

June 11, 2012

The Chehalis city council met in regular session on Monday, June 11, 2012, in the Chehalis city hall. Mayor Ketchum called the meeting to order at 5:00 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; Brian Kelly, Assistant City Attorney; Judy Schave, City Clerk; Glenn Schaffer, Police Chief; Bob Nacht, Community Development Director; Eva Lindgren, Finance Manager; Peggy Hammer, Human Resources Administrator; Herta Fairbanks, Public Works Director; and Rick Sahlin, Street Superintendent. Members of the media included Kyle Spurr from *The Chronicle*.

1. **Work Session - Briefing on Conceptual Alternatives for Future I-5 Widening/Protection Projects.** Bart Gernhart, Assistant Regional Administrator for Engineering, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Southwest Region, provided the council with an overview of conceptual projects that could protect the interstate highway and municipal airport at Chehalis and Centralia, and ensure access to medical and other critical community facilities during flood events, per House Bill 2020, approved by the State Legislature in May, 2011. Also in attendance was Colin Newell, WSDOT Area Engineer.

Mr. Gernhart talked briefly about the I-5 Mellen Street to Blakeslee Junction project. He noted, in order to provide access to the hospital from downtown Centralia, they planned to install flood walls and levees around the old sewage treatment plant in Centralia to keep water from encroaching the top of the existing Long Road dike.

Mr. Gernhart gave a brief overview of the I-5 improvements done over the last several years both north and south of Chehalis. He noted WSDOT spent a full year scoping the project for the five-mile gap between 13th Street and Mellen Street, noting at some point it would need to be widened from four to six lanes. Mr. Gernhart stated there was no funding available at this time for the I-5 widening project or for the I-5 flood protection project; the Legislature just asked WSDOT to provide alternative projects to consider. He noted his presentation would show how the conceptual projects would relate to the I-5 widening projects.

Mr. Gernhart reported they identified six different options:

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| ▪ Raise I-5 using fill material: | \$350 to \$450 million |
| ▪ Raise and widen I-5 to six lanes using fill material: | \$450 to \$550 million* |
| ▪ Raise I-5 using a viaduct: | >\$1.5 billion* |
| ▪ Raise I-5 outside flood plain: | >\$2 billion* |
| ▪ Protect I-5 with walls and levees: | \$80 to \$100 million |
| ▪ I-5 Express lanes or Temporary by-pass lanes: | Costs undetermined |

*Includes widening I-5 to six lanes

Mr. Gernhart noted widening I-5 to six lanes without raising it or protecting it would cost \$250 to \$350 million.

Mr. Gernhart stated by raising I-5 a couple of feet they would have to replace all of the storm sewer systems, guardrail, and lights, which would be very expensive. They would also have to consider the number of bridges, overpasses, and ramps that would need to be replaced, and raise the airport levee.

Mr. Gernhart reported WSDOT used the Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority's model, based on the 2007 flood event, for each of the conceptual projects to show the increase and decrease in water levels. He noted each one of the scenarios had a different outcome.

June 11, 2012

Mr. Gernhart talked briefly about the concept of raising I-5 and/or relocating it. He noted both projects were cost prohibitive and it was not reasonable for WSDOT to pursue them.

Mr. Gernhart reported on the 'walls and levees' alternative. He stated in this scenario the big issue would be the winners and the losers, and the overall cost. Mr. Gernhart talked about some of the options evaluated for Salzer and Dillenbaugh Creeks, which included: attaching walls to the bridges, installing culverts, raising the bridges, and realigning Dillenbaugh Creek.

Mr. Gernhart talked briefly about the concept of putting a culvert 'pipe arch' under the four bridges near highway 6. He noted this concept would include large walls or a levee across the top to prevent water from flooding the interchange. Mr. Gernhart reported by doing this they would avoid having to replace all four bridges in the future, saving WSDOT millions of dollars. He suggested this was a cost effective solution to move forward with, even if it doesn't protect I-5.

Mr. Gernhart reported on potential solutions for I-5 from SR6 (Main Street) up to Chamber way, using walls and levees. He noted, if the project were approved, it would need to include a new storm sewer system and mitigation to raise the flood elevations in some locations.

Mr. Gernhart reported the impact of protecting I-5 with walls or levees was very similar to that of raising it. He stated the water level on the west side of I-5 could potentially be 1.8 feet higher than in the 2007 event. Mr. Gernhart suggested mitigation money would be needed to help raise homes that could potentially be affected. He stated if the project does move forward, they would have to go through a full blown NEPA process and get public input to figure out what the true mitigation would be.

Mr. Gernhart talked about a new concept, which involved express lanes through Chehalis. He noted they hadn't done much work with this concept, but the idea was to take one lane of I-5 off the interstate in each direction and have them bypass the floodplain area on a bridge that would follow the Tacoma Rail line through Chehalis and eventually tie into the Mellen Street project. Mr. Gernhart indicated the express lanes would be right at the edge of the Westside Historic neighborhood, noting those folks would obviously not be happy with it.

Mr. Gernhart reported they had a brief conversation with Tacoma Rail regarding the idea, and they didn't say 'absolutely' no. He reminded the council that WSDOT was not proposing anything; these were just some ideas that might be worth further investigation.

Councilor Lund noted the city owns a steam locomotive, which is one of its tourist attractions, and every so many years it has to be rebuilt. He stated if the running gear needs rebuilt the only place he knows to work on it is in Mineral, Washington, and the only way to get there was to use the Tacoma Rail.

Mr. Gernhart suggested there were a lot more problems than that, but it was good to know because they need to document those types of issues and get them to the Ruckelshaus Center, so it can be part of the final report.

Mr. Gernhart reported another option would be a temporary bypass. He noted it would be a lower version of the express lane and would only be used during an emergency event. Mr. Gernhart didn't know if this project would be cost effective, adding the express lane concept was clearly more expensive than flood walls and levees.

Councilor Pope stated his greatest concern is for the people of the two communities and those living in the surrounding areas. He noted they are the ones he wants to protect, not I-5.

Mr. Gernhart reported Ruckelshaus Center was having a workshop on June 14 and 15 where the city and members of the Flood Authority and the general public will have an opportunity to comment.

Mr. Gernhart briefly reviewed the costs of each concept, noting there were a lot of negative issues with all of the options.

Councilor Dawes believed flood walls were nothing more than water retention on a lesser scale, suggesting all it does is push the water back. He stated he certainly cared about I-5, and for a period of time there was the interest of, "We need to

June 11, 2012

keep I-5 open at all costs." Councilor Dawes suggested keeping I-5 open at all costs would only end up costing the people who live out in the surrounding communities.

Councilor Dawes stated he hoped those attending the work shop will suggest that they be objective and take into consideration the widest range of solutions, and not just look at protecting I-5. He suggested, as far as the airport, there might be potential assistance from the FAA.

Mr. Gernhart responded to several questions and comments regarding the potential impacts of the concepts presented, including: drainage, economic impacts, mitigation funding, and protection for businesses.

Mayor Ketchum didn't believe the state would disregard our economic status or our needs just to protect the freeway.

Mr. Gernhart stated they would be sharing all of their information, including that of the Flood Authority and WSDOT, with Ruckelshaus Center who would write the report for the Legislature. It was his understanding that the legislature would be the ones to make the final decision, not WSDOT.

Mayor Ketchum closed the work session at 6:15 p.m. and announced the council would take a five minute recess before opening the regular meeting at 6:11 p.m.

2. **Introductions.** Councilor Pope introduced University of Washington student Denver Niiles. He noted each summer they have a medical student come and spend some time in the community. Councilor Pope noted this year's community project would be to help provide a portable defibrillator for the Chehalis Municipal Court.

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

- a. Minutes of the regular meeting of May 29, 2012;
- b. Claim Vouchers No. 103173-103292 and EFT No. 520121 in the amount of \$97,814.23 dated May 31, 2012; Payroll Vouchers No. 35644-35715, Direct Deposit Payroll Vouchers No. 3159-3230, and Electronic Federal Tax Payment No. 111 in the amount of \$647,542.84; and
- c. Authorize City Manager to execute interlocal agreement for equipment use between the City and the City of Centralia.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Spahr and carried unanimously.

4. **Administration Reports.**

a. **Chehalis Library Board.** City Manager MacReynold reported he had been in communication with the council regarding a conversation he had with Library Manager Corine Aiken. He noted Ms. Aiken is recommending that the council consider rolling the current Library Board members into the existing "Friend's" group.

City Manager MacReynold reported, in 1982, the citizens voted to be annexed to and be part of the Timberland Regional Library District. At that point the Governing Board became the Timberland Regional Library and the Chehalis Library Board started acting more like a "Friend's" group. City Manager MacReynold stated, since the mayor makes the appointments to this board with ratification from the council, it was their call whether they want to discontinue the board, or not.

Councilor Spahr suggested if they have no legal input into the operation of the library, they really don't serve any purpose.

Mayor Ketchum thought perhaps the board was left over from when it was the city's library and was never dealt with after the annexation. City Manager MacReynold suspected that was the case and suggested they were probably interested in keeping the board at some level as the transition played out.

June 11, 2012

Councilor Spahr inquired about the city's representation on the Timberland Regional Library Board. City Manager MacReynold indicated he had not received an answer to that, but would share it with the council when he does receive it.

The consensus of the council was to have the administration prepare a resolution and bring it back to the council for consideration at the next regular meeting.

b. **Council Work Session.** City Manager MacReynold reported a council work session to discuss the city's strategy for the upcoming year was set for Monday, July 30, at 5:00 p.m. in the council chamber.

5. **Council Reports.**

a. **Update From Councilor Spahr.** Councilor Spahr reported he attended the scholarship award ceremony for the Class of 2012 at W.F. West on Thursday night, as well as their graduation ceremony Saturday evening. He reported the graduating class received about \$1.5 million in scholarships this year. Councilor Spahr noted the class of 1965 started what's called "Dollars for Scholars" and gave out 30 scholarships averaging \$1,000 each.

b. **Update From Councilor Dawes.** Councilor Dawes gave a brief update on the North Lewis County Regional Fire Authority Planning Committee meeting. He reported they were going to start putting together some preliminary numbers to see what it's going to cost and what the model might look like. Councilor Dawes stated they plan to present the preliminary numbers at their July meeting. He reported, as chair of the committee, he has not been approached by any of the districts to say they were not interested in participating.

Councilor Dawes reported he was registered to go to the AWC conference next week, adding he was interested in seeing what's on the horizon.

c. **Flood Authority.** Councilor Taylor indicated he was having difficulty getting up to speed and actually making it to any of the Flood Authority meetings. He noted some of the meetings are one or two days long, adding the preparation before the meetings can be pretty exhausting with regard to the amount of information they have to read. Councilor Taylor didn't know if he was giving it the amount of time it deserves and asked if there was anyone else on the council who would like to help take it on.

Councilor Taylor suggested he become the alternate and make Dr. John Henricksen the primary representative, even though he too has a hard time making it to all of the meetings.

Mayor Ketchum asked if they wanted the administration to try and find another Julie Balmelli-Powe. City Manager MacReynold stated the administration could certainly try.

d. **Update From Councilor Harris.** Councilor Harris reported, on Monday, June 4, he attended the I-5 project groundbreaking ceremony in Centralia. He made a comment with regard to the by-pass alternative presented earlier, noting "They are going to make it easier to just pass by this community." Councilor Harris suggested we are going to have to sharpen our pencils and figure out ways to make our city more inviting, adding he wanted to work close with DOT on things like signage.

Councilor Harris reported the decoration committee met and are getting close to having a completed project for the Chehalis Foundation to take on. He noted he made a short presentation to the Chehalis Community Renaissance Team last Friday, adding once he gets it perfected for the Foundation he would bring it back to the council. Councilor Harris suggested it was a great group to work with, noting it took them a little while to get started because one of the key members, Centralia-Chehalis Chamber Executive Director Jim Valley, has been out ill and was working hard to try and keep his health. He asked that everyone keep Mr. Valley in their thoughts and prayers.

e. **Update From Councilor Pope.** Councilor Pope reported he had been receiving a number of verbal comments from citizens regarding a particular piece of property on the corner of 16th Street and Grandview Avenue. He suggested the home was in disrepair and has become an eyesore. Councilor Pope asked if there was a legal process the city could go through to encourage the property owner to clean it up.

June 11, 2012

City Manager MacReynold stated he couldn't speak to the legal process, but the city did have a code process that could place the property owner on notice.

Police Chief Glenn Schaffer reported he could have someone go by and check it out. He suggested even though there may be things that are eyesores, they may not violate the code. Chief Schaffer stated, if in fact it does violate the code, it would fall into the city's nuisance abatement process and the property owner would receive a letter and have an opportunity to correct it on their own before the city steps in.

6. **Resolution No. 9-2012, First and Final Reading – Adopting the 2013-2018 Six-Year Transportation Improvement Plan**. Herta Fairbanks reported this was the final step in the adoption process of the city's 2013-2018 six-year transportation improvement program. She stated on May 14 a public hearing was held to solicit public comment, and no comments were received. Ms. Fairbanks noted, at the request of the council, the attachment to the agenda was updated to remove any vehicles and rolling stock, making the list a cleaner version that focuses on street projects only. She reported the entire capital improvement program for city streets is currently about \$60 million, but over the next six-year period it was more in the realm of \$3 million.

Councilor Harris noted the last time the issue was presented his interest was sparked by the fact that the scour project on National Avenue was going to cost \$190,500, with only \$40,000 going towards the actual work. Ms. Fairbanks indicated it was actually a little more than \$40,000, but a significant portion of the total cost would be for environmental and permitting. Councilor Harris asked Ms. Fairbanks to provide the council with the actual numbers, noting he would like to send a letter to our Legislators and have them explain why a project should be 25 percent costs and 75 percent permitting.

Councilor Lund asked if the letter shouldn't come from the entire council. Councilor Harris suggested having the city clerk prepare a letter for the entire council to sign.

Councilor Pope moved to adopt Resolution No. 9-2012 on first and final reading.

The motion was seconded by Councilor Taylor and carried unanimously.

There being no further business to come before the council, the meeting adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Mayor

Attest:

City Clerk

SUGGESTED MOTION

I move that the council approve the minutes of the regular city council meeting of June 11, 2012.