

HERMISTON CITY COUNCIL

Regular Meeting

July 13, 2020

Mayor Drotzmann called the regular meeting to order at 7:06pm and announced the meeting was streaming live on YouTube. Present were Councilors Hardin, Myers, Barron, Smith, Gutierrez, Primmer, Davis, and McCarthy. In attendance were City staff to include: City Manager Byron Smith, City Attorney Gary Luisi, Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan, Chief Edmiston, Finance Director Mark Krawczyk, Planning Director Clint Spencer, and City Recorder Lilly Alarcon-Strong. The pledge of allegiance was given.

Citizen Input on Non-Agenda Items

Cathy Lloyd, Stepping Stones Board- thanked the Council and Planning Commission members that were able to attend the homeless shelter tour in Walla Walla that Stepping Stones is mirroring and handed out FAQ's regarding Stepping Stones (attached) and stated these items will also be placed on their website. Mrs. Lloyd stated she would be happy to answer any questions Councilors have regarding Stepping Stones.

The Council asked that Mrs. Lloyd stay for the remainder of the meeting to be able to ask questions and discuss the Walla Walla tour and Stepping Stones during Committee Reports.

Consent Agenda Items

Councilor Davis moved and Councilor Hardin seconded to approve Consent Agenda items A-G, to include:

- A. Public Notice of the November 3, 2020 General Election.
- B. Committee Vacancy Announcements
- C. Recommendation to the Hispanic Advisory Committee: Position #1, Mark Gomolski, term from 07/01/2020 to 06/30/2023
- D. Liquor License Application for "Full On-Premises, Commercial", sales for Delish Bistro, located at 1619 N 1st, Street.
- E. Minutes of the June 22, 2020 City Council work session and regular meeting
- F. Cooperative Improvement Agreement US 395 - SE 4th Street to I-84
- G. Initiate Annexation portion of 4N2815 TL 200

Motion carried unanimously.

Resolution No. 2160 - Employee Handbook Re-Adoption

City Manager Smith gave information regarding the re-adoption of the employee handbook stating minor changes were made this year, to include: added employee days off for permanent part-time employees, and updates recommended by the City's insurance carrier as outlined in the agenda packet.

Councilor McCarthy moved and Councilor Primmer seconded to adopt Resolution No. 2160 and lay upon the record. Motion passed unanimously.

Permanent Food Pod Location

City Manager Smith gave information regarding the Food Pod Pilot Project that started last year, to include work session information presented at the last meeting and staff and vendor input regarding the three potential permanent locations of the Food Pod, to include: Orchard, Butte, and Newport. Although it was a very close tie between the Orchard site and Butte site, staff and vendors are recommending the Council select the Food Pod's current site, Orchard, as its permanent location due to the public's knowledge of this site and the higher traffic count at this site. Vendors also worry that moving sites would have a financially negative impact to their businesses.

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Councilor Primmer moved and Councilor Gutierrez seconded to approve the Orchard site as the permanent location of the Food Pod with the improvements presented to include improved shade opportunities. Motion carried unanimously.

Request to Join Municipal Litigation Against FCC

City Manager Smith stated the current Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has been working very hard to roll out 5G cellular technology while preventing local government control on how and where these providers utilize the right of way, ultimately forcing tax payers to pay the fees associated with these 5G roll outs instead of having the large corporations pay for them. In response to the FCC's actions to make drastic changes to the rules related to how local governments could control what happens in public rights of way, a coalition of municipalities, to include the League of Oregon Cities, began forming to fight back from government overreach and allow local control.

Councilor Primmer stated what is being done removes the public input process, which should never be done.

Councilor Gutierrez and Councilor Davis moved to authorize the City Manager to join against the FCC in litigation at the price of up to \$5,000. Motion carried unanimously.

Miscellaneous Engineering Services Contract to Anderson Perry

City Manager Smith Presented the Engineering Services Renewal Contract from Anderson Perry as detailed in the agenda packet.

Mayor Drotzmann stated Anderson Perry has been a great partner to the City and provides great service for great value.

Councilor Smith stated Anderson Perry provides quick and informative responses anytime he has questions related to City projects.

Councilor Primmer moved and Councilor Hardin seconded to approve the Engineering Services Agreement as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

June 2020 Preliminary Financial Report

Councilor Myers moved and Councilor Gutierrez seconded to approve the June Preliminary Financial Report as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee- Councilor Davis stated the Committee met and received updates regarding the Parks Master Plan as presented during the work session.

EOTEC Committee- Councilor Barron stated the Committee does not meet in July.

Hispanic Advisory Committee- Councilor Barron stated the Committee would not meet in July as presenters are not able to meet due to COVID-19.

Stepping Stones (Non-City Board)- Councilor Hardin asked that the public take a look at the hut displayed at NW Farm Supply that would be used to house the homeless at the proposed Stepping Stones site. This is the same type of hut used in Walla Walla.

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Mayor Drotzmann thanked Councilor Hardin for organizing the tour and driving the bus to get everyone to and from the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless shelter. The tour was very informative and appreciates the time and effort taken to support this project and be able to hear success stories of about 60 people who were homeless, and used this site, and are now in permanent housing. This was a solution for Walla Walla, but Hermiston's solution may be different.

The Council stated they learned the City of Walla Walla did not allow the site to be built next to parks and the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless Board does not allow children in the facility. The Board also worked and works closely with the Walla Walla Police Department to establish ground rules, enforcement, and clarify each entities role which has helped create a better relationship.

Chief Edmiston answered questions regarding homeless tracking system, current calls for service involving homeless individuals, and the possible strain on law enforcement.

After Mrs. Lloyd answered questions from the Council regarding Stepping Stones and the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless, Mayor Drotzmann accepted Mrs. Lloyds offer to arrange a work session meeting for the Walla Walla Alliance Board to present information and answer questions from the Council.

Mrs. Lloyd asked that people remember that homelessness is not always a choice. Homeless people are humans and we have an obligation to do what we can to help them.

Mayor Drotzmann stated it is not a crime to be homeless and a proposed shelter may help the homeless find a safe place to sleep, use restroom facilities and throw trash away properly, instead of the alternative, which they may be doing near businesses, etc. Mayor Drotzmann thanked Mrs. Lloyd and the Board for everything they are doing.

Mayors Report

Mayor Drotzmann stated the City is currently ranked #1 with having the highest active Covid-19 cases in the state, and ranked #2 with having the highest overall cases in the state as well and asked that people do what we can to protect our family, friends, and neighbors by practicing the safety guideless set forth by the state.

Council Reports

Councilor Barron urged the public to follow the guidelines setforth by the state and wear masks. If we want kids in school and be able to recreate, if we want business to continue to be open and remain open, if we want to help our Latino community and farm workers all stay safe, we should all be wearing masks. Although he believes in everyone's rights, and wearing masks are inconvenient, the inconvenience of wearing masks are worth it to show the community we care. These are not normal times and COVID numbers are increasing and can continue to get worse. Those that have died because of COVID-19, regardless if they had underlying health conditions, does not diminish the pain that their family is feeling.

Councilor Gutierrez concurred stating his daughter works in a hospital where she is seeing people die of COVID, all alone, as patients are not allowed to have loved ones in the facility by their side. The family is left grieving, without closure.

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Manager's Report

City Manager Byron Smith stated he will have CARES Funding information and requested action at the next meeting.

Presentation- Hermiston School District Report

Hermiston School District Superintendent, Dr. Trisha Mooney, gave information regarding:

- Seeing Hermiston in the New York Times due to high COVID-19 numbers
- Updates regarding many different options/scenarios that the school year may look like to include accounting for full or partial short-term or long-term closures, and hybrid model plans that would allow for face to face and online schooling options
- 60% of survey results asked that the School District name the new elementary school with a geographical feature name; based on Councilor Barron's suggestions at the last meeting, they will be incorporating Latino geographical phrases in the upcoming naming survey

Mayor Drotzmann asked that the City help coordinate space with the School District that can possibly be used to facilitate in-person learning between staff and students to continue to help kids get the education they need and thanked Dr. Mooney for her leadership and continuing to give updates to the Council.

Adjournment

There was no other City business and Mayor Drotzmann adjourned the regular meeting at 8:23pm.

SIGNED:

/s/Dr. David Drotzmann

Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/Lilly Alarcon-Strong, CMC

City Recorder



Common Questions and Answers

What is Stepping Stones of Hermiston? Stepping Stones of Hermiston is a project designed to provide a safe, clean, and secure environment where those in need of temporary housing might sleep. This site is truly meant to be a stepping stone and not a permanent destination. The goal is to provide an immediate short-term place for the night for some as well as longer term sleeping arrangements for others willing to work, volunteer and/or improve their situation so they might gain the means by which they can obtain permanent housing of their own. Opportunities to receive work credit for on-going nightly housing will become available.

Where will Stepping Stone be located? It will be located on 8/10ths of a acre of property adjoining the north/west side of Agape House. It will have 6 feet of privacy fencing topped by three strands of barbed wired. It is fortunate to have found a location that is centrally located and not in a residential area.

How are the huts constructed? The huts will be handmade by local volunteers. One hut is finished and available for viewing. The huts look similar to the old Conestoga wagons. The huts are constructed out of common materials i.e. cement blocks, Kiln dried lumber, plywood, cattle fencing panels, Tyvek moisture barrier, pvc pipe and fiberglass insulation. The units have 1 small window and a vent for air flow. For the safety of our guests each unit will also have smoke/CO2 detector installed. Each hut will be equipped with a locking door to give guests privacy during the night. Site staff will have a key to each hut. Each hut will have a locking storage container where guests may securely leave belongings during daytime hours when they are gone.

How will the site be kept clean and secure? Guests will be required to empty and clean their hut every morning before departure. There will be a locked container by their hut where they may leave belongings during the day. Prior to staying on site, each guest will sign an agreement that outlines specific behaviors that will not be tolerated. One example is that no weapons, illegal drugs, marijuana or alcohol may be possessed or used on the property. The site will have a 24 hour/day surveillance system and during the night there will be personnel on site to oversee Stepping Stones.

Are there similar communities that have been successful? There are similar communities to Stepping Stones. Eugene Oregon, has a community called Community Supported Shelters and in Walla Walla, the Walla Walla Alliance for the Homeless has a sleep center using the Community Supported Shelter building plan. That is our intention as well.

When will it be open? Our projected opening for Phase one is October 2020. The date is dependent upon getting the necessary funds and approvals. Once a guest has signed the contract agreement and is assigned to a hut, it will be theirs nightly, as long as they are not absent more than 2 consecutive nights and they continue to abide by the site rules agreement. Phase two will take effect approximately 9 months after the initial opening.

Will it bring added criminal activity to the area? The police department has reported that they have not seen any significant increase in criminal activity in the area surrounding the current winter warming station. The communities in Walla Walla and Eugene have both stated that they have not experienced an increase in criminal activity around their sleep sites.

Will there be an increase of vandalism or issues at the nearby city ball field? As already documented, there are currently issues with vandalism, littering, loitering and undesirable behavior in the nearby area. It is our intention to be a good neighbor. One of the conditions in the hut agreement is that any individual cited for loitering, vandalism etc. in the nearby park will lose their right to stay in the site huts. Additionally, we are willing to commit to doing a monthly area cleanup. This will also be on the list as a service activity for someone wishing to obtain work credit to stay in a hut.

Will this site serve as a magnet for more homeless people moving to our area? Referring once again to the experiences of the Walla Walla Site, the Conestoga huts have not served as a magnet such as the tent cities in large cities have shown to be. Our plan is to serve the homeless people already in our area. Our site will have 20 huts when it opens, which will likely be filled by individuals already here. It would be very unlikely for others in need to risk flocking to our area without any assurance of being able to obtain a hut.

How many people can stay in a hut? The huts have been built to accommodate one or two people. This could be a single person, a couple or a parent and child.

Will the surrounding Property Values be negatively impacted? Our community is planned in a light industrial area. Looking at the Walla Walla and Eugene sites as examples, there has been no significant negative impact to the value of properties surrounding their communities.

How will Stepping Stones be funded? We currently have pledges for 18 of the huts and have raised funds for the privacy fencing, leveling of ground and the gravel. We also have a list of 23 volunteers willing to help get the huts built. Once we have city approval, we will do a major funding drive and apply for grants for the other necessary funds.

When will Phase 2 (work credit) go into effect? We plan to have phase two begin within nine months of the initiation of phase beginning. At that time guests will need to work with the exit homelessness manager to determine what they need to do to become more self-reliant and be actively involved in a program designed to assist them in achieving that goal.