

WALLA WALLA CITY COUNCIL
Work Session Minutes
November 23, 2020

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

Present: Councilmembers Yazmin Bahena, Riley Clubb, Myron Huie, Ted Koehler, Steve Moss, Susan Nakonieczny, and Mayor Tom Scribner.

Absent: None

City staff in attendance: City Manager Nabel Shawa, City Attorney Tim Donaldson, Public Works Director Ki Bealey, Utilities Engineer Frank Nicholson, and City Clerk Kammy Hill.

2. ACTIVE AGENDA

- A. Department of Ecology streamflow restoration grant for upgrades to Well #5; and
- B. Pilot water lease agreement with the Washington Water Trust for 5.5 cubic feet per second of the City's Mill Creek surface water during August and September 2021.

Staff reviewed:

- Water distribution system.
- Seven wells: two are currently aquifer storage and recovery (ASR).
- Department of Ecology is offering a feasibility study grant to convert Well #5 to an ASR well.
- The Department of Ecology has issued reservoir permits for the existing ASR wells. As a condition of the permits, the City is required to collaborate with other water users.
- One key piece of this grant is the proposed water lease agreement with the Washington Water Trust. This lease would leave 5.5 cubic feet of water in the Mill Creek channel during the months of August and September. The City will activate its wells for water during this period.
- This proposed lease will keep costs and revenue neutral to the utility ratepayers while increasing water flow for fish during critical low flow months.

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There was discussion on:

- Role of Washington Water Trust. This is a legal entity (a water bank) that can ensure the water remains in the channel and is not removed by other downstream water users.
- Repercussions on ASR program if the pilot lease project does not assist with restoring stream flows for fish.
- Impact of the ASR program on rebuilding the deep basalt aquifer levels. Without the ASR program, the aquifer water levels were dropping one to two feet per year.
- The pilot lease agreement will reduce the City's use of surface water during the summer months. The compensation is to offset the costs to operate Well #1. The costs will be tracked to determine if the compensation is fair.
- Protections are in place for the City if a dire need for the water arises.
- By limiting the lease to only two months, this allows the City to analyze and assess the impacts.
- The water injected into the aquifer is treated and is within the City's water rights.
- There is a need to improve the utilization of wells to ensure they are operational in emergency situations.
- Part of the analysis is determining whether the compensation will cover the wear and tear on the well pumps.
- This will not have any impact on the downstream water users.

3. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:47 p.m.