

CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL (WORK SESSION)
Municipal Court Room
Monday, October 10, 2005
4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor McLaran called the meeting to order at 4:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Councilors present: Councilors Jeff Christman, Dick Olsen, Bessie Johnson, Ralph Reid Jr., and Sharon Konopa.

Absent: Councilor Doug Killin.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no business from the public.

SEWER BILLING PROCEDURE

Public Works Permitting and Development Services Engineer Gordon Steffensmeier explained that home builder Mike Quinn thinks sewer service should not be billed until a house is occupied. Currently sewer service is started when the water meter shows that there has been water use.

Steffensmeier explained that starting the water and sewer bill at the same time is logical and efficient. He reviewed a table that showed ten homes built by Quinn, all showing water use starting at various times after the construction was completed. Steffensmeier explained that the City does not require customers to turn water on as soon as their water meters are installed; they can choose to have the meters installed in the off position to avoid both water and sewer charges if they desire.

Councilor Christman asked if staff can determine the lost revenue for the ten houses shown in the table, if the City did not charge for sewer. Principal Utilities Engineer Mark Yeager did not have the figure but said that on average, sewer is about \$25 a month. Yeager mentioned that if the City did not use the current process, there would be no incentive for new home owners to sign up for sewer service since they would already be receiving it. By putting it in the builders name when the water meter is set, the builder will close the account and the new owner would be forced to sign up.

Quinn said that he is representing the Home Owners Association. He came to the Council in March about this same issue. He said it takes 350 gallons of water, on average, to build a house. The Home Owners Association agrees that they should pay for the water they use, but they are not having an impact on the sewer because the fixtures (toilets, sinks, tubs) are not put in until about one week before the house is completed. He feels a fair compromise is to start charging for sewer four months after the water permit is taken out.

Councilor Konopa asked, how would the City know who to bill after four months? Quinn suggested that a title company could be used for this. Konopa asked Quinn, can't you just delay your use of water? Quinn said that they need water during construction. He is looking for a "happy medium" for the building community. He stressed that portable toilets are at building sites for workers to use. The sewers are capped and not accessible.

Councilor Johnson arrived at 4:23 p.m.

McLaran asked, what would happen if the builder finished the house in less than four months? Quinn said that is not likely, but if so, then it would be caught during the sale of the house and the title company would address it. Builders send final occupancy cards to title companies.

Quinn said he would be satisfied with starting sewer service two months after the water meter is set rather than four months.

McLaran said that customers are charged for sewer even when it is not being used, such as when they are out of town, because the service is available to them. Why is this different? Quinn said, this is for construction. McLaran said he sees no difference in the two scenarios, and Konopa agreed.

Christman does not see that this would be making an exception, because it would apply to the entire building industry, not just Quinn. He feels that there is a difference between when a house is being constructed and when it is occupied.

Councilor Reid explained that historically, the City has had apartments built in several phases. Several of the buildings were not charged for sewer for many years. The current process works to prevent sewer start-up bills from

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falling through the cracks, so he is reluctant to open up that loophole again by separating the water and the sewer billing.

Councilor Olsen asked staff if the builders can use water other than from the meter when they build. Public Works Director Diane Taniguchi-Dennis said they can use hydrants or tanks, or they can delay putting the meter in until closer to the construction completion. She said there could be some unintended consequences of starting the clock at four months. She thinks we need to balance the ease of starting services and fairness, but this is something that should be discussed with the Homebuilders Association as a whole.

City Manager Wes Hare said that there is an industry standard that says once the service is available, it should be paid for. He was told by his builder that homes can be constructed in less than four months, so it is possible to do. The current system is working and certainly does not seem to be curbing construction in Albany. The charge for sewer must be minimal, as he did not even notice it when he closed on his home. No matter what system is used, someone will say "it isn't fair for me". Whatever is fair also needs to be reasonable to administer. He is curious as to what other communities do.

Staff replied that the city of Salem begins billing water immediately and sewer 180 days after the water services starts or when the home is occupied. The city of Corvallis starts the water when the permit is taken out and the sewer once their Building Department says that they have passed the sewer inspection. The city of Lebanon bills water and sewer both with the issuance of the water permit.

Konopa wants the process to stay status quo. Christman would like to consider doing something different. Johnson would like more information.

The Council directed staff to look into the issue further and bring back more information.

TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM UPDATE

Civil Engineer III Jeni Richardson gave a Power Point presentation (see agenda file) on the Transportation Management Plan. It is over arching and includes a Financial Plan, Transportation Systems Plan, and Operation & Maintenance Plan. The draft vision, goals, and objectives were presented. These guiding principles were based on Council and community input and if approved by the Council will be used to develop the Transportation System Plan.

Konopa asked, when will we be discussing transportation system development charges (SDCs)? Richardson said that will come with the Financial Plan, which is scheduled for the end of next year depending on the number of alternatives evaluated and on the extent of community involvement. Konopa asked, do we have to wait until that plan is in place before we adjust the transportation SDCs? She continued by explaining that currently the SDCs are only at 50 percent of the maximum allowable rate and it would be good to increase it before the Financial Plan is in place. Dennis will review the methodology to see if it could withstand any challenge if we were to increase it. The advantage of waiting would be that there would be a firm, defensible plan already in place; the disadvantage would be that there are projects that are not SDC-fundable.

Johnson asked if Richardson worked with Linn and Benton Counties on the plan. Richardson said that they were involved in the earlier community discussions and that City staff used what they heard in those forums to create the Transportation System Plan goals. During Phase Two (2), Linn and Benton Counties will be solicited again, along with the Council, the general community, and ODOT.

Richardson said she is excited about Phase Two (2), because in Phase One (1) there were a lot of vacant land and goals were set on how to use it. Since then, we have accomplished many of those goals and have learned from the 1997 TSP and Financial Plan. Staff wants to get more involved with Linn and Benton Counties in discussions about the transportation network in the urban fringe.

Staff asked for approval to begin developing the Transportation System Plan using the Transportation System Plan Vision, Goals, and Objectives. Council was supportive.

SPECIAL PUBLIC WORKS FUND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE GRANT

Richardson pointed out that this grant was included in the Council agenda packet although it was not listed on the agenda cover sheet.

MOTION: Reid moved to approve the resolution authorizing the City to submit a grant application to Oregon Economic and Community Development Department's Special Public Works Fund Program and a commitment to provide the required local match and Christman seconded it. The motion passed 5-0 and was designated Resolution No 5196.

RED LIGHT PHOTO ENFORCEMENT

Crime Analyst Pat Hurley described the process used by the workgroup for this project. The information he is presenting is the result of the public survey. The survey was disseminated in utility bills and was also placed at public points, such as City Hall, the Libraries, the Police Station, and on the City's website. The goal was to collect

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data on the public's perception of the risk, degree of the problem, the perceived benefit, public support or comments, and the most problematic intersections in the City. The survey was dispersed in February and March and cost \$1,600.

The survey results showed that the public picked eight of the top ten intersections that were identified in the data as the most problematic. This validated staff's conclusions and matched the current data, and also foreshadowed the accuracy of the survey.

The survey showed that 62 percent support, or strongly support, red light photo enforcement.

Hurley said that two methods to pay for the program are by a flat rate or per-citation. He recommends using the per-citation method. When the vendor reviewed the program in October, they concluded that putting the photo enforcement at a dangerous intersection would require at least two citations each day to make the program cost neutral. By Oregon Revised Statute, the City is allowed to place photo enforcement at 12 intersections. Staff suggests that we start with two intersections. Staff would like direction to request information from vendors. The number of intersections recommended would be part of the proposal.

Johnson asked what the Officers think of the program. Hurley said that opinions vary. The technology is helpful, but there is also fear that it will take the place of jobs.

Hurley said the data shows that there is usually a 19-30 percent reduction in accidents. The state of Virginia did a study on the impact to accidents and found that photo enforcement reduced t-bone accidents directly, but that rear-end collisions increased as drivers tried to avoid red lights. However, rear-end collisions are generally far less serious than t-bone collisions.

Reid asked if Municipal Court would have time to process more citations. Hurley said that the Municipal Court Judge is supportive. It would need to automate some Municipal Court processes, so the impact would be manageable.

MOTION: Konopa moved to authorize staff to do Requests For Proposals for a red light photo enforcement program. Johnson seconded the motion and it passed 5-0.

Hurley asked the Council to please let him know of any issues they want addressed in the Request For Proposal.

COUNCILOR COMMENTS

Johnson went to her first Neighborhood Watch meeting. The Northshore Airport Road intersection was discussed. She thanked Transportation System Analyst Ron Irish for helping her to sort out the issues.

Olsen said that Central School attracts responsible people to its neighborhood and attracts people to Albany's downtown. He wants to send a resolution to the school district to ask them to not close the school, based on what the City is trying to do through the Central Albany Revitalization Agency.

Konopa distributed an email from a former Albany Police Officer (see agenda file). She asked if the City could have an outside source come in to evaluate management and processes at the Police Department.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Hare had the opportunity to meet employees at the Police Department and that live in the community. He wants to express publicly his confidence in the Albany Police Department. His opinion is that we have good people there and they need to know we support them. He will make sure that the issues brought up will be looked into.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the work session was adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Reviewed by,

Mary A. Dibble
Administrative Assistant I

Susan Busbice
Assistant City Manager/Chief Financial Officer