

**WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL**  
**Work Session Minutes**  
**July 13, 2015**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

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

Absent: None

City staff in attendance: City Manager Nabel Shawa, City Attorney Tim Donaldson, Deputy City Manager Tim McCarty, Development Services Director Elizabeth Chamberlain, Fire Chief Bob Yancey, Parks & Recreation Director Jim Dumont, Finance Director Jean Teasdale, Building Official Riley Jones, Deputy Fire Chief Brad Morris, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

**2. ACTIVE AGENDA**

A. Draft ordinance: Consideration of Building Code exemption.

Development Services Director Chamberlain reported the draft ordinance is not intended for any specific site or location. The ordinance, as proposed, may allow certain building code exemptions for existing structures for indigent housing. A list of other entities that have approved exemptions was provided. The majority of these entities adopting exemptions were to address the hosting of temporary encampments.

City Manager Shawa reported the intent of the proposal is worthy and compassionate but staff cannot recommend approval of the proposed ordinance as written. The ordinance appears to allow temporary encampments on a permanent basis and would open the door for other requests for building code exemptions.

There was discussion on:

- Chipping away at the building code on a project by project basis and appearance of catering to specific interest groups.
- Homelessness is a major nationwide issue.
- The indigent housing exemption is specifically allowed by state statutes.

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- Comparison of proposed building code exemption to current codes allowing for the preservation of historic buildings.
- Establishing precedence for allowing building code exemptions.
- Temporary versus permanent housing and building code exemptions.
- Need for the City Council to make a policy decision on whether to limit or allow exemptions as broadly as possible.
- Codes generally prescribe minimum requirements to cover the basic needs of humanity. There are many organizations working to provide adequate housing. Building codes are in place to provide for safe housing.
- All health and safety requirements would remain intact. Code exemption would apply to State energy code requirements.

Mayor Cummins invited public input.

The following spoke in support of allowing for building code exemptions for a specific project on Pine Street:

- Norm Ostermann, 1032 Pomona, Walla Walla.
- Chuck Hindman, Chair of Alliance for the Homeless.
- Dan Clark, 717 N. Main Street, Walla Walla.
- Desi, no last name provided, homeless person in Walla Walla.

The following spoke in opposition of allowing for building code exemptions for a specific project on Pine Street:

- Debbie Dumont, Walla Walla County Community Health.
- Ted Koehler, Blue Mountain Action Council Housing Director and Walla Walla Planning Commissioner.
- Jerry Watts, adjacent property owner.
- Brenda Watts, Pine Street neighborhood resident.

The following had general comments regarding housing for homeless people and the proposed building code exemption:

- Bart Preecs, 36 Parkwood Circle, Walla Walla.
- Dee Underwood, Washington School Apartments.

Councilmembers expressed their individual opinions.

A majority of Council supported having staff do additional research on the proposed building codes exemptions and bring back a cohesive solution.

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The meeting recessed for a break at 5:22 p.m. and reconvened at 5:27 p.m.

### **B. Washington State Fire Recruit Training Academy.**

Fire Chief Yancey introduced Firefighter Landen Roberts. Mr. Roberts thanked the City Council for the opportunity to attend the State Fire Academy and reviewed what was learned during the twelve weeks.

There were brief comments on training for wildland fires and providing training to other fire department employees. Fire Chief Yancey noted this is another way for the City to maintain its fire survey rating.

### **C. Ambulance Financial Plan.**

Fire Chief Yancey reported proposals had been sought for preparation of an ambulance financial plan. The FCS Group submitted the sole proposal. This financial study is a legal requirement for Medicare and Medicaid billing. Depending on the findings, it may be possible for the ambulance fund to collect an additional \$150,000 in revenue. The cost of the study is estimated at \$25,490.

There was brief discussion on the direct financial benefit to the City and the ambulance fund resulting from a financial study.

It was the consensus of a majority of Council to have staff bring back a contract at a regular City Council meeting for consideration.

### **D. Walla Walla Wayfinding Signage project.**

Jennie Dickinson, Port of Columbia Manager and member of the Tourism Walla Walla wayfinding signage steering committee, provided an update on the initiative for wayfinding signs from Dayton to Milton-Freewater. The study has been funded by all the partners and the project is now at the implementation stage.

Ron Peck, Tourism Walla Walla Executive Director, recognized the efforts of former Tourism Walla Walla Director Michael Davidson and Downtown Walla Walla Foundation Director Elio Agostini. The signage will be a phased-in project. The partners are striving for a consistent look and recognize the economic benefit to good signs.

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Elio Agostini, Downtown Walla Walla Foundation Director, commented that all communities put forth the necessary funds to pay for the study phase of the program.

There was discussion on:

- Implementation of the wayfinding signage program.
- Utilizing the sign design in City construction projects. This signage is not currently included in project budgets.
- Funding, color of signs, and incorporating bicycle signage into the program.
- Program priority is for gateway signs.
- Sign locations have been identified in the program.

Council asked for continuing updates on the wayfinding signage program.

E. Historic Preservation Commission discussion.

Development Services Director Chamberlain introduced Historic Preservation Commissioners John Knapp, Elio Agostini, and Doug Saturno. The Historic Preservation Commission has two items they would like to review. The first is the nomination of the Pioneer Park gazebo and original park boundaries to be added to the local historic register, along with consideration for placing City Hall and the Mountain View Cemetery on the local register. Property owner consent is required for placement on the register. The Parks, Recreation and Urban Forestry Advisory Board supports the placement of Pioneer Park on the local register of historic places and staff agrees with this recommendation. Staff also recommends exploring the pros and cons of placing City Hall and the cemetery on the local historic register.

There was discussion on the recommendation by the Historic Preservation Commission; and what measures historic preservation entails.

It was the consensus of a majority of Council to place the nomination of Pioneer Park on a future Council agenda for consideration; and have staff perform additional research on placement of City Hall and the Mountain View Cemetery on the local historic register.

Development Services Director Chamberlain reported the second item is demolition of structures fifty years and older and how those applications are currently reviewed. Municipal Code Chapter 20.146 outlines the

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process for demolition of historic structures. When a demolition permit is submitted for a structure fifty years and older, there is a ten day holding period where the City places a notice in the local newspaper and invites comments from the Department of Archaeology, Historic Preservation Commission, and local interest groups. Based on comments received, a sixty day stay can be initiated and staff or the concerned group or agency may petition the Planning Commission for a public hearing. The Historic Preservation Commission's concern centers on the Planning Commission, another advisory group, having the authority by code to hear cases related to historic structures when that charge rests with the Historic Preservation Commission. Staff recommends that a code amendment be researched and processed to look at how demolition permits for structures fifty years and older are reviewed.

There was brief discussion on the character of the permitting process.

Ron Peck, Tourism Walla Walla Director, suggested Council also look at the definition of a "historical" building because many buildings fifty years or older may not be worth preserving.

Council expressed their appreciation for the work of the Historic Preservation Commission.

### **3. OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was discussed.

### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:28 p.m.