

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL
Retreat Minutes
January 10, 2015

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Cummins called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Room at the City Service Center, 55 E. Moore Street.

Present: Councilmembers Jim Barrow, Barbara Clark, Mary Lou Jenkins, Dick Morgan, Allen Pomraning and Mayor Jerry Cummins.

Absent: Councilmember Chris Plucker

City staff in attendance: City Manager Nabel Shawa, City Attorney Tim Donaldson, Deputy City Manager Tim McCarty, Public Works Director Ki Bealey, Parks & Recreation Director Jim Dumont, Finance Manager Jean Teasdale and Executive Assistant Carol Pritcher.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

A. Status of Aviary

Parks and Recreation Director Jim Dumont provided the Council with a general history and overview of the operation and expenses of the aviary. Per Council's previous direction, the Friends of the Pioneer Park Aviary were to turn over \$185,000 raised for construction of a new large net pen at the aviary by January 2, 2015; a check was received for \$175,000. Staff is ready to go to bid for the improvements to the large net pen.

Council will review this matter further at their regular meeting January 14, 2015. Discussion will include the operation of the aviary as well as construction of the improvements.

B. State of the City

City Manager Shawa thanked the Council for committing this time to review 2014, and sharing plans for 2015. If the retreat were held later in the year, staff would have additional information on the City's overall financial picture to present. City Manager Shawa provided an overview on:

- Strategic Plan.
- Citizen satisfaction (last statistically-valid survey was done in 2013).

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- Economic Development. (Walla Walla Town Center; East Isaacs Avenue; Downtown; and Myra Road).
- City financial picture.

There were comments and discussion on:

- o Publicizing an annual report to raise awareness and help the public understand the City's strategic plan.
- o Focus on being the best of the best and then maintaining the good work.
- o The Isaacs Avenue latecomers' agreement and its potential negative impact on commercial development along the corridor.
- o Financing options for major expenses such as a new HVAC system at the library; fire suppression measures at City Hall; and a replacement fire pumper truck.

The meeting was recessed for a break at 9:45 a.m. and reconvened at 10:00 a.m.

C. Council Priorities/Issues

1. Streets.
2. LT2 Water Treatment Plant improvements.

Public Works Director Bealey provided an overview of street improvements and needs. The major factor in deciding projects often depends on availability of funding and how much money/grants can be secured from federal/state/local funding sources.

Public Works Director Bealey briefly reviewed current Public Works utility projects and bridge analyses; including the LT2 water treatment plant improvements.

Council inquired about traffic signals at Alder and Clinton, and Alder and Division Streets. Staff reported these signals are scheduled for discussion at the February Work Session.

3. Parks and Recreation.

Parks and Recreation Director Dumont reviewed the history and status of rebuilding Memorial Pool, including an overview of efforts by the Rebuild Memorial Pool Committee. Council suggested consideration of a resolution in support of the ballot proposition at their January 28 meeting.

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Director Dumont then reviewed plans for a music event in Walla Walla in August. An announcement by the event organizers is expected to be made on February 9. There was discussion on:

- The need to assure the public that staff has adequately considered all aspects of the event.
- The need for hundreds of volunteers.
- Methods to keep residents informed.
- Soliciting volunteers from local service clubs.
- Providing an update at the January 28 City Council meeting.
- The need to address vacation rental houses by owners.
- Establishment of an ad-hoc committee for event coordination.
- Providing additional details for City Council to consider on February 11 after the promoter announces the event on February 9.

4. Review of the City's Communications Project.

Deputy City Manager McCarty provided copies and reviewed samples of the various communication efforts (utility bill insert, budget pamphlet, draft communication plan/calendar, email newsletter, City Central newsletter distributed in the Union Bulletin and posted online). Communications Manager Rosa Jimenez will also be working on a more comprehensive budget book in February or March.

There was discussion on:

- Having copies of printed media available in City facilities.
- Involving the City's Communications Manager in emergency preparedness, news releases, and survey questions.
- Strengthening citizen engagement and communications through neighborhood efforts.
- Having printed media available in Spanish.
- A meeting is currently scheduled on January 12 with the Community Council to provide an overview of the City's communication efforts.

The meeting was recessed at 11:50 a.m. and reconvened for a working lunch at 12:00 p.m.

5. Council Priorities.

- Reactivation of crime watch/neighborhood groups. Focus on overall neighborhood outreach and communication rather than expending effort on National Night Out event in Pioneer Park.

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- Identify/obtain funding for a study on the Mill Creek channel alignment.
- Classification of bridges within street infrastructure to elevate importance.
- Stress the safety of Walla Walla in communications.
- Enhance communication with area colleges and public schools to share joint messages and gain greater citizen involvement and interest.
- Participation in prescription drug discount program through distribution of information and cards throughout the City.
- Improving relationship with Walla Walla County through informational meetings between the City Council and County Commissioners.
- Annexations are generally initiated by property owners wanting to obtain City services. Annexation requests may increase as the economy improves and property owners want to develop their land.
- Reinstate tree coupons for replacement of street trees within planting strips.
- Include a narrative section on agenda reports to address how the item meets or furthers implements areas of the comprehensive plan and/or strategic plan.
- Implementation of an equal pay plan for City utility bill customers.
- Allowing citizens to “round up” their utility bill payment through the online bill pay system.
- Involvement with Walla Walla County on substance abuse education efforts.

There was additional discussion on:

- The approximate number of utility shut off notices issued each week.
- Schools and public agency engagement is a component of the “communications” priority in the strategic plan.
- Continued work on Mill Creek alignment and bridges are a component of the infrastructure part of the strategic plan.
- Visibly identifying creeks and streams to raise public awareness.

6. Ethics discussion/training.

Jenny Scott of Northwest Leadership Strategies provided an interactive presentation with handouts on the subject of ethics. Ms. Scott and City Manager Shawa stressed this is just general information and the training is not the result of any kind of ethical issue or problem.

3. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:17 p.m.