



MINUTES

RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING

Tuesday, January 24, 2023

Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers
625 Swift Boulevard

City Council Workshop Meeting - 6:00 p.m.

Mayor Christensen called the City Council workshop meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Attendance: Mayor Christensen, Mayor Pro Tem Richardson, and Councilmembers Kent, VanDyke and Whitten. Councilmembers Jones and Lukson were absent.

Also present were City Manager Amundson, Deputy City Manager Schiessl, Assistant City Manager Florence, City Attorney Kintzley, Fire Chief Huntington, Chief of Police Clary, Development Services Director Jensen, Energy Services Director Whitney, Finance Director Allen, Parks & Public Facilities Director Hester, and City Clerk Rogers.

Agenda Items

1. Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation Memorandum of Understanding & TRIDEC Shoreline Reconveyance Initiative Update

Deputy City Manager Schiessl introduced David Reeploeg, Vice President for Federal Programs at TRIDEC and Executive Director of Hanford Communities.

Mr. Reeploeg described past and current efforts regarding the Columbia River Shoreline Reconveyance project. Local governments involved with the effort include the cities of Richland, Kennewick, Pasco, along with the counties of Benton and Franklin and the Port of Pasco. The United States Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) own much of the shoreline in the Tri-Cities, and the local government entities generally lease the property from the Corps to be used for recreational purposes. Under the current arrangement, the Corps is responsible for flood control and related liability. Mr. Reeploeg identified some of the challenges faced by local agencies in managing property owned by the federal government.

Since June 2021, TRIDEC has engaged in monthly meetings with the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR) to identify a path forward for shoreline reconveyance. Mr. Reeploeg explained that next steps include reviewing the existing Memorandum of Understanding and the proposed Memorandum of Agreement with CTUIR, identify and mutually agree on portions of the shoreline eligible for transfer to the CTUIR, and pursue federal legislation that would transfer those identified portions of the shoreline to CTUIR.

Mr. Reeploeg concluded by sharing that TRIDEC is very pleased with the partnership and engagement with CTUIR.

After the high-level report from Mr. Reeploeg, Deputy City Manager Schiessl described Richland's participation in the shoreline reconveyance effort, including the three (3) property requests included by the City in the draft reconveyance proposal. The property requests are the result of citizen feedback received from public forums.

Deputy City Manager Schiessl explained that the City has a long-standing MOU with the CTUIR which describes a variety of projects, including joint economic development projects. The proposed MOA currently sought by CTUIR, which is solely related to shoreline reconveyance, would supplement the existing MOU, not replace it. Staff will review to ensure no conflicts exist between the two before the MOA is provided to Council for consideration.

Deputy City Manager Schiessl also shared that Mayor Pro Tem Richardson and Councilmember Kent recently had a positive and productive meeting with CTUIR, and that CTUIR will have similar discussions with other local government entities affiliated with the shoreline reconveyance.

Mayor Christensen expressed an interest in including fire suppression responsibility in the MOA. Councilmember Kent agreed a safety component should be included in the MOA, then spoke positively about the proposed MOA approach with CTUIR and the land reconveyance proposal. At the conclusion of the presentation, Council provided comments and engaged in a question-and-answer session with Deputy City Manager Schiessl and Mr. Reeploeg.

2. Tri-Cities Animal Shelter Update

Zack Ratkai, City of Pasco Administrative and Community Services Director and Animal Services Division Director, provided an update on the Tri-Cities Animal Control Authority (ACA). Pasco is the operating jurisdiction for the ACA, and brought animal control services in house effective July 16, 2022 after the temporary emergency contract with the Benton-Franklin Humane Society expired. Mr. Ratkai provided an overview of challenges, progress and milestones realized after taking control of animal shelter operations.

Challenges included staff recruitment/retention, operations, fleet repairs, and outbreak of disease among animals. Progress included professionalization of staff, adoption of new standards and new operating procedures for animal intake, customer service, kennel care and field operations. Milestones included public communication regarding disease, establishment of weekly veterinary care, baseline staffing levels, and an annual baseline budget of approximately \$2,000,000 for operations and personnel. Mr. Ratkai announced that Ben Zigan was hired by Pasco to serve as the shelter manager. Mr. Ratkai provided an overview of Mr. Zigan's qualifications, responsibilities, and duties as Tri-Cities Animal Shelter (TCAS) manager.

Next, Mr. Ratkai recapped on the ground-breaking ceremony for the new animal control facility and provided sketches of the facility. The new shelter will occupy 10,000 square feet and cost approximately \$4.3 million to construct, with expenditures to be equally

divided between the cities of Pasco, Richland and Kennewick. Construction of the new animal shelter is expected to be complete before the end of 2023.

Mr. Ratkai responded to a series of Council inquiries regarding capacity in the new shelter, the sustainability of a city-managed shelter, estimated construction completion timeframe, standardization of pet-adoption pricing, and public outreach.

At City Manager Amundson's request, Mr. Ratkai provided an overview of the Tri-City Animal Control Authority Board operations and the role of the city managers. Mr. Ratkai added that the current Board will examine the existing interlocal agreement to determine if the agreement is appropriate or needs amending to support a city-led model.

Councilmember VanDyke stated it would be beneficial for citizens of Tri-Cities to receive information on the creation of the Tri-Cities animal shelter and how the City of Pasco came to be the administrative jurisdiction. Mr. Ratkai replied that Pasco staff will produce the information requested.

3. Advanced Meter Infrastructure (AMI) Project Update

Energy Services Director Whitney explained the functions, components, deployment timeline, implementation, and costs of the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) project. Contracted meter installers began replacing electric meters at customer locations in June 2022. The new advanced meters deliver usage information remotely over a secured network that is used to calculate billing. Staff also receive alerts, which allows for faster response times during service disruptions. Customers may view and monitor their energy and water usage and sign up for electronic notifications and alerts through the AMI Customer Portal.

Energy Services Director Whitney reported on a billing error impacting 834 bills in the November/December 2022 timeframe. Customers were incorrectly billed one tenth of the actual electric consumption. The cause of the error has been identified and remedied, but the billing must be corrected. Finance Director Brandon Allen concurred that 834 total bills, or 550 accounts, were impacted by the billing error with an estimated \$167,000 in corrections. The average bill for residential is \$187 and small commercial is \$208. Residential customers who are on an equalized payment plan will not be affected by the billing error since their monthly payment is consistent throughout a 12-month billing period. Finance Director Allen provided an overview of options to remedy the billing issue.

Energy Services Director Whitney shared that electric meter installations will be complete by the end of February, and water meter installation will be complete by the end of June. Mayor Pro Tem Richardson inquired if the meter reader position will be eliminated once meter installation is complete. Energy Services Director Whitney replied that the position will be eliminated once all AMI meters have been installed.

The next step in the AMI project is to solicit proposals from vendors to upgrade the utility billing system, including the customer portal and phone queue systems. City Manager

Amundson added that funding is budgeted for the utility software upgrade. Council offered comments and engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff.

4. HOME-ARP Presentation and Update

Development Services Director Jensen and CDBG/HOME Program Administrator Toni Lehman jointly reported on the HOME-American Rescue Plan (ARP) Updates.

Richland is the lead agency for the Tri-Cities HOME Consortium, which received \$2.4 million from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be expended by September 30, 2030. HOME-ARP funds must be used primarily to benefit individuals or families experiencing homelessness, and those who are at-risk of becoming homeless, fleeing or attempting to flee violence, and other populations. Cloudburst Consulting Group has been retained to serve as a HOME-ARP consultant.

Development Services Director Jensen provided an overview of major housing trends in the Tri-Cities, housing costs over time for renters and owners, housing affordability in Benton and Franklin counties, general housing availability, area median income (AMI) within the Tri-Cities, housing challenges for those below 30% median income, populations experiencing homelessness, available housing programs, individuals at risk of homelessness, homelessness among school-aged children, consultation themes and findings, and next steps for HOME-ARP funding. Development Services Director Jensen also provided a timeframe for the HOME-ARP plan.

CDBG/HOME Administrator Lehman provided an overview of the four (4) eligible HOME-ARP activities as follows:

- Production or Preservation of Affordable Housing
- Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)
- Supportive Services, Homeless Prevention Services, and Housing Counseling
- Purchase and Development of Non-Congregate Shelter

Detailed information can be found in the PowerPoint presentation included in the agenda packet. City Manager Amundson shared that Benton County might have capacity for a low-barrier shelter in one of its recently acquired facilities, but discussions are still in the early phases. Council engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff.

5. Corps of Engineers Yakima Delta Project Update - Bateman Island Causeway

Deputy City Manager Schiessl provided a high-level overview on the United States Army Corps of Engineers' (Corps) Yakima Delta Habitat Enhancement Project, which aims to improve water quality at the mouth of the Yakim River by eliminating the causeway to Bateman Island. The Project, which is receiving Section 1135 funds from the federal government, consists of a complete removal of the causeway connecting the shoreline to Bateman Island to re-route a portion of the Yakima River around the south side of Bateman Island.

The City leases the shoreline and Bateman Island from the Corps as property included within a recreational lease. The City is also responsible for the management of this federal land, including wildland fire suppression. Additionally, the City operates a public boat launch and marina downstream of the causeway. The tentatively selected plan (TSP) issued by the Corps does not currently include any mitigation related to the impact on the City of causeway removal.

A public comment period will begin, along with initiation of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process, on January 30, 2023 and conclude on March 10, 2023. The TSP will include an integrated environmental assessment with the assumption that there be a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Despite numerous requests, the City has not been included in project discussions nor received data which supports the TSP. Viable mitigation options include relocation, purchase or protection of the marina. There is concern that the river current resulting from removal of the causeway will be detrimental to marina operations.

Deputy City Manager Schiessl expressed frustration over the lack of inter-governmental cooperation with the Corps on this project, and suggested engaging state and federal elected officials in the conversation. Because the City was not included in informal project discussions prior to the initiation of NEPA, the City will seek to execute professional service agreements to bring on subject matter experts in marine engineering to provide appropriate technical comments for the record and preserve opportunities for appeal.

Councilmember Kent stated that she supports the City's decision to pursue technical expertise to advocate on behalf of the City in the Yakima Delta Project. Mayor Christensen stated the City should be prepared to protect the City's businesses and assets affected by the Yakim Delta Project.

Council recessed at 8:23 p.m.

Executive Session

Executive Session Per RCW 42.30.110(b): To consider the selection or site or the acquisition of real estate by lease or purchase when public knowledge regarding such consideration would cause a likelihood of increased price (15 min)

COUNCIL ENTERED INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION AT 8:37 P.M.

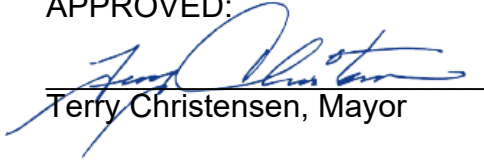
Individuals present for the executive session included Mayor Christensen, Mayor Pro Tem Richardson, and Councilmembers Kent, VanDyke and Whitten. Others present included City Manager Amundson, Deputy City Manager Schiessl, Assistant City Manager Florence and City Attorney Kintzley.

Council exited executive session at 8:52 p.m.

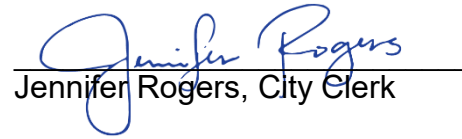
Adjournment

Mayor Christensen adjourned the meeting at 8:52 p.m.

APPROVED:


Terry Christensen, Mayor

ATTEST:


Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: February 7, 2023

DATE PUBLISHED: February 8, 2023