



PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE MINUTES

4:00 PM November 01, 2023
City Hall 2nd Floor Large Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER

Members Present: Councilors Gary Bode and Ron DeValois

Members Absent: Jerry Kuiken, with notice

Staff Present: Mayor Scott Korthuis; City Administrator John Williams; Public Works Director Jon Hutchings; Programs Manager Mark Sandal; Utilities Technician Jeff Davis, and Office Manager Heather Sytsma

Public Present: Gary Vis, David Vos

ACTION ITEMS

1. Review Minutes from October 4, 2023

Action

The minutes from October 4, 2023, were recognized and accepted by the Committee.

2. Proposed 2024 Utility Rate Increases

Hutchings presented an overview of historical rate increases, noting that there have been low to no significant increases in the few years prior to 2023. When the Water Treatment Plant was being constructed, rate increases to the water utility were started ahead of construction to develop a loan repayment fund. This also lessens the potential for larger increases post-project for loan repayment. He would like to do this with the sewer rates as well, as the City will likely pursue loans to fund the expansion of the plant.

Based on historic CPI across the past couple of years and reflecting the recent rates of inflation, Mayor Korthuis has proposed a 7% increase across all rates, with a goal of building some reserves ahead of loan payments.

Bode questioned how the rate structure will push costs of major capital upgrades toward future residents and future industrial users. He noted that the drivers for the proposed WWTP expansion are future industry and that the benefit of these investments will accrue to those future users. Hutchings noted that new connections will generally expand the pool of ratepayers and that additional capital investments are intended to be covered in part by impact fees levied on those who will directly benefit from the upgrades. Discussion ensued about how that concept will apply to Pump Station #17 and the Guide Sewer Line Extension. A rate analysis/study in 2024 will sort out those details.

Action

The Committee supported the increase of 7% for all utility rates in 2024 to reflect the increase in the cost of time and materials, and to build a reserve for wastewater treatment plant loan repayments.

3. Draft 2024 Development Standards

Sandal noted that most of the updates to 2024 are updates and corrections or clarifications. Item 4.61.F – planting requirements – is one of the main updates and allows for material other than grass in planting strips. These will be native and drought tolerant.

Williams stated a demonstration area with the plants will be constructed on City hall property by the Community Development and Parks Departments.

Action

The Committee supported the proposed changes. Staff will request a Public Hearing at a November City Council meeting.

INFORMATION ITEMS

4. Whatcom Conservation District Interlocal Agreement

Davis explained that the agreement with Whatcom Conservation District (WCD) is mostly for education/outreach in support of the City's NPDES stormwater permit requirements. Examples of education include pop-up education stations at local parks near the streams, classroom education regarding stormwater and salmon, and booths at RazzFest and the Northwest Washington Fair. He also noted that this year's contract is a decrease of \$10,000 from the 2023 contract.

Bode asked whether the WCD works with other agencies as well. Hutchings stated they are involved with Whatcom County and other local governments. De Valois asked whether they've been effective. Davis said they have been very effective in bringing awareness to Lynden's citizens.

5. Welch Ecological Services Agreement

Hutchings stated that this contract is mainly for stormwater program development and reporting for the City's NPDES stormwater permit. Davis explained that Welch's contract lists 12 specific tasks, and that the contract has decreased from 2023 to 2024 as more roles are being undertaken with in-house staffing. Sytsma noted that the City has a \$130,000 grant from Ecology to fund a portion of these services over the next two years.

6. Jansen Art Center Tree Planting Proposal

Sandal explained that the proponents waited too long to submit a proposal, and, in the meantime, their volunteer labor became unavailable. They have withdrawn the permit for now.

7. Projects Update

The Committee briefly reviewed current projects and received progress information.

NEW BUSINESS:

8. Nooksack Valley Request for Rate Increase

Hutchings stated that Nooksack Valley Disposal has submitted a rate increase for consideration by the Council, citing increased disposal and recycling costs. Increases vary from 2.5% for carts and dumpsters to 5.7% for the base fee. This will be presented at a future Council meeting for approval.

9. Cedar Drive Update

David Vos requested an update on the Cedar Drive Reconstruction project. Sandal stated that additional permits are needed. Vos wants to make sure impervious pavement is in the design for the shoulders in front of certain houses. Sandal stated he would schedule a neighborhood meeting soon to give an update on the project.

10. B.C. Avenue / Grover Street Accident

Bode noted there was another vehicle accident at B.C. Avenue and Grover Street, although the house at 112 B.C. Avenue was not impacted.

ADJOURNMENT: The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 pm.

NEXT MEETING: December 6, 2023