

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL

Work Session Minutes

September 10, 2012

1. CALL TO ORDER



Mayor Barrow called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Present: Councilmembers Conrado Cavazos, Jr., Barbara Clark, Jerry Cummins, Mary Lou Jenkins, Shane Laib, Chris Plucker and Mayor Jim Barrow.

Absent:None

City staff in attendance: City Manager Nabel Shawa, Deputy City Manager Tim McCarty, Public Works Director Ki Bealey, Parks & Recreation Director Jim Dumont, Finance Manager Jean Teasdale, City Engineer Neal Chavre, Utilities Engineer Frank Nicholson, Water Treatment Supervisor Tom Krebs, Accountant Jayne Likes, Streets/Stormwater Supervisor George Bell, Temporary Engineer Joel Petty, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

A. City of Walla Walla Hydroelectric Plant Power Purchase Contract.

City Manager Shawa reported the City had hired a consultant to provide guidance through the many options of selling its hydropower. The existing contract with Pacific Power will expire December 31, 2012. It has been a very lucrative contract for the City currently yielding about \$1,800,000 in revenue for the water fund.

Utilities Engineer Nicholson described:

- The location of the hydroelectric plant.
- The wheel turbine and generator.
- The current contract sells the power to Pacific Power at approximately \$.14 per kilowatt and the City is purchasing the power back at approximately \$.05 per kilowatt.
- The City and consultant, Global Energy & Water Consulting, analyzed three options by regional utilities:
 - Columbia Rural Electric Association.
 - Idaho Power Company.
 - PacifiCorp.
- Each of the three options would fulfill the contract needs of the City but at differing costs. Taking into account all tangible and intangible benefits, staff and the consultant recommend entering into a contract with Columbia Rural Electric Association based on the terms and conditions of their proposal and subsequent negotiations.

There was brief discussion on the lag time in receiving payment. Scott Peterson, Columbia Rural Electric Association, reported they are a non-profit agency and return profits to their members. The lag time in payments only applies to retail sales, not the power purchase.

City Manager Shawa reported staff will be bringing forth contracts with Columbia Rural Electric Association for approval on September 26 unless otherwise directed.

B. Local Agency Agreement and Project Prospectus for the Alder Street Traffic Signals: Alder/Colville and Alder/First Avenue.

City Manager Shawa reported formal action is being brought before the City Council on September 12 to approve the necessary agreements for this project.

City Engineer Chavre reviewed:

- Staff negotiated a pair of grants with the Washington State Department of Transportation.
- Scope of the project: replacement of traffic signals, construction of bulb outs, reconstruction of a portion of the roadway, and audible pedestrian signals.
- Problems associated with the outdated traffic signals currently at the intersections.
- Configuration of the existing traffic signals doesn't support a move towards angled parking on Alder Street.
- Total estimated project cost is \$1,100,500 with \$553,000 from a federal highway safety improvement program grant (requires an obligation of preliminary engineering to secure funds), \$353,000 from a surface transportation program grant (requires a 13.5 percent match), and \$44,500 from stormwater utility funds. This leaves an unfunded balance of \$200,000. The City has applied to the Port of Walla Walla for a grant and may also apply for a loan from the Public Works Trust Fund. The City must be able to show a fully-funded project.
- Next step is for the City Council to approve the project prospectus and local agency agreement to obligate design funding (preliminary engineering) for the project.

There was discussion on:

- Staff success in negotiating with the Washington State Department of Transportation for use of the highway safety improvement project funds.
- How the Port of Walla Walla funds are collected and allocated.
- Interest in the project due to its potential in allowing angled parking on Alder Street. Staff indicated part of the engineering study is to determine whether diagonal parking is a viable option.
- Project schedule is very aggressive due to the grant funding requirements.
- The number of driveways entering and exiting on Alder Street and pedestrian safety.
- The project will remove failing street lights at these intersections. It is not known whether they can be replaced with historic style street lights.
- Attempts will be made to keep the disruption to businesses in the project area to a minimum.

Mayor Barrow invited public input.

Elio Agostini, Downtown Walla Walla Foundation, expressed concerns with changing the street lights and encouraged the City to find a way to maintain this style. Parking is also a very important issue to the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation. Staff explained the difficulties in attempting to maintain the decorative lighting with a safety grant and reported they are working with the Historic Preservation Commission to identify possible solutions.

Council asked if the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation will support a local improvement district for diagonal parking improvements on Alder Street. Mr. Agostini responded the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation plans on putting forth the concept of a local improvement district to the property owners, but the property owners must agree for it to be approved. Staff indicated that construction on the project is estimated to be in 2014 which will allow the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation additional time to put together a local improvement district.

C.Draft 2013-2014 Capital Improvement Program.

City Manager Shawa commented that staff is looking to the City Council to prioritize projects in competing areas.

Public Works Director Bealey introduced Public Works staff assisting with putting together this first draft of the capital improvement program. Staff is seeking Council prioritization on ranking general fund projects such as: streets, fire, police, library, and other general projects. The City has a limited amount to spend on projects and the City Council plays a key role in policy delivery and lines of communication.

City Manager Shawa reported the Councils rankings and priorities provide invaluable assistance to staff in seeking grants and other legislative funding opportunities. The ultimate goal is to adopt a capital improvement program in conjunction with the 2013-2014 biennium budget. To accomplish this goal, staff needs the Councils individual project rankings within the next two to three weeks so staff can compile the results.

There was discussion on:

- Active assignments in the engineering division. The City also has other projects ongoing but they are not being managed through engineering.

- Inclusion of the following:
 - Isaacs Avenue west between Roosevelt and Wilbur streets. Staff indicated there is a project for Isaacs Avenue between Rose and Wilbur Streets. The capital improvement program is the City's long term plan of its top priorities, not just a general wish list.
 - Splash pads in neighborhood parks.
 - Renovation of the City Council Chambers. Staff reported the City has entered into a low cost contract with a vendor to look at what is feasible and identify costs for renovations to the City Council Chambers.
- Status of proposed move of the fire drill tower from Washington Park. Staff reported the Fire Chief has concerns with the structural integrity of the drill tower. There is an immediate need for \$10,000 to study the structural integrity and then staff will follow up on potential locations for a regional training facility.
- Movement from a Class A biosolids treatment to a Class B biosolids treatment to allow for the potential creation of an industrial park and shooting range at the Sudbury landfill property.

Council asked for additional copies of the prioritization sheets. Staff reiterated they are seeking input on the prioritization of projects that are not currently in progress.

D. Budget Development Update.

Deputy City Manager McCarty reviewed the two-page budget summary on where we stand at this point and the challenges ahead. The goal is to eliminate the calculated negative net budget activity. Work is continuing and the preliminary draft budget will be filed on October 1. Staff anticipates holding outreach meetings in the community in October. Work on the capital improvement program is necessary to be able to include the expenses in the individual department budgets. It is also difficult to anticipate the outcome of the ongoing labor negotiations.

There were comments on the proposed budget showing full funding of library services but not for the aviary. Staff clarified that the staff costs for the aviary are not included in the proposed budget but some operational costs will remain.

3. Other Business

City Manager Shawa reviewed the opportunity to partnership with the State Auditors office for a citizen survey as part of their local government performance improvement efforts. This will create a standard format so an outside consultant will not have to be hired to perform a survey every year. This will also allow for comparison with other cities in the state as it is the intent of the State Auditors office to create a baseline survey. The State Auditors office has contracted with the Elway group for creation of a forty question survey and staff is seeking feedback from the City Council on the survey composition. This survey will help drive priorities and strategic planning. The City's share of this survey is \$10,000.

There was discussion by Council on having the survey address:

- Participation of residents and getting people to engage with government and help with prioritizing services and projects.
- Televising City Council meetings and whether the programming would be viewed.
- Whether City government should be providing essential services such as water, streets, and public safety versus social services such as Community Center for Youth and Commitment to Community.
- What services would residents eliminate if cuts to services must be made.
- Why citizens are not voting and apparent lack of civic participation.

City Manager Shawa explained that survey companies generally use a combination of public records to create their statistically-valid survey group such as voter registration rolls and water accounts. They also now have access to cellular telephone numbers and not just land lines.

City Manager Shawa provided an update on the concerns expressed with the operation of the Farmers Market. The City leases the property to the Farmers Market under a contract but does not operate the market. Allegations have been made against the market operator regarding electrical consumption and disparate treatment of vendors. The City's goal is to ensure the market is well run, friendly, and supportive of small vendors and artists. The City has asked the market operator to provide the City with information required by their contract.

4.ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:44 p.m.