

October 11, 2010

The Chehalis city council met in regular session on Monday, October 11, 2010, in the Chehalis city hall. Mayor Ketchum called the meeting to order at 5:49 p.m. with the following council members present: Terry Harris, Dr. Isaac Pope, Bob Spahr, Daryl Lund, Chad Taylor, and Dennis Dawes. Staff present included: Merlin MacReynold, City Manager; Bill Hillier, City Attorney; Judy Schave, City Clerk; and Peggy Hammer, Human Resources Administrator.

1. **Executive Session.** Mayor Ketchum announced the council would be in executive session pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(i) – potential litigation for approximately 15 minutes and there would be no decision following conclusion of the executive session.

Mayor Ketchum closed the executive session and announced the council would take a two minute recess at 6:05 p.m. before reopening the regular meeting at 6:07 p.m. Additional staff included: Glenn Schaffer, Police Chief; Kelvin Johnson, Fire Chief; Bob Nacht, Community Development Director; and Tim Grochowski, Public Works Director. Members of the news media included Rachel Thomson from *The Chronicle*, and Paul Walker from KITI.

2. **Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Levy.** Adam Myer (2070 SW Salsbury, Chehalis), Vice-President of IAFF Local 2510, reported when the city approached the public for support of the EMS levy in 2009, *The Chronicle* quoted City Manager MacReynold as saying, “the whole city had seen cuts as much as 30 percent over the past year, but the fire department could see layoffs in 2010 on top of the furlough days they had already taken if the EMS levy does not pass.” Mr. Myer stated the message they were asked to deliver in gathering support for the levy was that the measure would continue the levy for six more years and tax .50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

Mr. Myer reported the EMS tax was not an increase to the citizens, adding they voted overwhelmingly to maintain a level for service that was already there. He noted in 2008, the department fielded 1,228 EMS calls compared to 712 in 1998. Mr. Myer suggested the cuts to the department staffing would impact who was available to respond, and without the levy, the department would have to cut up to \$200,000 and money could not be funneled from the other struggling city departments to support it. He stated, according to the 2010 budget, not having the levy would equal one to two firefighter positions in the department.

Mr. Myer stated the public heard the message, adding the byline in *The Chronicle* reported, “Status Quo: Measure Would Maintain Level of Service and Tax Revenue Already in Place.” He felt the full utilization of the EMS levy in the manner the public overwhelmingly supported at .50 cents per \$1,000 would provide the funding to prevent a layoff in the department.

Mr. Myer reported, in 1993, the council had a Fire Service Master Plan prepared for the city. He noted the intent was to provide the city with an approach to identify the most appropriate level and best method of providing service. Mr. Myer stated at the time of the study, the call volume was 689 EMS calls. He indicated the Plan projected an increase in calls due to the number of elderly care facilities and the aging population of Chehalis. Mr. Myer reported, in 2009, there were 1,338 calls for medical aid, which was up 110 over the prior year. He stated the Plan recommended an immediate hiring of two additional personnel, and an eventual third funded by the EMS levy. Mr. Myer reported in 1996 the EMS levy passed and two firefighters were added bringing the staffing level to 13. He noted the plan also indicated the department was too “top heavy,” and recommended the elimination of a Chiefs position.

Mr. Myer reported the staffing recommendations were based on the call volume at the time. He noted call volumes had literally doubled with the addition of Wal-Mart, Home Depot, the enlarged Lewis County jail, the Vintage retirement apartments, Woodland Estates, multiple adult family care homes, the increasing student population in our schools, frequent large scale sports tournaments, the dialysis center, American Behavioral Health Services, and the expansion of Green Hill. Mr. Myer suggested the large scale operations that had moved into our city constituted an impact on services much greater than that of a residential home. He stated with the current staffing level of 13 firefighters they were able to maintain the city’s current ISO rating of 5, while surrounding areas were going to a 7, or even 9.

Mr. Myer reported the Chehalis firefighters were asking the council to not eliminate the thirteenth firefighter position. He invited the council to enter into a dialogue with Local 2510 to seek additional efficiencies and funding, whether meeting by committee or the whole council, they were seeking a more proactive partnership based on the transparent understanding of the problems and potential solutions.

October 11, 2010

Mr. Myer stated, with all due respect to Councilor Dawes statement at the last meeting regarding budgeting for equipment, the firefighters were the ones who maintained and operated it and knew the score where replacement was concerned. He asked that the council utilize the Chehalis firefighters when analyzing the best ways to deliver fire and EMS services to the citizens of Chehalis.

3. Emergency Services and Layoff's. Kevin Reynolds (1915 SE Maple Drive, Chehalis) reported he planned to attend four to six council meetings to address the city council and administration about how they were running the city. He believed over the course of the meetings he could inform and educate, through thoughtful insight and communication, the ideas he had with regards to the operation of the city.

Mr. Reynolds reported, unfortunately, the situation in our city had changed more rapidly than he had predicted. He stated he would like to address the issue surrounding layoffs, particularly in emergency services. He stated he received some feedback from people that his words and comments may be discounted, and that some people would assume him biased because of his employment with the fire department. He indicated, in reality that was true; however, his employment gave him insight into certain aspects of operations of the city that others might not have. Mr. Reynolds started, despite his employment and a request from City Manager MacReynold to not speak to the city council; it was his right to speak. He added his opinion was just as relevant as any other citizen.

Mr. Reynolds reported at the prior meeting, Councilor Dawes stated the following: "Should the budget committee decide to increase the levy they would likely consider putting the money aside not to maintain employment of a fireman who was losing his job, but to replace aging equipment and fire apparatus for the Chehalis fire department." Mr. Reynolds stated he personally didn't want a fire department filled with expensive equipment with no trained professionals around to respond in it. He noted actions spoke louder than words, and despite Councilor Dawes statement of concern for the equipment, his comments did not earn him a lot of credibility in his eyes based on his past actions. Mr. Reynolds felt the budget committee raided the fire department's apparatus fund to help balance the general fund budget, and noted the following facts: the library project accounting debacle started the city's massive budget deficit; and, the budget committee helped balance the budget with monies from the fire department apparatus replacement fund. He noted Councilor Dawes previously stated it was reasonable to use the available levy money to replenish the raided fund at the expense of a fireman's job. Mr. Reynolds concluded that Councilor Dawes placed more importance on the temporary plants around the library, than responding to a citizen's cry for help.

Mr. Reynolds reported, while losing one fireman would certainly not destroy the integrity of the Chehalis fire department, or keep them from responding, it would certainly affect how they respond to calls and their capabilities during an emergency. He noted the National Fire Protection Association outlined requirements for manpower to operate safely during structure fires. Mr. Reynolds stated having one less firefighter in a small department could drastically affect the outcome of a potential rescue, as the risk increases. He felt cutting areas that affect safety was a regressive way of operating a city, and the first step to driving people and businesses away.

Mr. Reynolds suggested citizens had paid their fees and now they were going to get less service because the city council was irresponsible with the money. He stated he was personally outraged, adding the levy was sold to preserve current services and prevent any type of cut. Mr. Reynolds suggested some cities were using the economy to layoff firefighters even though they could fund them, while others had genuine fiscal problems. He encouraged the council to question its manager to find out which was going on in Chehalis. Mr. Reynolds stated he was paying for a service that the council was now taking away, and it would not go unnoticed. He understood tough decisions had to be made, tax revenues were down, and other departments were facing the same tough situation. Mr. Reynolds felt the council still had a chance to correct its course, and suggested other budget cuts such as the swimming pool, which was certainly hemorrhaging the city's money. He understood the council had some tough decisions, and hoped they would make the right ones.

4. 2010 Planning Association of Washington/American Planning Association - Planning Award Plaque Presentation. Richard Hart, Co-Chair of the Planning Awards Committee, presented the city with the 2010 Joint Planning "Citizen Involvement" Award for its Chehalis Renaissance Plan. He noted over the last 26 years, the two joint organizations had recognized outstanding planning, and economic development and citizen participation projects throughout the state. Mr. Hart reported the committee received nine submissions specifically in the category of 'citizen involvement' and Chehalis came out as the winner. He noted a couple of quotes that came from the jury that reviewed the projects:

October 11, 2010

- The Chehalis Renaissance project was a very sophisticated and expansive outreach effort that included a multitude of methods for obtaining citizen involvement
- The results defined the product, which was already seeing extensive use and implementation

Mr. Hart thought the council should be congratulated for their continued efforts of engaging its citizens in the future of the community, especially during these times of difficult economic situations.

5. **Consent Calendar.** Councilor Dawes moved to approve the consent calendar comprised of the following:

- a. Minutes of the regular meeting of September 27, 2010; and
- b. Claim Vouchers No. 98047-98178 in the amount of \$144,206.44 dated September 30, 2010; and Payroll Vouchers No. 34049-34147 and 1759-1829 in the amount of \$754,473.49 dated September 30, 2010.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Spahr and carried unanimously.

6. **Staff Reports.**

a. **Neighborhood Meeting with American Behavioral Health Systems.** City Manager MacReynold reminded the council about the upcoming neighborhood meeting on Monday, October 18, 2010, at 5:30 p.m. in the city hall basement meeting room. He noted representatives from American Behavioral Health Systems would be in attendance to address concerns and complaints the city had received since the facility opened in August 2009.

b. **New Reporter for *The Chronicle*.** Mayor Ketchum introduced and welcomed Rachel Thomson, the new reporter from *The Chronicle*.

7. **Special Reports.**

a. **Update on Flood Meetings.** Julie Balmelli-Powe updated the council on the recent United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) public meeting, noting the only change since January was they added numbers to their maps. She stated the Corps was guessing that the levees would raise the water outside the airport levee about six to eight inches, and that 30 percent of the levees would not hold out the water of the 2007 flood. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated the other revelation of the Corps plan was they had underestimated the cost to modify the Skookumchuck Dam to help alleviate the increase of water on the opposite side of the levee and were unsure if they would be able to include it in their levee plan. She noted original estimate was \$10 million and now they were guessing closer to \$50 million.

Mayor Ketchum indicated he didn't understand the estimate because the Corps hadn't even talked to the owners of the dam to be able to study it. Ms. Balmelli-Powe felt they pulled the number out of the blue; adding it was probably based on what they felt it would cost just to engineer it. She added Mayor Ketchum was also correct in the fact that they had not submitted any plan to TransAlta.

Mayor Ketchum stated the only question the Corp really answered during their meeting was the one Ms. Balmelli-Powe's asked that had to do with whether the levee would be certified as a 100-year levee. He noted the Corps indicated it would not be. Ms. Balmelli-Powe reported the state said they would not move forward with the levee plan unless they built the levees to handle the 2007 flood; otherwise, those who live behind the levee would not be able to get flood insurance.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe reported the recently formed Chehalis Basin Subzone District was being dissolved, noting they found a glitch in the process having to do with creating a new subzone without first dissolving what existed. She stated the Lewis County Commissioners intended on closing the subzone and would open it as its own individual zone. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated she hoped the council would consider her to represent the city in the future, should that position arise again.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe talked briefly about the flood zone district planning meetings with the FCS Consultants, noting they had scheduled three public meetings in October. She reported the county commissioners no longer wanted to be in charge and were trying to decide how many supervisors they want to have on the committee. In addition, they were also trying to change

October 11, 2010

some legislation to work out a few technicalities.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe reported on the basin-wide general investigation (GI), noting it needed to be signed in order to look at water retention. She added they last predicted the GI would cost \$24 million and take 14 years to complete. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated there was a meeting last Thursday to try to decide whether they wanted to go forward with a dual-purpose plan, or a single-purpose echo-system/restoration, which would not include flood structures. She felt the dual purpose approach would be diluted down amongst all the other studies and would be even slower than the Twin Cities Levee project. Ms. Balmelli-Powe asked if the council had any input or support for the dual-purpose plan.

Mayor Ketchum asked what the 14-year plan would tell them. Ms. Balmelli-Powe reported it was a combination of looking equally at echo-system restoration and flood mitigation. She added, the 14 years was just to get through the feasibility phase.

Councilor Pope stated in the 31 years he had been here they had done nothing but spend money. He felt they would never see anything happen because the Corps was never going to do anything, adding they were wasting our time, efforts and money. Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated the past proved Councilor Pope to be right; however, she still held a small glimmer of hope that something might get done.

Councilor Dawes felt they should go back to the original plan he had, which was to take all the studies done off the shelf and line the banks of the Chehalis River from the headwaters down to the ocean. He suggested in 15 to 20 years there were going to be new regulations to follow that would just clog the process all the more. Ms. Balmelli-Powe indicated the Corps information had to be updated every five years, and if it took 20 year to study it, they would have to update it at least four times.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe stated, in her opinion, the city should say no to the GI study.

Mayor Ketchum stated he did not want to support another 14 year/\$24 million dollar project. Councilor Harris noted the \$24 million was today's dollars and wondered what the actual dollar amount would be by the end of the 14th year. He also noted concern about the end product. Councilor Harris stated he shared Councilor Popes concerns, but felt they had to try to do something. He indicated he would look to Ms. Balmelli-Powe for her guidance about the study.

Ms. Balmelli-Powe reported the one carrot the Corps offered was, if they signed the dual-purpose GI, in three-and-a-half years they would be able to tell us whether they could consider water retention going forward, or not.

Councilor Dawes stated based on what he heard he would not want to see the city sign on to anything that would encumber any more money for a best case scenario described as 'a glimmer of hope.' He noted he would rather take his chances that some more forward thinking, proactive people get on board.

Councilor Harris stated as soon as another flood comes that creates water coming from a different direction they were going to have to start all over anyway.

The consensus of the council was to say no to the GI study.

City Manager MacReynold reported he had the opportunity to go to the flood meetings and watch Ms. Balmelli-Powe represent the city. He stated it was not an easy task, but she does an excellent job, adding she does her research, pays attention and speaks up.

8. Council Reports.

a. **Meeting Update from Councilor Spahr.** Councilor Spahr reported he attended the Chamber Forum earlier that day and listened to a presentation from proponents of Initiative No. 1082. He noted it was an interesting discussion, but felt both sides needed to be looked at.

October 11, 2010

b. **Rose Beds Cleaned.** Councilor Dawes reported he noticed the rose beds had been cleaned out down at 13th Street and S. Market Boulevard, adding they looked very good. He stated he didn't know the group who had done the work, but he appreciated it and asked that it be passed along that they did a good job.

c. **.09 Committee Meeting Update.** Councilor Lund reported, at the .09 committee meeting on Friday, the Mayor from Centralia stated he had heard at the Mayor's meeting there were four or five cities filing for bankruptcy. Mayor Ketchum stated he attended the same meeting and believed PeEll was the only one filing for bankruptcy.

Councilor Lund reported Chehalis had applied for \$80,000 of the .09 monies for a new restroom facility over at the steam train. He noted the city was granted the \$80,000 as long as we performed; however, the association involved with the project did not perform and we lost the money. Councilor Lund understood they had the plans drawn up, but apparently the association couldn't get a loan to cover their share of the project. He indicated the city could re-apply next year.

d. **Meetings and Events Attended by Mayor Ketchum.** Mayor Ketchum reported he attended the mayor's meeting on October 1, noting the discussion was about the county's budget. On October 4 he attended a Sister City Committee meeting; adding a group of 12 would be leaving for Inasa, Japan, on November 3 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the sister city program.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting adjourned a 6:46 p.m.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move that the council approve the minutes of the regular city council meeting of October 11, 2010.