



McCleary Regular City Council Meeting

Wednesday, October 23, 2024 – 6:30 PM

McCleary City Hall Council Chambers & Zoom Virtual Meeting

Minutes

Call to Order/Flag Salute/Roll Call

Agenda Modifications/Acceptance

No suggestions to amend the meeting agenda were made. A motion was made by Councilmember Klimek, Seconded by Councilmember Dahl, to accept the agenda as written.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Simmons, Councilmember Huff, Councilmember Dahl, Councilmember Klimek

Council Appointment

1. Presentation by Candidates and Council Questions

Candidates Fred Martin and Brent Schiller presented themselves to council, to lobby for the open seat of Councilmember 3. Each man provided his qualifications, answered the questions councilmembers posed to them, and provided the reasons as to why each man felt he would be the best choice for the position.

Executive Session

2. To Evaluate Qualifications of Candidates for Council Appointment RCW 42.30.110(1)(h)

Councilmembers Simmons, Huff, Dahl, and Klimek began an executive session at 6:38pm, to discuss the candidates' presentations and evaluate their qualifications, for the Councilmember 3 position. Executive session ended at 6:44pm. Upon completion of the executive session, Councilmember Huff announced no decision had been made.

Council Action

3. Appointment of Council Position 3

Councilmembers Dahl, Klimek and Simmons individually thanked the candidates for caring about the city, for their interest in the position, and their desire to serve.

A motion was made by Councilmember Klimek, Seconded by Councilmember Dahl, to nominate Brent Schiller, to the position of Councilmember 3.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Simmons, Councilmember Huff, Councilmember Dahl, Councilmember Klimek

Oath of Office

Councilmember Huff congratulated Brent Schiller for being chosen to fill vacant seat of Councilmember 3, and invited him to take the oath of office.

4. Oath of Office for Council Position 3

Councilmember Huff conducted the oath of office with Brent Schiller, and swore him in to the position of Councilmember 3. Councilmember Schiller then took his seat beside the other councilmembers and participated in the remainder of the meeting.

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Public Hearing

5. Combined Revenue Sources for the 2025 Budget & Property Tax Levy

Public Comment - Agenda Items Only

Councilmember Huff opened the floor at 6:48pm, as this time had been scheduled to take public testimony on possible revenue sources (including an increase on property taxes), regarding the 2025 Budget and Property Tax Levy. No public comment was made.

Council noted that no members of the public had signed in for the meeting (at this point), although there were a few people in the audience. A female in the audience questioned as to whether notice for public comment had been posted adequately, as she was unaware of the opportunity to discuss this issue until she read it on the meeting agenda. Deputy Clerk Treasurer Lindsay Blumberg verified notice of the meeting had been posted in the Daily World newspaper and at City Hall. However the audience member clarified that the notice had not specifically mentioned what issues would be open for discussion.

Councilmembers asked City Administrator Jon Martin how topics of future hearings could better be made known to the public. Administrator Martin apologized for the limited information provided to the public for tonight's meeting. He noted the city is working on getting access to the city's Facebook page, so more complete information regarding future meeting topics will be available to the public.

Jon went on to provide councilmembers with a packet denoting the actual administrative calendar, and demonstrating the city was on target with the schedule of public hearings. He then asked council for guidance as to what their priorities were going forward.

Councilmember Huff noted the council had a budget workshop with the prior Public Works Director (Chad Bedlington) and prior Deputy Clerk Treasurer (Jenna Amsbury) at the end of September. During that meeting, Councilmembers Simmons and Dahl requested a wish list of projects from the various departments, so they could determine priorities, but indicated they had not yet received that information.

Administrator Martin indicated he had received the list Councilmember Dahl was referring to and had been meeting with those department heads regarding the suggested items that Bedlington and Amsbury had placed on the list. He inquired as what councilmembers themselves would like to see addressed. Councilmember Dahl said the council had made list of priorities going into the 2024 year, and said her priorities would likely be those items on the list that had not yet been accomplished, but that she was uncertain as to what those items were.

Administrator Martin provided Council with a schedule of dates and times that the city-contracted CPA (Tara Dunford) was available, and suggested a meeting with councilmembers, so she could be a part of the conversation regarding city priorities, moving forward. Jon referred to the projected property tax levy rates, which show projected revenues and expenditures, and impressed upon council the need to discuss which projects would not be able to be addressed, due to lack of revenue.

Administrator Martin then presented Council with a graph that demonstrated how current property tax revenue is distributed across the various districts (school, county, hospital, court and library). He noted that McCleary has one of the lowest tax rates in Grays Harbor County, and provided specific amounts from various county assessments, which demonstrate this. Jon then showed Council a breakdown of current revenue, which comes from property, street, and real estate taxes, along with power, water, and sewer utilities.

Administrator Martin then asked about a rate study that was conducted in August, and asked if action had been taken by Council after that. Councilmember Huff indicated it was only utilized as information as they moved through the budget process. Jon reminded Council if they wanted to order a rate increase, they would need to do so by the end of November. Jon explained his previous experience with creating budgets, when he served for other city entities. He expressed his belief that the budget process should be a collaborative effort between department administrators and council, to include the examination of where the city is today and deciding what direction of they want to go, before building a budget around those goals.

Councilmember Simmons asked if the figures presented included the CPI rate, interest earned or ARPA funds - they only include the CPI rate. Councilmember Huff asked Deputy Clerk Treasurer Blumberg if she knew whether

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Council voted to take the ad valorem tax from the county. She was unable to verify if they had. She will investigate the matter and report her findings at the next council meeting.

Councilmember Huff said he didn't think the city would be able to fund many of the items on the wish list, and suggested utilizing revenue to do the bare minimum to get by, until the city could get back on its feet financially.

Councilmember Dahl asked for clarification on when ARPA funds needed to be allocated by; December 31.

Administrator Martin expressed concern that a current project might not get completed if funds don't get allocated soon. He has had difficulties working with state personnel to allocate ARPA funds, because the city has not yet declared what they intend to commit the funds to. Senior Lineman Paul Nott asked Jon what ARPA funds could be used for and was told they could be used in any number of ways (subcontracting, surveys, street projects, etc), but urged council to utilize these federal funds, rather than return them.

Administrator Martin asked Council what they would like to see from city administrators. Councilmember Simmons indicated he would like to see an updated capital improvement plan for Light & Power, because no changes have been made to the current plan in eight years. Jacob noted the city paid \$15,000 in March to have it finalized, but he still hasn't seen the outcome of this action. Once Council does obtain the final plan, he wants to know the reason why the plan should be accepted, and asked specifically what the risks to the city might be. Administrator Martin indicated he would look for the updated capital improvement plan and get back to Council.

Councilmember Dahl said although it would be nice to implement some of the items on the wish list (like a dog park or reader board), she feels like Council needs maintain the infrastructure the city has, and focus strictly on the needs, rather than wants of the capital improvement plan.

Councilmember Schiller said he wanted to know the actual operating costs will be for the L&P department. He noted the city always underspends on streets, but said it's the biggest juggernaut for Council to contend with, but reiterated it needs to be dealt with because of how it can impact other portions of the budget. Brent asked what the plan was going to be to shore up such an expense. Administrator Martin discussed the city's cash flow, and noted McCleary's position isn't nearly as bad as that of Aberdeen or Cosmopolis. Jon expressed his confidence that McCleary can balance it's budget by being intentional about what it chooses to spend it's revenue on. He suggested focusing on smaller projects and applying for grants as options that could help the city stay within its budget. Jon talked about making sure conversations are being had between department heads and council members, even if it means they disagree, so there won't be any surprises.

Councilmember Simmons said he was most interested in knowing not just what the priorities are, but why certain priorities are listed as a higher than others. He also expressed a desire to figure out how to finish projects currently in progress, but which can't be complete with current staffing resources. Jon agreed with Jacob's concerns about having the manpower or resources necessary for projects. He talked about the need to figure out up front whether the city has resources to complete a project first as the city goes forward. He talked about making sure there is an intention for the grants that are obtained, acquiring grants just for the sake of getting grants.

Councilmember Simmons then pointed out to fellow councilmembers, the need to assess current staffing levels, before making any commitments to contract out, for projects to be completed, noting that it costs the city less to keep projects in house.

Councilmember Dahl asked Administrator Martin if he had a chance to become familiar yet with the sidewalk project, and if so, to provide an update to council. Although Jon was aware of the project, he did not have sufficient information to provide an update to Council at this time.

After the presentation of funds by Administrator Martin and subsequent discussion with Council, Councilmember Huff directed the meeting to return to public comment.

Dan Baskins informed the council that he had looked up the ad valorem ordinance that was passed last year by council. Dan said records showed the city wasn't eligible for the 1% at that time, but suggested they might be this year. Dan then asked about the levy lid on the fire district for this year, and whether council planned to

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restart it. Councilmember Huff indicated council hadn't yet had the opportunity to discuss the matter. Fred Martin asked what the demographics of McCleary were. Councilmember Dahl indicated they had demographic information available in their comp plan that had been completed within the last few years. Councilmember Huff suggested Lori Ann Hanson (Utilities Clerk) would likely have financial demographic information.

Carri Comer expressed her hope that council would get ARPA funds allocated ASAP, before completing the budget.

As there were no other public comments, Councilmember Huff closed the public hearing at 7:18pm.

Consent Agenda

Councilmember Huff asked if there were any questions or comments on the consent agenda. As there were not, a motion made by Councilmember Dahl, Seconded by Councilmember Klimek to accept the agenda as written. Voting Yea: Councilmember Simmons, Councilmember Huff, Councilmember Schiller, Councilmember Dahl, Councilmember Klimek

Updates

New Business

6. IT Contract Updates

City Administrator Jon Martin presented a scoring sheet to council, which had been prepared by him, Chad Belington and Tyson Ryder. The sheet included information about various IT providers, including the city's current service provider, Right IT. Jon noted that Right has been very responsive to the city's needs thus far and providing excellent service. Jon believes changing to another vendor, mid-project, would cause additional stress going forward, if they had to transition to a different company. Councilmember Huff inquired about an earlier issue with Right's plan, in that the city was initially told Right could provide services to all departments, but then ended up not being able to meet the needs of the police department. Jon clarified that this issue had been resolved; although the portion of the police department still requires more work, Right now has the necessary certifications to complete the job. When asked for more details, Jon indicated the current police system was not only outdated, but required significantly more security than the software for other departments.

Brycen asked if Right had included a bid for the remaining work. Jon said if awarded the opportunity to complete the project, that Right had agreed to roll the additional cost into current monthly costs, less the price of any hardware that's required. Jon explained that when Right was initially brought onboard to assist with IT, it was from the perspective of temporary assistance being offered for a two year period. The current contract with Right expires at the end of this month. To complete the current project, Right either needs an extension on the current contract or a new contract commitment with the city, so they could finish the project and provide ongoing support to the police department (in compliance with industry standards). Jon has not yet spoken with Right about extending the contract, as he wanted to seek direction from council before proceeding. Councilmember Huff felt it would be in the city's best interest to have Right provide a presentation, outlining the details of their plan to complete the project, before the city agrees to further contracting. Administrator Martin mentioned that he has an IT support background, and feels pretty confident about his understanding of what Right has left to do on the project, and their proposed methods for accomplishing the task. Council agreed to have Jon schedule a presentation with Right for next council meeting, so a final decision can be made.

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Old Business

7. City Social Media Postings

Councilmember Simmons noted this topic had partially been addressed earlier in the meeting, when they discussed the effectiveness of public hearing notices. Jacob asked to know why we no longer had access to the city's social media sites, who was responsible for those sites before, and who is currently responsible for keeping current postings up to date on the city's website?

City Administrator Jon Martin was unable to speak to the process or management of postings prior to being hired, but noted his vision was for city staff and administrators to have the ability to post and manage various sites. He recommended the comment aspects of Facebook not be turned off, in order to encourage communication between the public and city officials.

Councilmember Huff agreed with Jon's suggestion, and noted that whoever posts on these sites, should represent the city in a professional manner, post information relating to city events or issues, and provide legitimate answers to the public's questions, rather than post nonsense about the northern lights, etc. Jacob stressed the importance of having the policy committee make these standards regarding social media posts clear.

As Councilmember Klimek (along with Councilmember Simmons) is on the policy committee, he will send Administrator Martin a copy of the policy they have been working on regarding this issue, and schedule a time to meet with him so it can be finalized.

There was some discussion as to who has the password for the Facebook account and how to obtain it. It was presumed the Mayor has the password, since he has made recent posts on the account. Jon has spoken to Mayor Miller about the account, and the password he was given does not work. Given this information, Brycen suggested when the social media policy is drafted, that it authorize Jon/City Administrator position to oversee the posts. Councilmember Simmons mentioned that in the past, the Deputy Clerk Treasurer and Public Works Director both had access to the city's Facebook account, because they each had different subjects to post about. It was also noted that both individuals signed their names at the bottom of their posts.

Cindy Nott asked if the policy will include the Mayor's page. Councilmember Simmons responded to this question, stating the policy would not cover his page, explaining that part of a person's first amendment rights include and individual's ability to create a personal page about themselves.

8. Budget Workshops

Councilmember Simmons noted a list of dates and times that council had been given, in which CPA Tara Dunford is available for budget workshops. Councilmembers began sharing their availability over the next two months. Councilmember Dahl reminded everyone that council meetings had been changed to the first and third Wednesdays, for the months of November and December, due to the holidays. It was decided that each councilmember would email Administrator Martin their availability, and Jon would set up a meeting with Tara based upon the information they provide him.

Ordinances and Resolutions

Public Comment - City Business Only

Jeff Geer commended Council for their decision to select Brent Schiller to fill the vacant position of Councilmember 3. He noted the high turnover of city employees over the last 2.5 years and suggested a common denominator to this issue; Mayor Miller. Jeff mentioned that the Mayor was yet again not in attendance at tonight's meeting and called for his resignation.

Cindy Nott talked about the horrendous condition of the 10th Street alleyway. She noted that for many citizens, this alley is the only entrance to get to their homes. Cindy asked when council was planning to appropriate the necessary funds to repair the alleyway. She also complained about the smell of the sewer treatment plant next

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to her house, and stated she has yet to receive an explanation, despite numerous inquiries to the city, via email and phone. Cindy noted this is the first time she's ever experienced such an awful smell coming from the plant in the 34 years she's lived in McCleary.

Councilmember Huff acknowledged Cindy's concerns, noting that the condition of the alley has been brought up numerous times in the past, and that he had attempted to address the issue with the previous Public Works Director.

Administrator Martin said he would speak to employees at the treatment plant, and look into why the smell had become so pungent.

Councilmember Klimek stated he thought interest funds had been earmarked for such projects and looked to fellow councilmembers for clarification. Councilmember Simmons said that had not been decided yet, but that it was a conversation they were planning to have as they move forward with budget planning.

Paul Nott stated that years ago, Randy Carlson used to go down the alleyway periodically and grate it with his equipment, or fill in potholes with gravel using his backhoe, and asked only for fuel reimbursement in exchange for his services.

Carri Comer brought up the need for there to be some kind of running register, that keeps the public up to date on what the city is doing to address issues that get brought up in council meetings. Carri mentioned seeing the city begin to look into some issues, but then never seeing the problem resolved. She suggested a running list of issues would keep problems from getting lost in the shuffle and allow for greater transparency. She would like some updates on old items.

Councilmember Huff agreed with Carri's suggestion and noted that's why they keep records of prior public comment sessions to refer to. However, he also acknowledged how easy it can be to get in a hurry and overlook something important.

Executive Session

Council Comments

Councilmember Huff wanted to bring attention to the pink lights that were put up at City Hall earlier in the month, in remembrance of October being Breast Cancer Awareness month. He wanted to express the city's focus on public health and encouraged audience members to get screened, and attend regular doctor appointments, as early detection can save lives. He also reminded everyone that the annual Merchant Trick or Treat event would be held again at the park on the 26th. Given the extra people out and about for the event, he reminded everyone to be careful while driving. He noted the PD would have a cruiser located at the corner of Simpson and Summit streets during that time, accepting donations of non-perishable food items, hygiene items and school supplies to donate to the food bank and local school.

Councilmember Simmons mentioned that his schedule was rapidly filling up, and asked Administrator Martin how quickly they would hear back from him regarding the budget workshop meeting with the city's CPA. Jon indicated as soon as he got dates and times from councilmembers, he would immediately forward that information to Tara and try to schedule a meeting ASAP.

Prior to adjourning the meeting, Administrator Martin asked if he may have some time to address the council, and update them with what he's been doing. Councilmember Huff granted the request, and Jon provided the following information:

- 1) There are currently three city positions open: Police Chief (no applications received yet), Clerk Treasurer (one application received), and Public Works Assistant (three applications received).
- 2) Of the four applications received, two individuals have been interviewed thus far, and the other two are scheduled for interviews. If it feels like one of the individuals would be a good fit for one of these positions, he plans to bring them back for a second interview.
- 3) Jon is concerned that no one has applied for the position of Police Chief yet.

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Councilmember Huff asked where the opening for this position was being posted; on the regional justice website (where all law enforcement job openings are posted).

4) Jon and the Mayor met with representatives of the Teamsters Union last week regarding contract negotiations. Negotiations are scheduled to continue on Monday (Oct 28).

5) Jon has been concerned about the city having legal counsel to address concerns that get brought up, and noted that Chris Coker has provided his proposal to extend the current legal services contract. Jon has been introduced to Madison Pleasant, who is also a member of Chris' firm, and will be assisting Chris with legal matters in the future. Jon clarified however, that Chris will still be the city's primary legal advisor. He is hoping to present Madison for approval at the next council meeting.

6) Jon has learned the city does not currently have a contract with LeMay for waste disposal; we've been paying as we go. He is hoping to meet with them to negotiate a contract with them at a reduced rate to help save the city more money.

7) The state has been conducting an audit for us this month, and he has been observing office staff as they work identify and locate the documents that have been requested. Through this process, Jon has noticed some inefficiencies in the city's current process for filing documents. He is interested in having the city consider investing in some sort of centralized filing system, at some point in the future, when the budget can allow for it.

8) Jon would like to improve communication between staff members and council. It's important to him that we improve efficiency and our responses to the concerns of citizens.

9) Jon also wants to ensure we don't lose the \$210,000 the city has available in ARPA funds, and wants to ensure we find a solution on how to utilize that funding before the deadline.

10) Jon has enjoyed getting to know several business owners and members of the community at recent public events. He feels McCleary is a great community and hopes the city can work together to figure out a path forward to determine how they can best work together to serve the public.

11) Since the departure of the Clerk Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer Lindsay Blumberg has taken over payroll responsibilities. Jon wanted council to be aware of the effort Lindsay has put in to learn the system and payroll process in such a short time, and recognize the great job she's done to step in and maintain this routine but very important task that is required for the city to function.

12) Jon has also been thinking about how city administration can better support the civic groups of our community. Though he may not have all the solutions to problems, Jon is willing to meet with anyone and believes the council and the mayor can find a path forward if they'll simply stay focused on what needs to be done.

Councilmember Simmons inquired of Administrator Martin about the interview's he's been conducting to fill city positions. He asked for clarification - is the plan to only hire for positions of Clerk Treasurer and Public Works Assistant, and do away with the position of a Public Works Director? Jon answered in the affirmative; he doesn't think a PW Director is needed, that a City Administrator and PW Assistant is sufficient to manage the city's current issues. Jacob then asked if he would be able to get the Mayor to begin showing up to meetings. Jon said he can only do so much and it's on the Mayor to show up. Whether he chooses to attend or not, Jon's vision is to work with the Mayor and Councilmembers to the best of his ability, and he'll be a go between if that helps. His focus is on taking care of city employees, fixing problems and helping the city become financially sound. He feels very positive about current city staff members and is confident we'll be able to resolve issues and keep the city functioning.

Councilmember Klimek asked Jon if his position was a permanent one. Jon said his is the only position that is at will employment, so his job is temporary, since he's an interim administrator.

Keith also noted that with so many employees resigning over the last two months, he feels the front office staff are swamped because they're having to pick up the slack and take on extra duties. He suggests during this period that councilmembers not bother the office staff unless absolutely necessary, so they don't add to the stress. Jon acknowledged that "we've been busy," but feels the temperature of the office has calmed down and people are managing.

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Mayor Comments

Adjourn

A motion was made by Councilmember Simmons, Seconded by Councilmember Klimek, to adjourn the meeting. Voting Yea: Councilmember Simmons, Councilmember Huff, Councilmember Schiller, Councilmember Dahl, Councilmember Klimek.

Meeting adjourned at 8:00pm.

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