

CITY OF WHEELER

CITY COUNCIL – WORKSHOP MINUTES

February 16th, 2024

Call to Order

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to order at 1:07 PM.

Roll Call

Present onsite:

City Council: Councilor Deanne Ragnell, Councilor Heidi Stacks, Councilor Gordon Taylor,
Councilor Karen Matthews, Mayor Clif Kemp

City Staff: Pax Broder

Guests:

Present via Zoom:

Guests:

New Business

Manzanita/Wheeler IGA for Police Service 2025-2028 –

Pax stated that the email from the Manzanita City Manager that accompanied the new contract indicated the price increase was to include administrative, fuel, and maintenance costs that had not been included previously. The new contract is still for 15 hours of monthly coverage, but the price has increased from \$14,020.00 to \$21,700.00. It is also a three-year contract with an annual increase of 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index for all Urban Consumers, whichever is greater.

Pax spoke with Undersheriff Kelly of the Tillamook Sheriff's office to inquire about the possibility of an IGA with Wheeler for additional police coverage, but was told that they don't have the staff to provide the same level of service Wheeler gets from Manzanita. The Sheriff's Office is hesitant to engage in another IGA because they aren't sure they could uphold their end of the commitment. On a good day, they only have one officer up north, one central, and one south.

Councilor Ragnell asked if the traffic radar trailer on the north end of town was a permanent addition. Pax clarified that it was loaned to Wheeler by the Sheriff's office, and they move it around from city to city.

Councilor Stacks said she had a couple of concerns. She looked at June of 2023, and she said that historically the City Council looked at the fiscal year to see if the Police bring in a similar amount to what the City pays them. It has been \$12,000.00 or less in revenue on a \$14,000.00 contract. This is a big concern with the new cost of the contract. It breaks down to approximately \$121 per hour. Councilor Stacks said that the police seem to try, but they are a little bit lackluster. There are known issues in town that need attention and monitoring better than the City can do. The police are a valuable service, but perhaps the city needs to communicate with them about what our true needs are. Councilor Stacks wondered if we aren't calling them enough or if there a conversation to be had about helping the City with the things that are really needed. In Manzanita the police list city ordinance offenses that they follow up on, and Wheeler could use a bit of help with that.

Councilor Ragnell said that if they need extra time in the courts, we would be billed additionally

for that per the contract. Councilor Stacks would like for the police to help us solve issues before they go to court. Councilor Ragnell asked if the police get to pick and choose when they come. Councilor Stacks said they seem to have a route through the towns.

Councilor Matthews said the City used to have a Councilor assigned as a liaison to the police. The police had 68 traffic stops in the year, compared to 83 the previous year. Councilor Matthews questioned why there was a difference.

Councilor Ragnell stated that the warning-to-citations ratio is 9-to-1. Councilor Porter asked if travel time between Manzanita and Wheeler is coming out the 15 hours a month of coverage, as that is close to a half-hour of time right there. Councilor Porter stated that some of the City streets need to be driven around as well as just Highway 101. Police presence means a lot, accountability of being there means a lot.

Councilor Ragnell asked if Nehalem had the same deal as Wheeler. Pax stated that Nehalem does also contract with Manzanita for police services, but they pay more and presumably get extra coverage compared to Wheeler. They are also expecting their contract price to go up as well.

Councilor Ragnell stated that Rockaway Beach had just hired a full-time police officer. Councilor Matthews said they have in the past, but there were some problems and they had disbanded. Councilor Porter said they turned everything back over the County to patrol. The County is responsible for us whether they like it or not. Councilor Porter said he can't believe they are that short-handed because not more than a month ago he was talking to the County Commissioner who said they were fully staffed. Councilor Matthews stated that per Wheeler's City Manager, they are not willing to take us on as a customer. Councilor Porter said they are still required by law to respond to problems. Councilor Matthews noted that they have been responding to Pennsylvania Avenue a lot.

Mayor Kemp said that Manzanita Police will contact the Sheriff's office and give certain work to them. It is a conundrum. Mayor Kemp and Pax had met previously with Erik Harth, the Manzanita Police Chief, and had some discussion about coverage. Mayor Kemp had mentioned to him that we are going to be putting out parking restrictions in the future and Chief Harth said they would be willing to cooperate with Wheeler in that regard. They would patrol the parking and do revenue sharing with Wheeler on the citations from parking enforcement to help offset the cost of the contract. Mayor Kemp stated that he didn't know that we had many options. As Councilor Porter had said, "we need some kind of a presence." Most of their presence is reactive and after-the-fact instead of proactive, like driving up and down the streets doing drug busts. That is a well-known problem here in Wheeler.

Councilor Porter asked if the problem is that they can't prove it. Mayor Kemp suspected so, as they don't have any detectives and "are not prepared to do these things." Councilor Porter said the hourly price is not really that outrageous considering the line of work and risks involved. Councilor Matthews said the fees wouldn't be out of line if it was full service, but it isn't full service. Councilor Taylor said they don't have the resources to handle everything we want. Councilor Porter asked if the problem was related to Measure 110, and Councilor Matthews responded that these problems have been going on for decades and were never addressed.

Councilor Matthews said we either have to take the money from somewhere else if we are going to agree to this IGA or figure out how reduce our services. It is a mathematical problem.

Councilor Ragnell asked if the Manzanita Police respond to the issues on Pennsylvania Ave.

Councilor Matthews said it is usually the Sheriff's Office that responds.

Councilor Matthews asked why the annual increase would be 5% even if the CPI is lower than that.

Councilor Porter said he didn't see a lot of benefit if all the police are going to do is write tickets. If they are going to put presence into town with some enforcement, it would make more sense. Traffic is not worth \$21,700.00 per year.

Councilor Matthews said we could get a photo radar that takes a picture of the vehicle license plate so we can send them a ticket, but she didn't think Wheeler would want to be known for that either.

Mayor Kemp said we could go back to Manzanita and say, "no more warnings, we want a citation for every stop." Councilor Matthews suggested stopping people going over 30mph in a 25mph zone. Councilor Porter disagreed. He didn't think that the police would get that "nit-picky." Councilor Matthews suggested that at 30mph they get pulled over, and at 35mph they would get a ticket. Councilor Porter didn't think many vehicles go through Wheeler at 35mph. Councilor Matthews asked what the protocol was now for who gets a warning or a ticket. Councilor Porter said he wasn't sure there was a set rule.

Councilor Taylor said that what we are talking about here is that we are asking the police to crack down on speeding and generate revenue from citations. From his home, he sees a lot of people get pulled over, and a lot of people get let go. He suggested asking the police to be more aggressive in their ticketing. They must be able to have some discretion though, it is part of being a police officer.

Councilor Ragnell stated that former Mayor Honeycutt had spoken to the police, and they were told to be kindlier to vehicles from out of state. Councilor Matthews said we pay for a service, and we have rules that we want them to enforce. However, we don't want the reputation of being a speed trap.

Councilor Taylor said that during a traffic stop the police are deciding if this is an isolated incident or a habitual offender. Councilor Matthews said they have a database of every time a car is pulled over, so they have this information. Councilor Porter said he got pulled over for speeding but was let go due to a good record.

Councilor Ragnell asked if we can negotiate this contract or make a counteroffer. There is a difference between the police coming over daily versus once a week when it comes to the amount of fuel used.

Councilor Porter asked if a response to a wreck on the south side of town would count against our 15 hours of monthly enforcement. Councilor Ragnell said they must have a log of how much time they spend in Wheeler.

Councilor Matthews suggested that we maintain good will but inform Manzanita that this is beyond our budget. We need to look at our options but need more data on which to base our decision. We need to know how many stops were made, what was the clocked speed, was a citation given or not, what is the record of coverage in Wheeler, how do they determine the schedule of when they come here, and what is the split between traffic and other calls. Then the City Council can assign somebody to analyze the data and make a recommendation to the Council. Councilor Matthews said that Wheeler can't afford this contract, but perhaps there are better times of year the police could be here and be more effective.

Councilor Porter asked when the State Police would come in. Councilor Matthews said they have assigned areas, but the routes are somewhat random so that bad guys don't recognize a pattern. Councilor Porter asked who gets the citation income from the State Police. Councilor Matthews said we don't have a contract with them, so if they write a citation the County gets the revenue from it.

Mayor Kemp suggested setting up a meeting between the City Managers, the Police Chief, and himself to discuss options and talk about the contract.

Priority List Updates –

Councilor Matthews said this list was put together a year ago and there was a series of rankings to determine the priority of projects, and then they were color-coded with the dark green items as the highest priority, light green items as medium-high priority, yellow as medium priority, and red as the lowest priority. Some other projects have come up that should be considered, and some existing things may drop off this list.

Waterfront ADA Compliant Restrooms – The City has received \$75K from Tillamook Coast Visitors Association and another \$75K from Oregon Parks and Recreation Department. There was a change in direction part way through this project. The former City Manager was to apply for a grant for the walkways and some layout, but she was advised by the Oregon State Park people to go for the smaller grant with a maximum of \$75K. Since then, Councilor Matthews has met with the Director of State Parks, and she said they have so much cash, they encourage us to send them another request. This project is still a dark green high priority.

ADA Compliant Walkways – Oregon State Parks has grants available that could fund this kind of work, but the deadline would be this summer. Councilor Ragnell said she could extend her plans for Waterfront Park to include this area. Councilor Stacks asked if the recreational immunity issue would have an effect on this. Councilor Matthews said that it is different. The ADA compliant paths would reduce our liability, but recreational immunity is a separate state issue. This project is still a dark green high priority.

Ramp and Gangway Repair – Pax said that the dredging project has been completed and the dock section that was removed has been replaced. The gangway should be back within the month. This will come off the priority list at that point. For now, it will remain a dark green high priority.

Rector Street – Pax said that we are going to replace a water line in that same area when the retaining wall is being built. Jiffy Construction will be providing quotes for the excavation broken up by project. Robert Schumann had indicated a preference to wait for a dryer time of year to do the construction work. This is still a light green medium-high priority item.

Stormwater Improvements on Pennsylvania Ave – The grant that was applied for was denied. This is still a light green medium-high priority item.

Water Line Replacement on Pennsylvania Ave – Pax said we have been invited to apply for the BIL funding and get up to \$1.464M to replace the old AC water lines. This would be a 52% forgivable loan. The original cost estimates are a bit out of date, so City Staff are working on the application now and will be partnering with Civil West to get their cost estimates updated. The \$12.71 water debt service charge on the current water bills is to pay off this loan. This is still a dark green high priority item.

Hemlock Street – Pax stated that we have received a \$20K Technical Assistance Grant from Business Oregon and are still waiting to hear back on the forgivable planning loan from the DEQ (CWSRLF). We should hear back in March. This is just for the engineering, but there is additional funding the City can apply for when it is time for construction. The re-routing of traffic has been complete, so this has been crossed off the list. The remainder of the work will still be a light green medium-high priority.

Gervais Creek Mitigation – Pax said the City’s FEMA grant is in the EHP review, which is “expected to be a lengthy process.” It is unlikely that this project will be complete in 2024. It is still a dark green high priority item.

SCADA – Pax said the City applied for a grant from the Bureau of Reclamation to replace the SCADA system. There were a significant number of incomplete applications submitted for this grant, so the deadline has been extended. This grant would also include new computer units for the remote pump sites. This is a dark green high priority item.

Water Rate Increase – Councilor Matthews asked if we knew where Mr. Gitzen got his data indicating that we have the highest water rates in the country. Pax had read an article a few months back on publicwaternow.org regarding the most expensive water in the U.S. that seemed to concur with Mr. Gitzen’s statements, but wasn’t sure if this was the same thing he was referencing. This project was crossed off the list.

Rewrite Nuisance Ordinances – The City has done the preliminary work on this but have not yet adopted the new ordinances. This was moved to a dark green high priority.

Code enforcement procedures – This will remain a light green medium-high priority item until the new ordinances are written.

Vacancy Tax – Mayor Honeycutt came up with this as a potential tax for vacant buildings. This will be kept as a light green medium-high priority.

Integrate Waterfront Development Plan into Development Ordinance – The citizens’ advisory committee just had their second meeting (and meets twice monthly). This will remain a light green medium-high priority.

City Marketing Plan with Logo – The new logo is done, but the City hasn’t done a marketing plan yet. Councilor Stacks asked about incorporating the Business Association in with this project. The logo portion of this task was crossed off, the rest will remain a light green medium-high priority.

Setbacks – Our Contract City Planner is working on this now, notices to affected property owners will be going out in March. This has been kept a light green medium-high priority.

Improve Communications (newsletter and listening sessions) – The Mayor and City Manager End of Year Letters were sent out. Additional communication with the citizens is still needed. This will remain a light green medium-high priority.

Review and Implement Zoning Ordinances – The Planning Commission is working on this, and hopes to present a draft to the City Council by this summer. This will continue to be a light green medium-high priority.

Support Business Association – Councilor Stacks will be the liaison for this and will partner with Pax. She hopes to get a letter out to the business owners in mid-March to re-invigorate this association. This will be changed to “take a leadership role in supporting businesses.” This will be a light green medium-high priority.

Parking and Boat Launch Fee – The boat launch fee can be removed, but the parking project hasn’t been completed yet.

Replace the Faded and Damaged Signs by the Dock – This project is complete and has been removed from the list.

Traffic Calming – The Sheriff’s speed radar trailer at the north end is temporary. The City will need to look for more permanent solutions for traffic calming and the business owners have requested it. The crosswalks will be repainted soon. Councilor Ragnell said that she had applied for a \$22K Main Street Grant for traffic calming, but wasn’t awarded it. The City can try applying for it again this year. Councilors Stacks and Ragnell will be assigned to this project and will revisit the Main Street Grant. This project has been left a light green medium-high priority.

Update the Vision Plan – It has been decided that we are not going to do this at this point.

Emergency Management Plan – Councilor Stacks said this was completed with our ICS preparation.

Website Update w/ All Ordinances – Pax said that he and Mayor Kemp had spoken to the company that hosts Nehalem’s ordinances online. The issue they ran into is that Pax hasn’t been able to locate hard copies of all the ordinances and resolutions. The digital versions we have are not all signed. As such, we need to go through the meeting minutes to verify if these were approved or not. A large selection of our meeting minutes is also not on the website, and the hard copies are currently in one of our lawyer’s offices in Portland. Once those are returned, verifications can be made, and then the website will be updated appropriately. This is still a yellow medium priority.

Wayfinding Signage – Councilor Ragnell said these are being made now. We don’t yet have a date for installation. This has been left a yellow medium priority.

Community Event – This has been left as a yellow medium priority.

Streetscape Improvements – This priority has been left as a yellow medium priority.

Salmonberry Trail – The grant they applied for was declined, but they can try again in the fall. This has been left a yellow medium priority.

Park Drain Field – This has been approved, but not yet installed. The WET team will take this over. This has been left as a yellow medium priority.

Relocate Public Works – This has been removed from the list.

City Hall Repair/Replacement – The carpet is wet and moldy and is a safety hazard. The priority would be to get the carpet out. There are mold remediation companies and there are processes to handle these things. This will be left as a yellow medium priority.

Update Drought Tolerant Plantings – The City received a grant in December for \$2K to fund this

project. When the Parks and Recreation group starts meeting again in March or April they will put together a plan for these plantings. This is a yellow medium priority item.

Redesign and Rebuild of the Life Jacket Station – This has been done and was removed from the list.

Adopting the TSP – this has been done and was removed from the list.

Roadway Improvements to Fill Potholes/Grading – Grading was done yesterday on Pennsylvania Ave and one of the higher side streets. There is a sunken repair on Hemlock near Highway 101 that will need to be addressed. This is still a yellow medium priority.

Speedbumps/Curbing – Speedbumps or asphalt curbing on 3rd & Hemlock, on Pennsylvania Ave, and on Rector to divert surface water. This project will be looked into further with Public Works.

Councilor Matthews stated that this should be a working document and that the City should add to it as more things come up.

Mayor and Councilor Comments

Adjournment

Mayor Kemp called the meeting to close at 2:15 PM.

Dated: February 16, 2024

Clif Kemp, Mayor

Pax Broder, City Manager/Recorder

Recorder: Pax Broder