



## **MINUTES**

### **RICHLAND CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**

**Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

**Richland City Hall ~ Council Chambers  
625 Swift Boulevard**

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#### **City Council Regular Meeting - 6:00 p.m.**

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

#### **Welcome and Roll Call**

Mayor Christensen welcomed those in the audience and expressed appreciation for their attendance.

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

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

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

Mayor Christensen led the Council and audience in the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

#### **Approval of Agenda**

**COUNCILMEMBER JONES MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS PUBLISHED. MOTION CARRIED 7-0.**

#### **Presentations**

##### **1. Swearing-In of Richland Police Officer Eduardo Martinez**

Chief of Police Clary introduced newly commissioned Police Officer Eduardo Martinez and administered the Oath of Office. Following the swearing-in of Officer Martinez, Monica Malhan, President of the Richland Police Department Foundation, presented Officer Martinez with a welcome basket on behalf of the Richland Police Department Foundation and welcomed him to the community.

##### **2. Benton Resource Initiative Grant**

Lori Mattson, President & CEO of Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce, announced

the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce entered into an agreement with Benton County on June 2022 in support of the Benton Resource Initiative (BRI) grant program. Ms. Mattson explained that BRI, which launched on October 1, 2022, is designed to provide grant assistance to local small businesses in Benton County that were negatively impacted by COVID-19.

BRI offers businesses five (5) grant funding options consistent with the categories outlined by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). Contingent on qualification requirements, local small businesses may be eligible to receive \$3,000 to \$30,000 in grant funds.

Ms. Mattson briefly touched on applicant demographics and described the various business sectors represented. Ms. Mattson also discussed business eligibility requirements. Detailed information, including how to apply for a BRI grant, is included in Ms. Mattson's PowerPoint presentation and at [bentonbri.com](https://bentonbri.com).

In addition to the BRI, the Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce has a full-time Business Resource Navigator whose primary role is to connect business owners with available resources.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Ms. Mattson responded to questions from Council.

### 3. 2022 Development Services Year In Review

With the aid of a PowerPoint presentation, Development Services Director Jensen provided the annual department update on activities handled by the Development Services Department in 2022. Activities included: construction, planning, zoning, annexation, land uses, CDBG/HOME grants, business license reserve funds, and economic development projects. Following the presentation, Council engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff.

### 4. Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) Update

Deputy City Manager Schiessl provided an update on the AMI project with a focus on project challenges associated with the transition phase of the meters, and the steps taken to remedy the challenges.

Deputy City Manager Schiessl shared two main reasons why some customer bills have been higher than anticipated. The first reason is because hundreds of meters were billed based on estimated readings instead of actual readings. Estimates used for utility billing generally tie to the customer's usage last year during the same month. Because November and December were not as cold in 2021 as they were in 2022, the bills that were issued based on 2021 estimates reflected much lower usage. When the actual readings were finally billed, the difference between estimated consumption and actual consumption was significant in many cases, causing a higher than average payment due.

The second reason bills are reporting higher than average is because mechanical meters slow over time, which prevents capturing accurate consumption data. When an old mechanical meter is upgraded to a digital meter, an accurate capture of usage data is transmitted for billing.

In addition to explaining the basis behind the higher than average bills, Deputy City Manager Schiessl thanked customers for their patience as the City continues to remedy technological issues identified during the implementation process. Installation of new equipment is on hold until existing issues are remedied. The City is committed to restoring customer trust and meeting expectations by prioritizing excellent service to customers affected by meter reading errors.

Additional information can be found in Deputy City Manager Schiessl's PowerPoint presentation and by visiting the City's website ([City of Richland AMI ClearGov](#)). City Manager Amundson added that separate from the utility bill, he will personally compose a letter to be mailed to each utility customer with an update on the AMI project. Council offered comments and suggestions then engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff.

## **Public Hearing**

City Clerk Rogers read the Public Hearing and Public Comments procedures.

### **5. Vacating a Portion of the Windmill Road Right-of-Way**

Mayor Christensen opened and closed the public hearing at 7:26 p.m. No testimony was offered.

## **Public Comments**

The following individuals provided public comments:

- Reverend Jane Schmoetzer - 1322 Kimball Avenue, Richland, WA: Reverend Schmoetzer, Rector/Senior Pastor of All Saints' Episcopal Church, spoke of the church's experience serving as an emergency warming shelter from December 22, 2022 through January 2, 2023. Pastor Schmoetzer stated most daytime shelters were closed during the holiday season which left those in need of shelter with no alternatives.

Pastor Schmoetzer spoke highly of the volunteerism displayed by congregants and community members. In conclusion, Reverend Schmoetzer stated the church intends to partner with other local churches and agencies to develop a response to assist those in need of shelter.

- Julie Wiley - 1322 Kimball Avenue, Richland, WA: Ms. Wiley, Senior Warden of All Saint's Episcopal Church, spoke of the church's experience as a recent emergency

warming center. Ms. Wiley asked the City to collaborate with All Saints' Episcopal Church in establishing long-term solutions for the community's homeless population.

- Ryan Tucker - 24907 Dallas Road, Richland, WA: Mr. Tucker asked Richland City Council to favorably consider his petition for annexation into the city limits. Mr. Tucker owns 1.83 acres of property legally described as Lot 3 pf Short Plat 739 that is contiguous to the City of Richland. Mr. Tucker is actively pursuing the annexation process.
- Cameron Anderson - 319 Shaw, Richland, WA: Mr. Anderson stated that the City completed a road resurfacing project in his neighborhood in August 2022, but the aggregate was not cleaned up after completion of the project. Mr. Anderson shared that he has attempted to get the attention of city staff on this issue to no avail. Mr. Anderson brought a canister of aggregate swept from the front of his residence to show to City Council, and asked for assistance. Lastly, Mr. Anderson spoke highly of the improved customer service in the City's building inspection division.

### **Consent Calendar**

City Clerk Rogers read the Consent Calendar as follows:

### **Minutes**

6. Approval of the February 7, 2023 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes

### **Ordinances - First Reading**

See Items of Business.

### **Ordinances - Second Reading & Passage**

None.

### **Resolutions - Adoption**

7. Resolution No. 2023-15, Authorizing a Property Development, Right-of-Way Improvements, and Right-of-Way Vacation Agreement with Rowe Holdings LLC for 1531 Tapteal Drive
8. Resolution No. 2023-20, Authorizing Award of Bid for the Haines Avenue and Goethals Drive Stormwater Quality Retrofit
9. Resolution No. 2023-21, Authorizing a Consultant Agreement with Fitch & Associates, LLC for a Standards of Cover Study

10. Resolution No. 2023-23, Approving the Final Plat of Skyline South
11. Resolution No. 2023-24, Authorizing the Circulation of a Petition Proposing Annexation of 1,643 Acres in the North Horn Rapids Industrial Park
12. Resolution No. 2023-25, Authorizing a Sixth Amendment to the Consultant Agreement with Shannon & Wilson, Inc. for Wetland Monitoring
13. Resolution No. 2023-26, Accepting a Request for Annexation of 1.83 Acres (Tucker)
14. Resolution No. 2023-27, Authorizing Application and Acceptance for Professional Development Grants from the Washington State Library
15. Resolution No. 2023-28, Authorizing Application and Acceptance for Online Reading Services Grant from the Washington State Library
16. Resolution No. 2023-29, Authorizing a Consultant Agreement with Obsidian Forensics for Behavioral Health Services

#### **Items - Approval**

None.

#### **Expenditures - Approval**

17. Expenditures from January 1, 2023 to January 31, 2023 for \$24,058,914.14 including Travel Check Nos. 20254-20260, Accounts Payable Check Nos. 308002-308624, Accounts Payable Wire Nos. 9364-9408, Payroll Wires & ACH Nos. 13150-13198 Payroll Direct Deposit & Check Nos. 202906-203985, and Pension Check Nos. 6366-6390

**MAYOR CHRISTENSEN MOVED AND MAYOR PRO TEM RICHARDSON SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AS PUBLISHED. MOTION CARRIED 7-0.**

#### **Items of Business**

18. Ordinance No. 2023-03, Vacating a Portion of Windmill Road Right-of-Way and Accepting a Dedication Deed for New Windmill Road Right-of-Way

Transportation & Development Manager D'Allesandro provided an overview of the proposed right-of-way vacation and dedication of new Windmill Road right-of-way that mirrored the details provided in the staff report and associated ordinance.

**MAYOR CHRISTENSEN MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER WHITTEN SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE ORDINANCE NO. 2023-03, VACATING A PORTION OF WINDMILL ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY AND ACCEPTING A DEDICATION DEED FOR**

**NEW WINDMILL ROAD RIGHT-OF-WAY FOR FIRST READING, BY TITLE ONLY.  
MOTION CARRIED 7-0.**

19. Resolution No. 2023-22, Authorizing an Application for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Fire Chief Huntington introduced Deputy Fire Chief Randy Aust, who provided historical background regarding the SAFER grant program. The objectives of the SAFER grant program are to assist local fire departments with staffing and deployment capabilities to respond to emergencies so that communities have adequate protection from fire and fire-related hazards.

In 2018, the City was awarded a three-year SAFER grant to assist with staffing Fire Station 75. The City reapplied for a SAFER grant in 2020 and 2021 but was successful. FEMA will accept Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 SAFER grant applications February 13, 2023 through March 17, 2023, with an anticipated award date starting June 2, 2023 and no later than September 30, 2023. There is no cost share or match limit for the 2022 SAFER grant program.

After Deputy Chief Aust concluded, Chief Huntington reviewed staff's request to submit an application to receive SAFER funding to staff future Fire Station 76 in Badger Mountain South. Next, Chief Huntington provided an overview of the monthly household utility fee rate projections for 2024 - 2028 with and without SAFER funding. The current household rate will hold at \$10 per month through 2023.

Council engaged in a question-and-answer session with staff.

**MAYOR CHRISTENSEN MOVED AND COUNCILMEMBER LUKSON SECONDED THE MOTION TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2023-22, AUTHORIZING AN APPLICATION FOR A STAFFING FOR ADEQUATE FIRE AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE (SAFER) GRANT FROM THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT TEAM (FEMA). MOTION CARRIED 7-0.**

**Reports and Comments**

*City Manager*

City Manager Amundson thanked the City Council for providing input and feedback regarding the AMI project, and committed to providing a progress report in the near future. In the meantime, staff will continue to work on improving communications with customers.

*City Council*

Councilmember Kent expressed anticipation for the upcoming Strategic Planning retreat. Next, Councilmember Kent reported that at a recent Richland Public Library board

meeting, board members emphasized the continued need for library services, including in the Badger Mountain South area.

Councilmember Lukson shared that he recently attended a Benton-Franklin Council of Governments meeting, and that the City has been awarded funding for downtown improvements projects.

Councilmember VanDyke reported that he recently attended meetings of the Utility Advisory Committee and Visit Tri-Cities, and asked representatives of each body to provide an update at a future council meeting.

Councilmember Whitten shared that he has been involved professionally in implementing projects similar in magnitude to the City's AMI project and noted that it is exceedingly unlikely to do so without facing obstacles and challenges. Councilmember Whitten spoke positively of staff's customer service response to the AMI challenges and appreciation for staff's willingness to take accountability for the unexpected challenges.

Councilmember Jones and Mayor Pro Tem Richardson had no comments.

#### *Mayor*

Mayor Christensen spoke in favor of the City providing support and assistance to the All Saints' Episcopal Church regarding services offered to the homeless population during the winter months.

#### **Adjournment**

Mayor Christensen adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

APPROVED:

  
Terry Christensen, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Jennifer Rogers, City Clerk

DATE APPROVED: March 7, 2023

DATE PUBLISHED: March 8, 2023