

March 23, 2015

The Chehalis city council met in regular session on Monday, March 23, 2015, in the Chehalis city hall. Mayor Dawes called the meeting to order at 4:45 p.m. with the following council members present: Terry Harris, Dr. Isaac Pope, Bob Spahr, Daryl Lund, Chad Taylor, and Tony Ketchum. Staff present included: Merlin MacReynold, City Manager; Bill Hillier, City Attorney; and Judy Schave, City Clerk.

1. **Executive Session.** Mayor Dawes 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 Dawes closed the executive session at 5:06 p.m. and announced the council would take a short recess before opening the regular meeting at 5:09 p.m. Additional staff included: Glenn Schaffer, Police Chief/Interim Fire Chief; Judy Pectol, Finance Manager; Becky Fox, Court Administrator; Rick Sahlin, Public Works Director and Don Schmitt, Street/Stormwater Superintendent. Members of the media included Dameon Pesanti from *The Chronicle*.

2. **Citizens Business.**

a. **Port of Chehalis Update.** Executive Director Randy Mueller provided a brief update on the various activities happening at the Port. Mr. Mueller reported when he was hired they had seven vacant properties and the immediate concern was to get those properties leased. He was pleased to report they are in the process of writing up a lease for the last vacant property. Other activities at the Port include:

- Looking at water supply for large scale industrial users in the Port and the south side of the city.
- The Tacoma rail study with Lewis County and the City of Chehalis. The Port is interested in making sure any examination of the Tacoma rail line includes a look at the Port's rail line that goes out to Curtis.
- Meeting with other economic development professionals to open up lines of communication. Attendees, include: Chamber Executive Director Alicia Bull, Lewis Economic Development Council Executive Director Matt Matayoshi, Chief Operating Officer Allyn Roe from Industrial Park at TransAlta-USA (IPAT), and Port of Centralia Executive Director Kyle Heaton.

Councilor Lund asked if the economic group ever considered inviting one of the Lewis County Commissioners to attend their meetings. Mr. Mueller stated the group felt an 'all staff' format would work better. Councilor Lund suggested if they don't have a good relationship with the elected officials they're not going to get anything done. He stated it might behoove somebody to suggest they learn to work with the county. Mr. Mueller reported if the county were to hire a county administrator or manager they would certainly invite that person to attend their meetings. He noted most of the members occasionally attend the Board of County Commissioners meetings, as well as other meetings that include elected officials.

Mayor Dawes stated he was glad to see the group meeting and hoped that it would bear some fruit.

b. **Breastfeeding Coalition.** Lewis County Health Department Health Educator Ellen Kim Cho gave a brief report on the recently formed Breastfeeding Coalition group. She noted their goal is to support and maintain breastfeeding practices of mothers and to change the environment around breastfeeding. Ms. Cho stated while education is important, they also realize mothers need support after the initiation at the hospital. The Coalition's next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 14, at the Historic Lewis County Courthouse.

3. **Consent Calendar.** Councilor Spahr moved to approve the consent calendar comprised of the following:

- a. Minutes of the regular meeting of March 9, 2015;
- b. Claim Vouchers No. 111921-112048 and Electronic Funds Transfer No. 22015 in the amount of \$287,288.33 dated March 13, 2015; and
- c. Adopt Resolution No. 04-2015 on first and final reading for the surplus of city property.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Lund and carried unanimously.

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4. Administration Reports.

a. **February Financial Report.** Finance Manager Judy Pectol reported some of the revenues are a little less than what she would like at this point, but they should even out by the end of the year. She also noted that the city will not be receiving as much brokered natural gas tax as budgeted and would be doing a budget amendment later in the year to make the adjustment. Ms. Pectol informed the council that the city had been overpaid since 2010 from a company located outside the city limits and the state will be deducting \$30,000 from what the city is owed this year.

Ms. Pectol reported on the general fund intergovernmental grant fund, noting the revenue received is related to the transportation grants the city earned in 2014, but received in January 2015. She indicated the city also received \$262,000 from the pool grant earlier this month, which will show up in the March report. Ms. Pectol reported the proprietary funds looked good, noting things should start picking up as the year goes on.

b. **Update on New Video Arraignment System.** Court Administrator Becky Fox reported the video arraignment system has been on their goal list for many years. She stated the Lewis County Jail installed software about a year ago that now gives us the ability to do video hearings. Ms. Fox noted once we got our equipment installed and the technical issues worked out they had to figure out how to fit it into the schedule because the jail only allows a certain amount of time to do the hearings. She briefly described how the system works and some of the issues they've had to deal with. Ms. Fox noted logistically it's working well, but it has created more paperwork.

Ms. Fox stated the city has a memorandum of understanding with the county and is billed .25 cents per minute, as well as a \$5 service fee to use the system. She reported they held their first video hearing on January 7 and to date they've used 456 minutes. Ms. Fox stated the process is going well and has reduced the risk and liability of transporting prisoners to and from the jail.

Mayor Dawes stated he heard the State Supreme Court had ruled that when someone is fined an amount of money the courts now have to ask if they have the ability to pay it.

City Attorney Hillier reported he hadn't read the ruling yet, but it does effect Superior Court. He noted during the sentencing process they request financial information so they can base the financial portion of the sentence on their ability to repay. City Attorney Hillier stated he didn't know if it was going to leak down to the municipal courts or not, but suspected it would.

Ms. Fox stated it was her understanding that it would be based on out of pocket costs for the city, not necessarily the fine. She noted it's still pretty new to try and figure out. Mayor Dawes suggested that might be a future update to the council.

5. Council Reports.

a. **Update From Councilor Spahr.** Councilor Spahr reported he attended the Lewis Economic Development Council meeting, and also gave an update to the Twin Cities Rotary Club about what the city has going on. He thanked city staff for providing him with some budget information, noting it was interesting to go back and look at what they did and why, adding it brings things into perspective again.

b. **Update From Councilor Lund.** Councilor Lund reported, a couple of weeks ago, he met with the Tacoma rail work group to interview two consulting firms. He noted the firm selected will be putting together a feasibility study and business plan for the Tacoma rail line between Chehalis and Maytown to see if purchasing the line makes economic sense. Councilor Lund reported a smaller group, consisting of Commissioner Bill Schulte, David Hartz, Larry McGee and himself, met last week to work out the details of the scope of work.

c. **Update From Councilor Taylor.** Councilor Taylor reported the Twin Transit Board has been working on a cost recovery plan for the last couple of months to help recover some of the money they're losing at the fare box.

Councilor Taylor reported people are paying about two percent of the actual cost to ride the bus. He noted the Board accepted a proposal to eliminate some discounts, which included passes for seniors above the age of 70. Councilor Taylor stated free passes were given to seniors because most of them can't drive, or they're on fixed incomes. He asked the

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full council if they would support having City Manager MacReynold meet with Twin Transit General Manager Rob LaFontaine to see what the cost might be, and to see if there's a way for the city to provide free bus passes to our senior citizens above the age of 70. He noted the passes run \$10 or \$20 per month.

Councilor Ketchum stated he didn't think it was a bad idea, but had concerns that it might open up a can of worms for other things they can't afford.

Councilor Taylor reported Twin Transit didn't ask him to talk with the council, adding it was his idea. He felt the discount they offered to seniors was something they should try to preserve.

Councilor Pope reported when they were teaching the kids with special needs to ride the bus they set up a trust fund for ridership and only a certain portion could be used every year to help compensate Twin Transit for their loss.

Councilor Harris suggested counsel would need to be brought in to determine whether or not it would be considered a gifting of public funds.

City Attorney Bill Hillier reported the city has a history for discounting public services to seniors, such as discounted utilities for senior/low-income. He indicated they have the ability to do it, but it would require an ordinance.

Councilor Harris stated they would also need to make sure it only applies to residents within the city of Chehalis. He noted he would love to see what they could do to help, but didn't want to see people taking advantage of the situation.

Councilor Taylor stated, administratively, he wouldn't want there to be more work for city staff, so it would need to be administered by Twin Transit.

Councilor Ketchum stated he would support Councilor Taylor's request to have City Manager MacReynold meet with Mr. LaFontaine.

Councilor Harris thought it was a good idea, as well.

Councilor Spahr suggested they could look at it and see where it goes from there.

Councilor Pope stated he would still suggest they take a look at setting up a trust fund.

Councilor Taylor thought it was a good idea and he would love to do that, but didn't know how it would work.

City Attorney Hiller stated it wouldn't be something they could do through the city, but the Chehalis Foundation is certainly available for something like that.

Mayor Dawes reported there was enough of a consensus to move forward; however, he wanted to caution them that while he too thought it was a great idea, the problem with great ideas is that they sometimes have unintended consequences. He stated he was a little concerned because the city already has a representative on the Board and they're the ones setting the fares. Mayor Dawes stated he didn't want to see them gum up the works of an organization that's supposed to be running on its own.

Councilor Taylor stated he didn't care (not in a negative way) what Centralia or the county does, adding the people he wants to take care of are those that live here in Chehalis. He suggested Centralia will probably look at what we do and may have to do something similar for their seniors.

Councilor Pope suggested if they set up a trust they wouldn't have to pay all of it, but it could help reduce the cost to Twin Transit. He noted there are many ways to fund a trust.

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Councilor Spahr reported he liked Councilor Pope's idea about the trust. He stated they have to think about the people in Chehalis, but they also have to think about the taxpayers who are already funding 98 percent of the program, adding they would just be shifting more of the burden onto them by covering the additional cost.

Mayor Dawes felt there were other things that could be done by Twin Transit that could alleviate these things without having to ask folks to shift that burden.

City Manager MacReynold stated the key will be to figure out how it could be done, explore the Foundation option and what the cost would be. City Manager MacReynold stated he would report back to the council after he meets with Mr. LaFontaine.

Councilor Pope asked if the city supports the Twin Cities Senior Center. City Manager MacReynold stated it does. Councilor Pope asked if that was considered gifting of public funds. City Manager MacReynold stated it was not.

d. **Update From Mayor Dawes.** Mayor Dawes reported on Wednesday, at 7:00 p.m., the Timberland Regional Library Board of Trustees will be meeting at the Vernetta Smith Chehalis Timberland Library. He noted the Board extended an invitation to the full council to attend, if they can.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting adjourned 5:39 p.m.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk