

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
December 9, 2013

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Present: Councilmembers Barbara Clark, Jerry Cummins, Mary Lou Jenkins, Shane Laib, and Mayor Jim Barrow.

Absent: Councilmembers Conrado Cavazos, Jr. and Chris Plucker.

City staff in attendance: City Manager Nabil Shawa, Deputy City Manager Tim McCarty, Public Works Director Ki Bealey, Parks & Recreation Director Jim Dumont, Finance Manager Jean Teasdale, Public Works Operations Manager Mori Struve, Solid Waste Manager Damon Taam, Water Treatment Supervisor Tom Krebs, Water Distribution Supervisor Adrian Sutor, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

- A. Presentation of the traffic and on-street parking analysis (diagonal parking) as part of the Alder Street traffic signals replacement projects. (First and Alder; Colville and Alder)

Public Works Director Bealey introduced Scott Mansur with DKS Associates and Adam Schmidtgall with Anderson-Perry & Associates.

Public Works Director Bealey and Mr. Mansur provided an overview of the project area, scope, engineering analysis, and reviewed the following three alternatives:

- Alternative 1: Three lanes with one in each direction and a center turn lane with diagonal parking on north side of street and parallel parking on the south side. Adds 47 parking spaces.
- Alternative 2: Two travel lanes (one in each direction), with angled parking on both sides of the street. This two-lane option provides the greatest increase in on-street parking, adding as many as 80 additional spaces, but was projected to result in traffic back-ups at the intersection of Second Avenue similar to what occurs at Second and Main.
- Alternative 3: A hybrid of alternatives one and two, adding as much parking as possible (60 additional spaces) and still providing a high level of service at the intersections. This is the alternative

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recommended in the traffic analysis. It consists of angled on-street parking on Alder between Spokane Street and Fifth Avenue for all but one block on each side of Second Avenue. Under this alternative, a left turn lane would be included on Alder for the blocks immediately east and west of Second Avenue to provide for left turn movements.

There was discussion on the alternatives and allowances for bus stops.

Public Works Director Bealey provided a brief overview of this topic on the City's new "Online City Hall" web portal.

Mayor Barrow invited public input.

Dr. Don Ashley, 1128 SW Bade Avenue, College Place, commended the attention to pedestrian safety and suggested that areas be dedicated for the loading and unloading of commercial vehicles and buses.

Charles Potts, 129 Alder, Walla Walla, asked that pedestrian bulb-outs not be placed on all four corners of the intersection at Colville and Alder Streets. Mr. Potts spoke in support of Alternative 2 and suggested the intersections be posted as "no left turns" when traffic queuing becomes a problem.

Kurt Friederich, 1526 Ruth, Walla Walla, asked if a parking study has actually been done and what is trying to be accomplished with this proposal. Two through lanes is the best option for cyclists. Mr. Friederich asked if staff has reviewed reverse in/drive out diagonal parking for increased safety. Council, staff and Mr. Mansur responded.

Elio Agostini, Executive Director of the Downtown Walla Walla Foundation, 217 Beam Court, Walla Walla, strongly believes there is a need for more parking downtown. Parking is critical to keep downtown a vital commercial core. The Foundation's preference is for Alternative 2 to create as many spaces as possible, with no left turns if traffic queuing is a problem. The Downtown Walla Walla Foundation would also like to seek to have First Avenue blocked off to vehicle traffic between Main and Alder Streets to establish a pedestrian corridor.

Norm Ostermann, 1032 Pomona, Walla Walla, suggested the City purchase the Port of Walla Walla's property on Second Avenue across from the Post Office for public parking.

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Gordon Gunfert, Executive Director of Goodwill Industries, 599 Pinewood Loop, West Richland, supports maximizing the number of parking spaces on Alder.

Bruce Buchanan, Walla Walla, asked that Alder Street be configured just like Main Street.

There was discussion on:

- Prohibiting left hand turns has been shown to not be business friendly.
- The traffic counts on Main Street are almost identical to the counts on Alder Street.
- Restricting left hand turns only during peak traffic periods.
- The need for commercial vehicle loading and unloading areas.
- Goal for downtown should be to create a destination.
- Alder should be made more pedestrian friendly with Poplar and Rose Streets used as the main thoroughfares.

Councilmembers voiced their individual opinions on the three alternatives.

Consensus was for Alternative 2 or Alternative 3 with further staff review on the issue of traffic queuing at intersections.

- B. Presentation of delivery options for the LT2 water treatment plant upgrade project.

City Manager Shawa reported the Department of Health has approved a low interest loan of \$12,000,000 for the water treatment plant upgrades. Staff believes that work must start in eighteen months to be eligible.

Public Works Director Bealey introduced Jessica Guerrette with Kennedy/Jenks Consultants.

Public Works Director Bealey and Ms. Guerrette reviewed:

- The alternative contracting methods, including advantages and disadvantages of each:
 - Traditional Design, Bid, Build (DBB).
 - General Contract/Construction Manager (GC/CM) alternative delivery.
 - Operate, Design, Build, Operate (ODBO) alternative delivery.

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- The ratings and comparisons of the three approaches. The ratings were not weighted and reflect that the ODBO delivery approach provides the highest value and is the most advantageous for the City.
- The policy issue is whether the City Council wants to contract out the operation of the water treatment services. Staff cannot point to poor performance or violations of existing water treatment plant operations as a reason for recommending the privatization of services.
- The overall system must be considered, not just the treatment plant.
- Contracting out operations is not about performance of existing staff, it is about long term risk management, innovation, and long-term cost control.
- If the Council decides to contract out operations, then ODBO is the clear choice. The decision timing is being driven by regulatory compliance and funding timelines.
- Staff recommends including measures within any authorizing resolution for the transition of existing water treatment staff, such as: must offer employment to existing employees; total compensation package equal to or better than existing; no involuntary transfers; no terminations without just cause.

There were comments and discussion on:

- Walla Walla scored second out of forty-nine applications, two points behind the City of Tacoma.
- The ODBO process is more complex as far as procurement.
- The types of innovations that the ODBO may result in.
- Responsibilities, controls, and the City's ability to monitor.
- Employees in communities that employed the ODBO process were very happy with their new positions. Staff members at the water treatment plant are concerned with succession planning. ODBO addresses these concerns, and provides more opportunities for collaboration and promotions.
- When Cities contract out operations, the new operators typically employ existing City staff.
- Impact if there is a falling out or the contractor goes under. There is a contractual obligation that will have to be fulfilled.
- The ODBO process is a new idea and intriguing. Appropriate protections will need to be in place for current employees.

It was the consensus of a majority of Council to defer any recommended course of action for further discussion in January.

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The meeting was recessed for a break at 5:58 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 6:05 p.m.

C. Discussion of the Aviary Capital Project.

Parks & Recreation Director Dumont reported the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary will be providing an update on their fundraising efforts. A budget allocation of \$36,500 has been put in the 2014 budget modification to pay the salary and benefits of the aviary caretaker with the understanding that the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary will provide the remainder necessary for operating expenses. The question is will the aviary continue to operate to warrant the capital investment.

Councilmember Laib indicated the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary were able to accomplish some of their goals but not all. They are still awaiting approval from the Internal Revenue Service for their non-profit status. The committee appreciates the City funding the aviary caretaker position but it still leaves almost \$20,000 for the Committee to raise in funding for operations. Without clear guidance from the City Council, the committee has not started the capital fundraising campaign.

Parks & Recreation Director Dumont reported the construction cost estimate received in October for construction of new net pen over the large pond went from a preliminary estimate of \$240,000 to approximately \$500,000. The most recent cost estimate to net the large pond is \$375,000. The Parks, Recreation & Urban Forestry Advisory Board reviewed the project and cost estimate and asked staff to request a cost estimate for netting the small pond. The estimate for the small pond is \$285,000, almost \$100,000 less than the large pond. The Parks, Recreation & Urban Forestry Advisory Board feel the small pond is a better option.

Council asked about the feasibility of the City loaning the money at a low interest rate to cover the cost of the project that is not covered from insurance proceeds. Staff indicated this is a possibility but it would still be necessary to make the loan payments.

Councilmember Laib commented that the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary don't concur with the recommendations of staff or the Parks, Recreation & Urban Forestry Advisory Board. The recommendation for netting the small pond will diminish the bird population and will take away the heart of the operation. The proposed footprint for netting the smaller

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pond is less than the current netting. The Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary have raised \$158,000 over three years. With the City funding the aviary caretaker position, the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary can focus on a capital fundraising campaign. The Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary also feel this could be a good topic for the City's new "Open City Hall" web portal. Parks & Recreation Director Dumont outlined the maintenance requirements of the small pond versus the large pond.

Council commented that the money from the City for the aviary caretaker position is one time funding and the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary were tasked to find a way to keep the program self-sustaining.

Mayor Barrow invited public input.

Trina Judd, Treasurer of Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary, felt that the organization is left with a lot more questions. The outlook of "can it be saved" hamstrings the fundraising process so they are proceeding very cautiously. The aviary is one of many benefits of living in Walla Walla.

There was discussion on:

- Continuation of funding a low priority program.
- Making a commitment on improvements if the program is not self-sustaining.
- Some Councilmembers believe the City has higher priorities, such as splash pads or a swimming pool, for funding.
- There is a major difference between operating funds and capital funds. It is a waste to spend money on capital needs if the funds are not there for operations.
- The City Council needs to decide whether they wish to continue to fund operations at the aviary before a decision is made on the capital improvements.

Council asked the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary to provide a current balance sheet.

There was no clear consensus or direction.

3. OTHER BUSINESS

Councilmember Laib offered his thanks for the donations to the Toys for Tots campaign.

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4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.