

Cottage Grove City Council
Work Session Minutes
March 14, 2016

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Thomas Munroe called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

COUNCIL PRESENT: Mayor Thomas Munroe, City Councilors Jake Boone, Jeff Gowing (6:43), Garland Burback, Amy Slay and Mike Fleck

ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: City Manager Richard Meyers, Community Development Director Howard Schesser and City Recorder Trudy Borrevik

OTHERS PRESENT: YAC Representative Ian Dukes

MEDIA PRESENT: Jon Stinnett, The Sentinel

City Manager, Richard Meyers, handed out an extensive list of potential goals and priorities for the Council to review. He said the purpose of the work session was not to talk in depth about each of the items, but to determine which ones were the Council's priorities.

Urban Renewal Districts

Richard talked about urban renewal districts and what they were and how they worked. He said potential projects for an urban renewal district were the Main Street Refinement Plan, bridges, downtown parking lots, Armory and downtown underground utilities.

Richard also spoke about Local Improvement Districts (LID) and how they worked and what they could be used for.

Councilor Fleck asked about non-remonstrance and when they were required. He also asked about pockets or individual properties being included in an urban renewal district.

Richard explained when non-remonstrance's were used.

Recreational Marijuana Tax

Richard talked about a three percent recreational marijuana tax and if Council wanted to put it on the November ballot.

City Liens in First Position

Richard talked about amending the City Charter to put liens in a first position. He said currently when the City put liens on property, they were in the last position. He said any changes to the Charter had to go on the ballot. If Council was interested, staff could direct the City Attorney to research the matter to see if it would work for Cottage Grove.

Limbo Houses or Zombie Properties

Richard said these were houses that were abandoned and the owners walked away from the property and no one was responsible until the property was sold at a Sheriff's auction or repossessed by the lending institution.

Nuisance Abatements

Richard said the City was working to include in the budget a part-time nuisance abatement officer to handle complaints and process abatements.

Sign Code Revision

Richard said the sign code was older than fifteen years and needed to be updated. He said it had liability associated with it if it weren't addressed.

Howard said the biggest issue with the sign code was it wasn't content neutral and limited the City.

Road Improvements

Richard said the last couple of winters had been bad on the roads and the gas tax money barely did maintenance. He asked if they wanted to look at bonding or a local improvement district to repair roads. He commented about some of the streets in town.

Sidewalks

Richard said Council had talked about sidewalks and places where they were needed desperately.

Gas Tax

Richard said Council had talked about gas tax. He said the City had been threatened when the gas tax was implemented that it better not be more than three cents per gallon or the petroleum institute would fight it and put on the ballot. He asked if Council were interested in looking into increasing the gas tax.

Yard Debris Service/Backyard Burning

Richard said something would be coming from LRAPA's Advisory Board regarding backyard burning. He said it might be forced on the City to make a decision one way or the other. He said if we did backyard burning, did we want to increase the yard debris, the limb and leaf pick up and have a weekly service that's available. He said it could be started before the population reached 10,000 and would still be counted as a new service once the population reached 10,000. He said it would have costs associated with it.

Treated Effluent/Steps to Expand Irrigation

Richard said the City didn't currently have enough land at the golf course to handle all the

effluent discharge. He asked if Council wanted to look at expanding the effluent irrigation to Bohemia, Coiner and Trailhead parks.

Expanding Water Treatment Plant

Richard said the Water Treatment Plant needed a \$2M expansion within the next five to ten years.

Radio Meter Reading

Richard said currently there were two public works employees who read meters in town by hand for two weeks every month. He said using a radio system, the meters could be read by either a truck driving around or tapping into the WiFi system to read the meters. He said it would allow finance staff to have access to meters from City Hall. He said it would allow the public works employees to work on other projects. He said the equipment wasn't cheap but all the new meters being installed were adaptable for radio readings.

Fiber System

Richard asked if Council wanted to continue expanding the fiber system.

Homelessness/Transients

Richard said the City was currently relying on the non-profits to address the issue and if that was something they wanted to continue or did they want the City to get involved in a more active role.

Mayor Munroe asked about the water treatment plant and if there would be a problem trying to expand.

Richard said the City had options regarding water rights as all the ones from up river hadn't been transferred yet. He talked about Water Watch and said the 2017 Legislative session would probably fix it before it was resolved in court.

Councilor Slay said regarding the homeless and transient issue, Richard had said the City might have to take a more active role, and asked what that looked like.

Richard said he didn't know but had reached out to other smaller cities to see what they were doing. He said the only response the City received was from Brookings and they were doing the same kind of things Cottage Grove was by providing food, Beds for Freezing Nights and Community Sharing.

Councilor Slay said it was hard to prioritize without having more information. She asked if it were possible to amend the Charter to include both placing liens in first position and how to deal with limbo houses.

Richard said the limbo houses wouldn't go in the Charter; it would be an ordinance stating someone had to have water and sewer to reside in a house. He asked if they wanted to spend the time to see if there was anything else that needed to go in the Charter.

Councilor Slay said if the City was going to have an Attorney involved, that maybe more than one issue should be addressed.

Councilor Boone said his top three priorities were fiber, updating the sign code and limbo houses. He felt a lot of problems the City was facing involved the economy and fiber was the best chance at changing that.

Councilor Roberts said he lived downtown and would like to see the alleys lit up more. He said there was a lot of criminal activity in the alleys and it would be nice to see them cleaned up.

Richard said a lot of the alleys were impassible and asked if more than lighting needed to be upgraded to allow the police vehicles to drive down the alleys.

Mayor Munroe asked if the alleys were addressed in the Downtown Refinement Plan.

Richard said there had been some discussion in previous years about making the alleys more user friendly.

Councilor Roberts asked about the sidewalks downtown.

Richard said they were included in the Downtown Refinement Plan. He said the City had a company do some “shaving” on the sidewalk in front of Stacys Covered Bridge Restaurant. He said the City had received a quote to do ten other sidewalk areas in the downtown and the EBID had offered to pay up to \$4,000 to repair the sidewalks in the downtown area.

Councilor Burback said his priorities were fiber, bonding for roads and amending the Charter to allow the City’s liens to be in first place.

Councilor Fleck asked if the City did an urban renewal for the downtown area if all the projects would be included, such as alleys, downtown plan, the bridge, etc.

Richard said an urban renewal district could include them all, but said now wouldn’t be the time to decide which ones should be included. He said at a later date, Council could start the process to decide which to include and not to include.

Councilor Fleck asked if it would be one district.

Richard said it would be one district, he wouldn’t suggest doing multiple districts or expanding a district.

Councilor Fleck asked if any of the Lane County cities were going forward with the recreational marijuana tax.

Richard said he wasn’t sure if any of the cities in Lane County were but mentioned several cities in the State that were.

Councilor Fleck said he would be in favor of the marijuana tax if other cities in Lane County were, he wouldn't want to make it unfair to the local businesses.

Councilor Fleck talked about putting liens in a first position. He said for economic development the City would not want to be in a first lien position because the property owner couldn't apply for a loan themselves and provided an example.

Councilor Fleck asked if there were a hybrid for collector and arterial streets to go to a bond and residential streets were covered by LIDs.

Richard said Council could do whatever they wanted.

Councilor Fleck asked about the radio meter and if customers would save any money by the City using the radio meters.

Richard said it would depend on the initial investment costs if any savings would be seen by the customers.

Councilor Fleck said he wouldn't support that unless some real benefit could be shown in less than five years.

Councilor Fleck said his priorities were fiber, urban renewal district and road improvements. He said regarding road improvements, he would be in favor of going out for a bond and then it would be the citizen's choice.

Mayor Munroe commented about the gas tax and what the State and Federal government were looking at as far as increases.

Mayor Munroe asked for clarification of what was meant by nuisance abatement. He said there were codes on the books currently that weren't enforced.

Richard said the position would be doing enforcement on nuisance issues. He said there were summer interns that currently did just the tall weed nuisance abatements.

Mayor Munroe said vacant houses should be included in the abatement. He said when the community awareness meeting was held, he pointed out the fact that neighbors needed to keep an eye on the empty homes and if nothing else mow the yards to make it look like someone was living there.

Councilor Slay said that was considered trespassing and it would be asking people to put themselves at risk of being held responsible.

Councilor Boone said his priorities had changed and the bridge on Main Street was his first priority.

Councilor Slay asked if a bond could cover 6th Street.

Richard said the bond could cover whatever the Council wanted to include but had to go to a vote of the citizens. He reminded Council that whatever streets they included in a bond, the water and sewer would have to pay for repairing the utilities and storm water underneath those streets. He said all the projects included in the budget added up to about \$58M.

Councilor Boone asked if there were a way to put on the ballot, some kind of survey asking the citizens which items they wanted to see done first.

Richard said they could do an advisory vote; it had been done in the past. He asked if that would be a good way to do a survey.

Discussion was held on how to get citizen input on the Council's priorities. The Council priorities were also discussed and what each Councilor felt was their top priority.

Councilor Roberts – Police
Councilor Boone – Sign Code Update
Councilor Gowing – Public Safety
Councilor Burbach – Fiber & Road Improvements
Councilor Slay – Road Improvements
Councilor Fleck – Road Improvements/Infrastructure
Mayor Munroe – Code Enforcement

There being no further business, Mayor Munroe adjourned the meeting at 7:01 pm.

Trudy Borrevik, City Recorder

Thomas C. Munroe, Mayor