

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
September 9, 2013

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, Finance Manager Jean Teasdale, City Engineer Neal Chavre, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

A. Children's Resilience Initiative.

Dr. Mark Brown, Friends of Children in Walla Walla, and Teri Barila reviewed the Children's Resilience Initiative and provided an in-depth overview of the impact of trauma associated with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) and their efforts to raise community awareness.

There were suggestions on the role of the City Council including:

- Issuance of a proclamation.
- Speaking with community members to help spread the message.
- Educate the City's Human Resources staff.
- Continue to emphasize prevention.

Dr. Don Ashley reported that guidelines have been issued for pediatricians to help. Part of a trauma informed community is spreading the word.

Mayor Barrow suggested staff determine beneficial ways to promote the message of the Children's Resilience Initiative.

Mayor Barrow invited public input. No one in the audience chose to address the City Council on this issue.

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B. Discussion on sidewalk needs.

City Manager Shawa reported staff is working to establish a programmatic response to implement an annual sidewalks program.

Public Works Director Bealey reviewed:

- Sidewalk deficiencies include: defects, lack of ramps required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and gaps in sidewalk construction.
- Changing ADA standards.
- Citizen survey results pertaining to sidewalks including the gaps between importance and performance.
- Sidewalk "trip and fall" claims are becoming more prevalent. The cost for these settled claims over the last five years is approximately \$130,000 with a number of claims still outstanding. This is causing an increase to the City's insurance for 2014 of \$75,000.
- The Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization, against the City's wishes, conducted an informal survey at the fair. The City has not received the results of this survey.
- The City's street division spent over 250 hours in the last year addressing sidewalk defects.
- The City needs to become proactive in addressing defects to help control insurance costs.
- There is a need to address accessibility improvements beyond what is being done with the IRRP and TBD programs.
- Staff will be discussing funding options with the Finance Committee for inclusion in the 2014 budget modification. Possible funding sources include :
 - Transportation Benefit District (TBD) funding
 - Banked Levy Capacity
 - Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
 - With council's support, the City can utilize Municipal Code Chapter 12.08 to address sidewalk defects using Sidewalk Improvement Assessments beginning with program implementation in 2014.
- The City is required to have a plan and develop strategies for pedestrian ramps in accordance with ADA Title 2.

There was discussion on:

- Costs for ADA pedestrian ramps are approximately \$5,000 each or \$20,000 for a full intersection (one ramp at each corner). Sidewalk reconstruction costs are approximately \$40 per square yard.

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- Sidewalk gaps have also been identified by the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. This committee can be used to assist staff in their efforts.

Mayor Barrow invited public input. No one in the audience chose to address the City Council on this issue.

Dr. Don Ashley commented on a conference he is attending in Spokane on complete streets and safety.

Councilmember Laib asked that the City review its position on pickup of storm debris.

C. Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) entitlement option.

City Manager Shawa reported that because of the 2010 census, the City of Walla Walla now qualifies as a direct entitlement City for CDBG funding. The City must notify the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by Friday, September 13, of whether it wishes to receive a direct entitlement or continue to compete for grants on a statewide basis.

Deputy City Manager McCarty reported:

- Funds are exclusively for the use of the City of Walla Walla. There would be no need to compete against other communities in the state.
- The annual allocation for 2014 is \$268,000.
- Seventy percent of CDBG funds are restricted to benefit low and middle income populations.
- Full annual allocation is awarded January 1 of each year or when Congress authorizes the allocation, usually by March.
- Funds are expected to be spent in a timely fashion. Maximum funds on hand may not exceed 1.5 times the annual allocation.
- Past CDBG grants include:
 - Eastside sewer (2003) \$580,000 (City project).
 - Edith-Carrie neighborhood (2011) \$995,520 (City project).
 - Rosehaven Cottages (2005) \$348,000 (Housing Authority project).
 - Washington School Homes (2006) \$470,000 (Housing Authority project).
 - Neighborhood Stabilization project (2009) \$307,000 (Housing Authority project).

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These projects average \$245,500 in CDBG grant funds over the last eleven years.

- Entitlement cities find that CDBG programs require a full-time support staff to administer grant activities. HUD and State Department of Commerce recommend one full time equivalent for program administration.
- The annual grant provides a ten percent allowance for administrative staff and another ten percent for planning.
- Project management is an eligible expense for annual allocation funding.
- The Housing Authority strongly supports designation of Walla Walla as a CDBG entitlement City.
- The City may rescind its decision to accept entitlement city status and return to State competition status at any time. The City may also decline to participate now and opt in later.

There was discussion on:

- Whether the Housing Authority has the expectation that these funds will be for their use. Staff reported they did not get that indication from the Housing Authority.
- Funding for an administrative staff person. Council suggested looking for a local agency to manage the grant administration and paperwork.
- Time period for opting in or out of being a direct entitlement city.
- The advantages and disadvantages of being a direct entitlement city.

Council suggested that staff report back on how the CDBG funds will be administered and managed.

Mayor Barrow invited public input. No one in the audience chose to address the City Council on this issue.

Councilmember Laib left the meeting at 5:28 p.m.

D. Annual Citizen Survey.

City Manager Shawa reported the City had citizen satisfaction surveys done in 2011 and 2012. Staff is proposing using Cobalt Community Research to conduct the 2013 survey at a cost of approximately \$13,000. City Manager Shawa outlined the benefits of using Cobalt Community Research to measure the City's performance against other communities;

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and testing citizen interest and opinions on specific issues. Council was asked if there were any questions they would like to see included on the survey.

Council suggested:

- Specific crime/gang-related concerns and whether the respondent has a recommended course of action
- Whether citizens would like a neighborhood association.
- Bicycle paths in street design.
- Separating out questions about streets, sidewalks, and bicycle paths.

There was discussion on:

- Whether performing another survey is redundant unless there is new information the City is seeking from residents.
- The need to communicate with residents and collect statistically valid information.
- Performing the survey in some manner other than through land-line telephone numbers. Staff indicated this would be a written survey using the City's utility service database. Cobalt Community Research will actively seek different demographics that those used in the past.

Mayor Barrow invited public input.

Allen Pomraning, 22 McKay Place, Walla Walla, suggested including something for policy guidance in response to Initiative 502. Mayor Barrow asked Mr. Pomraning to submit a suggested question in writing to the City Manager.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

There was brief discussion on appointments to the two openings on the Sustainability Committee. Two members of the Boards & Commissions subcommittee are ready to make a recommendation to the City Council at their September 11 City Council meeting.

City Manager Shawa provided a brief update on the City's efforts to get a handle on puncture vine and asked for assistance in identifying areas of this noxious weed.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:56 p.m.