

COTTAGE GROVE CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 28, 2022

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Jeff Gowing called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

ROLL CALL

City Recorder Mindy Roberts called the roll. The following were

PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: Mayor Gowing, Councilors Mike Fleck, Kenneth Michael Roberts, and Chalice Savage

PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING: Councilor Greg Ervin, Jon Stinnett, and Candace Solesbee

COUNCIL ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS: City Manager Richard Meyers, Police Chief Scott Shepherd, and City Recorder Mindy Roberts

STAFF PRESENT VIA GOTOMEETING: Assistant to the City Manager Jake Boone, Public Works & Development Director Faye Stewart, and Finance Director Roberta Likens

CITY ATTORNEY: None

MEDIA PRESENT: Damien Sherwood, The Sentinel

ITEMS ADDED TO THE AGENDA

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILOR FLECK AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR SOLESBEE TO ADD A PROCLAMATION TO THE AGENDA

The vote on the motion was as follows:

VOTE	Councilor Roberts	Councilor Stinnett	Councilor Savage	Councilor Fleck	Councilor Solesbee	Councilor Ervin	Mayor Gowing
AYES	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NAYS							
ABSTAIN							

Mayor Gowing announced the motion carried and the Proclamation will be read under item number seven, Resolutions and Ordinances.

APPEARANCE OF INTERESTED CITIZENS FOR ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Bonnie Sono 33739 Cea Jack Rd, Cottage Grove, Oregon read a letter on behalf of a resident who lives locally but wished to remain anonymous. The letter she read referenced the COVID vaccine and the adverse reactions the author and the author's mother experienced.

Andrew Kalloch 2599 Van Ness, Eugene, Oregon said that he is a candidate for Congress in the fourth district. He said he is 37 years old, has three children under the age of five and feels lucky to be raising his children here. He said we need a new generation and approach to leadership in Congress to tackle the challenges. He said his leadership is one that is rooted in humility and integrity. He added that he will be available to answer questions about his candidacy and experience after the meeting.

Johanna Zee 316 Quincy Ave., Cottage Grove, Oregon said she wants Councilor Fleck to exclude himself from any decision making process on City Council with anything related to COVID. She said that he has a conflict of interest as the Executive Director of a nonprofit that has received millions of dollars in grant money during the pandemic, he is a partner with United Way, a radical organization, he is on the budget committee for the School District which took in over 9 million dollars to mask and vaccinate the kids, and he sits on the Advisory Committee of Lane County Public Health. She said Councilor Fleck is the one benefitting from keeping the narrative going and he cannot ethically make decisions for the City while he is invested in maintaining the lies and this also applies to anyone who has immediate family members a part of these organizations. She continued by saying she would like all vaccines to be stopped, mandates discontinued, and the discontinuation of discrimination based on medical status. She said we know the truth and have an obligation to put the truth forward to help people.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

None

CONSENT AGENDA

- (a) Approval of February 7, 2022 Work Session Minutes
- (b) Approval of February 11, 2022 Agenda Session Minutes
- (c) Approval of February 14, 2022 Council Meeting Minutes

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILOR FLECK AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR ERVIN TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Gowing asked if there was any discussion, seeing none he called the vote.

The vote on the motion was as follows:

VOTE	Councilor Roberts	Councilor Stinnett	Councilor Savage	Councilor Fleck	Councilor Solesbee	Councilor Ervin	Mayor Gowing
AYES	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NAYS							
ABSTAIN							

Mayor Gowing announced the motion carried.

RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES

- (a) Proclamation of Support for the People of Ukraine

Mayor Gowing read the proclamation out loud.

BUSINESS FROM THE CITY COUNCIL

- (a) Award of Engineer of Record Contracts

Public Works & Development Director Faye Stewart explained to Council that prior to the retirement of the City Engineer on December 23, 2021 he had been researching the options for Engineering Services and had posted the position for recruitment. He said over the past five years there have been five postings for positions in the engineering division and the demand for individuals in the profession far exceeds the amount of available applicants. He said the City budget calls for three full time employees and operational expenses and we currently have one full time employee and a part time employee working six hours per week. He added that the current staffing level is causing delays in project designs, application reviews, and approvals of project management. He said the difficulty of filling vacant positions is still a reality and with legal counsel consultation he created a Request for Proposal for a City Engineer of Record. He stated that two responses were received, one from West Yost and the second from Branch Engineering and both met the RFP requirements. He said staff is recommending that Council approve the two Engineer of Record contracts with Branch Engineering and West Yost as presented, and authorize the City Manager to sign those contracts and all associated documents, including task orders issued thereunder for projects included within the City’s budget.

Councilor Savage said her understanding is that the City had openings over the last five years for engineers and had either not received any response to the postings or not enough people in the pool to make an adequate choice. She added that this proposal would allow the City to get our engineering needs done by these two firms.

Faye Stewart said that is correct and added that not all of the posted positions were certified engineers, some were Engineering Assistants and Engineering Technicians which do not require a degree.

Councilor Savage stated the budget for the Engineering Department is \$388 thousand per year for three fulltime employees and currently the City has one full time and one part time employee so we are using about half of the budget.

Faye Stewart replied that is accurate.

Councilor Savage asked if the city was to move forward with both Branch and West Yost if that cost would be between \$15 and \$25 thousand dollars per year.

Faye Stewart said that amount is for day to day items and that the Engineering costs for projects would be billed to the street, water, storm and sewer funds. He said there will be additional Engineering Services provided at an additional costs and it will be very similar to what we are paying today for specific projects.

Councilor Fleck stated that it is his understanding that permit services for Coburg, Veneta, and Creswell would not be impacted.

Faye Stewart replied that is correct, the City of Cottage Grove does not provide Engineering Services to those cities. He said we provide building permit services and their engineering reviews and services are taken care of by each city individually before we receive the building permit application.

Councilor Fleck asked if the City's current Civil Engineer would be more of a Project Manager and take care of daily tasks.

Faye Stewart replied yes, the intent would be that the position would focus mostly on project administration and less of the engineering design work.

Councilor Roberts asked if Council passes this item would the City cease trying to find more in house help for Ryan Sisson.

Faye Stewart replied that he would recommend having only Ryan's position and he would not seek any additional support.

Councilor Roberts asked who would oversee the fee schedules that come in from West Yost and Branch Engineering.

Faye Stewart said he has been working with Roberta Likens and they are proposing that one of the Finance staff would oversee the billings and assure that they are appropriate.

Councilor Greg Ervin asked how this would affect people who are doing projects and what the turnaround time is for other cities who have contract services compared to what we are able to do with our current structure.

Faye Stewart said the day to day work for smaller projects would be handled by the Planning Department staff. He added that the larger projects that need to be reviewed by one of the Engineering firms can be turned around in most cases, in five to seven days. He added it is faster than the present time we have been turning them around because of the current work load for the Engineering staff. He said the Planning staff and Building staff would be looking at sidewalk inspections and the Utility crew is certified in water and sewer connections and those would be done generally in the same day that the request is made.

Councilor Stinnett said he would prefer keeping the Engineering services in house. He said it sounds like the City is dissolving the Engineering Department and that keeping an Engineer and making him a Project Manager sounds like a demotion. He asked if the assurances could be there to serve people adequately.

Faye Stewart said he understands Councilor Stinnett's concerns. He said his goal is to improve service and make sure that we can serve the construction community and the needs of our citizens with the best and timely service. He said right now the City uses a lot of outside engineering firms and this is not too far from what we are doing at the present time.

Councilor Ervin asked if this is being done because we cannot find the staff within the budget to do the work and if we can find the staff at a future time are we locked into the contract.

Faye Stewart said it is a three year contract that is renewable for two, one year periods, and the City can terminate the contract at any time. He said one of the problems that the City has is that our engineering needs are so diverse for projects. He said for the City to have a full service Engineering staff it could take six full time individuals, paying them in excess of \$100 thousand dollars each in compensation.

Councilor Solesbee said she supports the idea and understands that the City has been contracting a lot of the Engineering needs and added if we are going to save the citizens money it is worth a try. She commended Faye Stewart for expediting the permit process since he has come on board with the City and trusts his knowledge.

Mayor Gowing said he supports the idea and understands that Civil Engineers and all Engineers and in short supply with a high demand.

Councilor Savage asked if the rate of pay will be changed for Ryan Sisson the current Civil Engineer who will be acting as a Project Manager.

Faye Stewart said the intent is to pay him at his current rate of pay. He added that if Mr. Sisson decides that it is not working for him and he chooses to get a position somewhere else, then he would recommend that the position be posted at a lower range.

Councilor Savage asked if Mr. Sisson would be okay going to a Project Management position.

Faye Stewart said he has not had a conversation with Mr. Sisson, not knowing if Council would support going to contractual services.

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILOR FLECK AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR ERVIN THAT COUNCIL APPROVE THE TWO ENGINEER OF RECORD CONTRACTS WITH BRANCH ENGINEERING AND WEST YOST, AS PRESENTED, AND AUTHORIZE THE CITY MANAGER TO SIGN THOSE CONTRACTS AND ALL ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, INCLUDING TASK ORDERS ISSUED THEREUNDER FOR PROJECTS INCLUDED WITHIN THE CITY’S BUDGET.

Mayor Gowing asked if there was any further discussion, seeing none he called the vote.

The vote on the motion was as follows:

VOTE	Councilor Roberts	Councilor Stinnett	Councilor Savage	Councilor Fleck	Councilor Solesbee	Councilor Ervin	Mayor Gowing
AYES	X		X	X	X	X	X
NAYS		X					
ABSTAIN							

(b) Audit Committee Appointment

Finance Director Roberta Likens said that the Council appointed subcommittee met on Friday the 25th of February to interview the applicant Brandon Parsons for the Audit Committee. She asked Council to consider his appointment to a three year term to expire July 31, 2025.

Councilor Ervin apologized for not being able to be at the interview process and added that he understands the applicant Brandon Parsons is highly qualified and said that he looks to the nomination from the rest of the committee.

IT WAS MOVED BY COUNCILOR ERVIN AND SECONDED BY COUNCILOR FLECK TO APPOINT BRANDON PARSONS TO THE AUDIT COMMITTEE FOR A THREE YEAR TERM TO EXPIRE JULY 31, 2025.

Mayor Gowing asked if there was any discussion.

Councilor Roberts said he enjoyed the interview and that it will be a good pick and fit for the Audit Committee.

Mayor Gowing asked if there was any further discussion.

Councilor Fleck said he agreed with Councilor Roberts statement.

The vote on the motion was as follows:

VOTE	Councilor Roberts	Councilor Stinnett	Councilor Savage	Councilor Fleck	Councilor Solesbee	Councilor Ervin	Mayor Gowing
AYES	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
NAYS							
ABSTAIN							

(c) Concerns from Council

Councilor Fleck gave a brief explanation regarding Conflicts of Interest under State law and said that he would be willing to share the rules with anyone who is interested.

Councilor Ervin said that he met with the Executive Director of Lane County Workforce Partnership and he hopes that by understanding the organization better he will be able to direct resources and projects to connect funding and opportunities to residents of Cottage Grove.

Councilor Roberts said he attended a good RAIN meeting with 16 entrepreneurs wanting to learn how to get there business started. He said the program seems to be growing and hopes that it can create economic development and jobs in our community.

Mayor Gowing added that the RAIN meeting had a good turnout and everyone seemed to be networking.

BUSINESS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

(a) Report from City Manager

City Manager Richard Meyers reported that a policy was sent out to all employees rescinding the emergency policies associated with COVID. He said that it was scheduled to take effect March 19th, and now has been moved up to March 11th at 11:59 pm. He said the City has also inquired if the Lane County Emergency Declaration, which is set to expire at the end of March, will be renewed. He added that the City's declaration will stay in place as long as Lane County's is in place, and if the County decides to extend, the City will bring it before Council to decide if they want to rescind the declaration or continue to follow the County's.

Richard said there is a Town Hall homelessness discussion on April 5th at 7:00 pm.

He added that there will be a kickoff meeting for YAC on April 4th at 7:00 pm and asked Council to encourage youth to apply by April 1st.

Council Roberts asked if Council members will be rotating attendance at the YAC meeting.

Richard replied yes.

BUSINESS FROM CITY ATTORNEY

- (a) Report from City Attorney

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Gowing adjourned the regular meeting of the City Council at 7:53 pm.

The next regular City Council Meeting will be held March 14, 2022, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Mindy Roberts, City Recorder

Jeffrey D. Gowing, Mayor