

CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL (WORK SESSION)
Municipal Court Room
Monday, May 5, 2008
4:00 p.m.

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Dan Bedore called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Councilors absent: None.

BUSINESS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no business from the public.

PRESENTATION OF AWARDS FOR ALBANY STATION

Special Projects Coordinator Guy Mayes described three awards the City received for the Albany Multimodal Train Station.

Mayes passed around a framed award from the Oregon Downtown Development Association. Albany received the award last year for our downtown transit transportation. Mayes said recognition should go to the citizens of Albany and the Council for their vision.

Albany also received an award for engineering excellence from American Council of Engineering Companies. The competitors were primarily from Oregon and southwest Washington. Mayes explained that we were up against much larger cities, so winning sends a very positive message about Albany. Recognition should be shared with David Evans & Associates, Zimmer, Gunsul & Frasca, and Rob Dorntignacq Architect.

Councilor Jeff Christman arrived at the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

Mayes said that three weeks ago Albany received a first place construction award from Oregon Chapter American Concrete Institute for Excellence In Concrete. Competitors were from Oregon and southwest Washington. Recognition should be shared with James W. Fowler and Brown Contracting who constructed the project.

Councilor Ralph Reid asked, when will the platform be raised to the train level? Mayes said that is actually being discussed now because there may be some potential funding.

Councilor Floyd Collins asked about the construction schedule for the north end of the train station. Mayes said all the environmental documents have been submitted. Upon federal approval, staff can start to incur expenses for the design work.

Councilor Sharon Konopa said she had heard many compliments from other community leaders about the train station. She thanked Mayes for his hard work on the project.

Mayes said that it has become apparent to him that Albany may be the only city in Oregon, perhaps one of very few in the country that has all transportation localized: six trains, seven Amtrak busses, the Valley Retriever running from Bend to Newport and Newport to Portland, the Linn Shuttle, the Loop busses, and the Albany Transit System busses. There is a lot of activity going on and best of all, parking is free.

Collins said, the success of this project shows that we need a staff person to champion long-term projects to bring them to fruition. The success of the train station can be attributed to an employee with continuity and history. He thanked Mayes for a job well-done.

Councilor Dick Olsen said former Mayor Chuck McLaran should also be thanked for his work on this project.

COMMUNITY SURVEY REPORT

Public Information Officer/Management Assistant Marilyn Smith introduced Barbara Tull from Advanced Marketing Research. Tull gave a PowerPoint presentation (see agenda file). The Councilors also had copies of the survey (see agenda file).

Councilor Bessie Johnson said that knowing the demographics of the responders is useful.

The Council discussed the demographics in relation to the comments regarding growth. For example, 54 percent responded that growth is just right or too slow, which is a positive response.

Konopa said she reviewed the entire report and suggested the other Councilors do the same. She said by reading all the comments she was able to get a broader view. She said there were no comments to suggest our growth should increase to the point of Salem, Eugene, or Portland; so she thinks we should set policies to prevent it. Also, there were negative comments towards the Council. Other negative comments related to high crime, the homeless situation, and high utility bills. There were positive comments about the Albany downtown. There were split comments on the red light cameras and types of shopping.

Konopa asked, were the surveys distributed evenly throughout the Wards? Tull said yes they were, though when the surveys were returned the residents' Ward was not tracked. That could be difficult to do. Smith said Corvallis did so by assigning numbers to the surveys.

City Manager Wes Hare said that what we draw our conclusions from is important. Reading through the results, a person could ascertain that a Walmart is desired; but conversely, that it is not desired. The data can be understood both ways, depending on a person's bias. Christman agreed, explaining that it is a matter of interpretation. He too read through all the comments and does not agree with Konopa's summaries, except for the concern about crime. Overall, he said, he feels positive about how the Council is doing.

Bedore said he too came away feeling positive. Obviously, there are some issues that we can work on. This is a very important document for us going forward.

CHANGE FOR CHANGE AND TOTO PROGRAMS

Captain Ben Atchley thanked the Council for allowing him to explain the "TOTO" Program and the "Change for Change" Program.

TOTO Program

The TOTO Program is based on the Wizard of Oz movie, with the tag line "there is no place like home". Atchley said people become stranded in Albany for a variety of reasons such as running out of gas or car trouble. In fact, the transient that started the Saint Mary's Church fire years ago was stuck in Albany trying to find a bus ticket. If we could find a way to help folks move on, it not only helps them in the long run but is also a benefit to Albany because they do not become a draw on resources. If they were to stay, they would have to build a whole new support system.

Atchley said an anonymous donor approached the Community Services Consortium interested in a way to help people move on in their lives. From this the TOTO program was born. FISH of Albany was already providing bus tickets to people, so administratively they are already set up and have agreed to administer this program. The program works this way: If a social service agency or the police come across a person in Albany that is trying to get home, the agency employee or police officer will verify (usually by a phone call) that there is indeed a support system for that person in their home town. The police officer completes the verification form and the person takes it to FISH. In the event of an after-hours emergency, the police officer has access to TOTO cash funds so they can purchase what is needed (a bus ticket or a tank of gas, for example). The receipt is then sent to FISH with a copy of the referral form. Anytime TOTO provides gas, a driver's license and proof of insurance is required. Atchley said this program also makes it more difficult for those who are dishonestly soliciting help, because they have to go to the police station to fill out the paperwork. Atchley stressed that they are not handed cash; rather, the police officer or the FISH representative purchases the item needed. The program also tracks users to make sure there are not people repeatedly using the system.

Change for Change Program

Atchley explained that the idea behind this program is to discourage panhandling by encouraging donators to invest instead in programs dedicated to helping people help themselves. Atchley said, homelessness is not a crime, but panhandling is not the solution to homelessness either. The majority of panhandlers will use it for drugs or alcohol. Change for Change money boxes and posters will be placed at restaurants and stores. The money boxes will also have brochures that list the agencies in Albany where people can get help. Instead of giving money to the panhandler, the person can put it in the Change for Change box and hand them a brochure that tells them where to get help. The money will be funneled to the TOTO Fund, where in turn it will be used for people that truly need help.

Atchley will be presenting the program to the Albany Downtown Association next week.

Atchley said that Love, Inc. just elected their Board of Directors and will be appointing an Executive Director in the near future.

Atchley said he visited the boondoggle area today and found that there are some transient camps set up. They were able to get those folks to move on. It was in much better shape than two years ago. We are making positive changes and progress. Atchley said there was a 64 year old man who had a stroke six months ago. He is eligible for social security so they want to get him into some sort of housing and find him the resources to live independently. At 64, recovering from a stroke, he should not be living in the woods but he just didn't know how to get help.

Atchley is excited about these two programs because the best way to reduce panhandling is to educate the donators. Eventually the panhandlers will stop and those who truly need help can find it. Atchley gave an example of a panhandler who regularly works Albany and Salem, but actually lives in Dallas. Panhandling is his "weekend job."

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He targets stores where folks are likely to have change and to have just made large purchases, such as Costco. The areas they choose are not random, they are targeted. Continuing to give them money does not help them in the long run.

Olsen suggested the City create a line item for continued support of the programs. Atchley suggested he come back to the Council in six months to give an update to see how the money fleshes out.

RECESS TO EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO O.R.S 192.660 (h) TO DISCUSS PENDING LITIGATION

The meeting was recessed to Executive Session at 5:11 p.m.

RECONVENE

The meeting reconvened to the Regular Session at 6:20 p.m.

COUNCILOR COMMENTS

Konopa would like to see the survey comments posted on the website.

Reid would like to honor former Economic Director Dick Ebbert, who just passed away. Hare said that Parks & Recreation Director Ed Hodney had suggested a memorial tree planting, as there is a park near the Ebbert's home where he and his wife often walked. Discussion followed.

Collins said he got a letter from Mr. Byrne asking the City to address an Oxford House. The specific concern is how many folks can live in the house. Hare checked with the Building Department and learned that we can limit the number of occupants under the dangerous building code, but we have to be able to establish that the house in question is in a dangerous condition. The Oxford House has lots of square feet for the residents, so it does not apply. Hare said that City Attorney Jim Delapoe believes we do not have the tools in our code to deal with Byrne's complaint. Byrne, however, disagrees. The Council can make a policy decision to restrict the number of occupants that can live in a home while recognizing that Oxford Houses must be treated the same as other houses. At this point the City has responded to Byrne several times. The next step is that Delapoe will write another letter stating that density is not regulated at this time and until the Council adopts policy to restrict density, there is no violation.

Collins will be out of town on May 28.

Bedore attended a Parent Teacher Association meeting at Waverly Elementary School, where Police Officer Ken Fandrem gave a presentation on gangs. Fandrem would like to make the presentation to the Council.

Bedore said the Hackelman District clean up is taking place this weekend. Smith said that 15 members of the Oxford House have already signed up to help.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

Hare will be gone the next few weeks to Pakistan and on vacation.

Smith said there is a Teen Art Show in the hallway at City Hall. Last year the show was not too successful but this year, there were over 100 participants. The top pieces are on display now. Three awards and a "People's Choice" award will be presented on May 28. The Arts Commission wanted to create an additional award and asked the Council and Mayor to vote on their collective favorite. Voting expires May 22.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no other business, the Work Session adjourned at 6:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary A. Dibble, CMC
Deputy City Clerk

Reviewed by,

Stewart Taylor
Finance Director