Implementation – 2009, which included the following:

- Implement new Chehalis brand (Concept of brand, tagline and logo development) – A committee was formed of Economic Development Steering Committee members and people throughout the community. Would need a consistent image to reflect the marketing of the city, which would translate into wayfinding and gateway signage, and promotional materials.
- Expand current website so it does more than talk about the city: link with Chamber of Commerce; museums; and other attractions.
- Initiate 'Young Chehalis' and a 'Younger Chehalis' Outreach Program – involve them to carry on some of the future tasks.
- Adopt a Main Street Program – to include design, economic restructuring, promotion and organization. Develop historic and business directories, historical walking tour, outdoor sculpture walk, arts festival, and investigate expanding the farmers market.
- Initiate Retention and Recruitment Program – Attract new small start-up businesses, as well as recruit our own business opportunities. Make known what stores are for sale and which ones are for lease. Façade improvements.
- Adopt Building/Landscape/Sign Standards – Draft urban design standards for the downtown area to go to the planning department and commission for their review sometime in June. Develop citywide landscape standards, and citywide and downtown district signage standards.
- Erect National Historic District signage on I-5 – Park and historic wayfinding signs.
- Erect major district identification gateways and wayfinding signs throughout the city.
- Create Dillenbaugh Creek Conservancy Park.
- Relocate the Chehalis-Centralia Railroad and Museum steam train to Main Street.

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- Install Street Trees on main Arterials – Parkway corridors on the Chamber and Louisiana intersection, Main Street median, Chehalis Avenue, Market Boulevard and West Street. Demonstration project this summer. (The Chehalis Foundation agreed to pay for those trees.)
- On-street Parking and Traffic Calming – Use Chehalis Avenue for demonstration project.
- Support continued development of Lewis County campus complex.
- Acquire the St. Helen's Inn - Charter a Public Development Authority (PDA) and renovate the building.
- Surface parking lots. Issue a request for proposals (RFP) for parking and mixed use projects.

Mr. Beckwith stated it was a very aggressive comprehensive plan that would reach out to youth, business development, promotion, investment, and new entities. He reported the key issue in getting things started would be to transition it from being a community planning process to an implementation process. Mr. Beckwith noted the fire for the plan was lit and the city needed to make sure the committees and volunteers had the resources and continued support to carry it out.

Mr. Beckwith reported the city would need to codify an organization representative of the city's interest, and give them the charter to continue to implement the key portions of the plan approved by the council.

Mr. Beckwith responded to a question from the audience, asking what the plans were for the St. Helen's Inn. He reported there were a lot of alternatives; however most would involve ground floor retail; possibly one floor of office space, and the top floors for hotel. Mr. Beckwith felt they needed to keep as many apartments as they could with mixed income possibilities, adding the current apartments ranged from 500 square feet to 1500 square feet. He reported one of the objectives for the Boistfort project would be to put a couple layers of parking decks under a structure, giving them at least 46 parking stalls to support the needs of the building, making it a lot more viable.

Councilor Dawes asked if they were looking to make the downtown area self-sufficient. Mr. Beckwith noted they were looking at two zones; Market Street - a mixed area of stores and offices that would be able to support people who want to live downtown; and Chehalis Avenue - which would include more art gallery type businesses, and a working hotel/warehouse area.

Councilor Pope asked, if by codifying a group, would obligate the city financially in any way. Mr. Beckwith indicated it would not, adding when the council decided to create the plan they gave a charter to the group to create it, along with some requirements. He stated now that they were in the implementation stage, while some projects leaned toward city oriented projects, a lot of them involve other organizations and interests. Mr. Beckwith stated it would be much easier to let the group continue the charter, but charter them for the approved plan. Councilor Pope asked if the plan needed to be approved by the council. Mr. Beckwith indicated yes, adding under the growth management act, it would need to be an approved plan, and would become a part of the city's comprehensive plan.

Rick Burchett, from the Chehalis-Centralia Railroad Association, reported on the concept of moving the Steam Train. He indicated they talked about moving the loading platform over to the area near the park-and-ride along Main Street, to make it more visible. Mr. Burchett noted they would keep the maintenance facility at its current location, which was on city property. City Manager MacReynold reported one of the exciting projects currently underway in that same area was the new Liberty Plaza. He added those two things, in addition to the county's campus plan, could totally change that part of town.

Councilor Dawes felt the city had a perfect opportunity, using steam the train to draw people off the freeway. He noted the city had some areas along main arterials where things were not that attractive, and asked if they would be looking at similar projects, or if that was something they would deal with a little further down the road. Mr. Beckwith reported one of the objectives of the parkway approach was to use street trees, gateways and signage to begin to unify the image of the city. He felt the council would be surprised with the tree demonstrations at just how effective the trees and wayfinding signs would be. Mr. Beckwith reported it was a city-wide project; however all the ideas kept coming back to the downtown area. He felt, as the downtown started to develop, the energy and interest would start to flow across the rest of the city.

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Allyn Roe reported the Airport Board expressed interest in supporting the plan in the area of the Louisiana Avenue and the roundabout. He stated they submitted a letter to the city notifying them that they would support the project up to \$10,000. Mr. Roe noted he was also tasked with trying to get support from local businesses such as Wal-Mart, Home Depot and other larger retailers in the area.

Greg Lund, Century 21 Lund Realtors, reported there was a lot of stuff already underway, such as the signage that was approved by the Washington State Department of Transportation and the wayfinding signage, which was being worked on as well. He noted there were several people on the committee that had 'pet' projects they wanted to work on, with regard to structures that may not look so good. Councilor Dawes felt a community approach to such projects would work a lot better than a government approach.

Larry McGee reported on the need of getting youth involved in community projects. He reported every year during 'Business Week' he met with 400 to 500 high school students, and indicated he would like the plan to become part of the fabric of what they learn. Mr. McGee felt it would be a way to plant the seeds of what we were trying to do in the community, and how they could be a part of it.

Chamber Director Vernadel Peterson talked briefly about the Young Professionals Program, geared toward 20 to 30-year olds in the community. She reported their first meeting, which would be a networking and social event, was coming up on June 3, at The Shire. Ms. Peterson reported they wanted to first focus on gathering the group, and next year they would start working on fundraising opportunities.

Lewis County Historical Museum Director Debbie Knapp reported the business and the historical walking tour directories were both underway. She noted they were getting a group together to go to Anacortes, Washington, to get some ideas from their art festival.

David Hartz thanked Mr. Beckwith, adding he floated a lot of balloons and had given the city an opportunity to grab on. He talked briefly about the art festival and about putting together an Art Commission. Mr. Hartz noted, as he talked with various individuals, he received a lot of negative history on how it didn't work before, but he wasn't going to let that stop him. He indicated he had some people come forward who showed interest in the project, adding they would start out slow and get creative. Mr. Hartz reported Mr. Beckwith suggested using some of the empty storefronts downtown to display work by local artists, giving them some visibility. He added they needed all of the volunteers they could get to network and come up with some ideas.

Lewis County Economic Development Council Director Dick Larman spoke briefly on the industrial area and about bringing in people from out of town and out of state. He noted people want to see a community that they could make an investment in. Mr. Larman added the kids in the community would be the next investors of the buildings and businesses, and if they didn't make it attractive for those that are already here, it would be even harder to get outsiders to come in. He reported their plan was to focus on some of the businesses downtown through their small business development council. Mr. Larman felt they needed to keep focused on the areas they want to develop, and keep adding layers so it isn't just a place to talk about investments, but a place where investments are occurring.

City Manager MacReynold reported the city received some good news about a bakery investing in the bottom floor of the St. Helen's Inn. He reported they were still in the permit process and hoped to be open by June. Ms. Schwartz added the bakery was part of the Farmers Market last year, and they were very well established.

Ms. Knapp reported she had a gentleman come by the museum who was interested in some property on Market Boulevard. She stated the business, Twin Cities Trading Post, was in the process of getting permits as well. City Manager MacReynold reported, what was exciting about it was, he asked for some historic photos of what the building used to look like as well as others, so he could restore it back to the same look. Mayor Ketchum stated he too had met the gentleman, adding if he stayed true to his format and design it would be a real nice building. He felt the gentleman had a lot of community spirit and wanted to get involved. Councilor Dawes stated he didn't have anything against the service industry, but it was nice to see the downtown getting back to retail service. He felt the two served two different interests and didn't really mesh well together.

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Gail Shaw stated he came to infect the city with the project because it looked like a fantastic opportunity. He asked that the city not get discouraged, adding the plan wouldn't always work just the way it was outlined, or the way we had hoped. Mr. Shaw reported it was a huge project and it was going to be a real challenge to make some of the things work, but it would change the focus of the downtown and make it a viable place. He felt the opportunity was here, and the city would have such pride after the project was done. Mr. Shaw stated he was satisfied with the council's joy and focus to make things happen.

City Manager MacReynold reported the action plan would be before the council on Tuesday, May 26, for their consideration and approval. He noted he appreciated the council's support and continued good questions.

Mayor Ketchum thanked everyone for coming, adding he appreciated their commitment and spirit, and to keep up the good fight.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move that the council approve the minutes of the regular city council meeting of May 18, 2009.