

HERMISTON CITY COUNCIL

Work Session

January 13, 2020

Mayor Drotzmann called the work session meeting to order at 6:00pm. Present were Councilors Primmer, Barron (arrived at 6:05pm), Myers, Gutierrez, Smith (arrived at 6:12pm), Hardin, and Davis. Councilor Kirwan was excused. Staff members in attendance were City Manager Byron Smith, City Attorney Gary Luisi, Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan, Chief Edmiston, Mark Krawczyk, Clint Spencer, Diana Picard, and Lilly Alarcon-Strong. Media present were Jade McDowell of the East Oregonian and Michael Kane of NE Oregon Now.

Food Pod Review and Plan

City Planner Clint Spencer and Recreation Coordinator Diana Picard reviewed and gave information regarding the first year of the Food Pod pilot program, to include:

- Monica Todd was last years Food Pod Manager; however, Patrick Hunt from Southern Twain BBQ, one of the food pod vendors, will be taking over this role if the Council decides to continue the food pod
- The food pod was originally planned to open from April through October, however the vendors asked for a one-month extension through November due to the mild weather
- There were two to four vendors at the food pod daily
- Issues/improvements needed, to include:
 - Lack of water onsite to be able to fill and dump daily. The City would need to invest roughly \$4,000 to \$5,000 to add this feature; however, Heller's would be interested in pumping out the gray water and filling fresh water if there was a water source. Not having water onsite does impact vendor interest
 - Lack of electricity and light in the area for added safety and security. The City would need to invest roughly \$3,000
 - Adequate fencing around the area to detour parking in food pod area. Parks and Recreation Department can place white picket fencing to add curb appeal and accomplish this goal
 - Lack of shade. Although some vendors did have shade structures, the shade structures could not withstand Hermiston's frequent wind
 - Some bus stop riders who would cause issues on site

Patrick Hunt thanked the Council for allowing the food pod pilot program. He moved his food truck from Pendleton to Hermiston, where he lives, and has almost doubled the sales of his business since the move. He believes he would have had more business if the food trucks were able to stay on site and not move once per week, for the City's street sweeper to clean the area, as he could have stayed open all seven days. He also lost sales when he ran out of food, not realizing how much more business he would be doing here compared to Pendleton.

Both Mr. Spencer and Mrs. Picard stated the food pod area was always kept so clean; going forward, they would not recommend that the food trucks be moved once a week for cleaning.

Mr. Hunt gave information regarding the lack of shade and parking issues as mentioned previously. However, the lack of utilities is the biggest reason the food pod does not have more vendors. There are vendors from Tri-Cities that have confirmed to him they would relocate to Hermiston, due to Washington's overly strict rules, but the lack of utilities keeps them from making that move. Mr. Hunt recommended that the Council Consider a different permanent location for the food pod near Funland Park as the area brings in lots of people for sporting events, to play at the park, the splash pad and the aquatic center. The area also has adequate designated parking and permanent restrooms. He could see Hermiston also having a "Food Pod

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Night” once a month, like Walla Walla does in this site. Mr. Hunt stated he believes the pilot program was a great start and is looking forward to continuing to grow the food pod to give food options to the public.

Mayor Drotzmann stated he loves the idea of continuing and expanding the food pod and making it more inviting. This is also a great way for people to start out, test the market and possibly grow their business into a building. However, how much is the City willing to invest in a location that may not be its permanent home and how will the City recoup costs for investment and improvements for the food pod area.

Mr. Spencer stated the City could consider a “Rent-A-Space from the City” for vendors. The spaces could then include a parking pad and all utility hookups as well.

There was a consensus from the Council that food trucks are important and popular to constituents. The food pod should continue another year of operation at its current location while the City locates a new permanent site, big enough to accommodate at least six food trucks, and researches infrastructure costs associated with a permanent site, as well as making sure the new site would have adequate parking and shade.

Chief Edmiston stated he believed the area of NW 7th Street, near Butte Park, would also be ideal for a permanent location.

City Manager Smith stated the Council will be asked to take action on this item during the regular meeting.

Mayor Drotzmann thanked Mr. Hunt for his work and feedback and ended the work session at 6:40pm. The Councilors took a short recess before the regular City Council meeting convened at 7:00pm.