

**MINUTES**  
**CITY OF STEVENSON COUNCIL MEETING**  
**November 21, 2024**  
**6:00 PM, City Hall and Remote**

**1. CALL TO ORDER/PRESENTATION TO THE FLAG:**

**Mayor Anderson** called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., led the group in reciting the pledge of allegiance and conducted roll call.

Attending:

Elected Officials: **Mayor Scott Anderson; Councilmembers Pat Rice, Lucy Lauser, Michael Johnson, Dave Cox, Chuck Oldfield**

City Staff: **Community Development Director/Interim City Administrator Ben Shumaker; Public Works Director Carolyn Sourek; Stevenson Clerk/Treasurer Anders Sorestad.**

Public Attendees:

Mary Repar, Debra Taylor, Sam Kniestadt, Ann Leuders, Gregory Stafford

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

>Gregory Stafford related issues on getting a water meter for an ADU installed next to his current water meter.

>Debra Taylor spoke on the same issue and requested city assistance to get a second water meter installed next to an existing one to serve an ADU on her property.

>Mary Repar commented on a need for more public restrooms. She invited people to the Stevenson Library's holiday centerpiece project.

>Sam Kniestadt requested an update on the courthouse plaza project.

**3. CHANGES TO THE AGENDA-None requested.**

**4. CONSENT AGENDA:**

a) Approve 2025 Tourism Funding Awards in the amount of \$575,035. **City Clerk/Treasurer Anders Sorestad** presented the Tourism Advisory Committee's 2025 funding recommendations for council approval in the total amount of \$575,035.

b) Christmas Eve Office Closure Request – **City Clerk/Treasurer Anders Sorestad** presented a request from City staff to close City Hall on Tuesday, December 24th prior to the December 25th holiday. Staff taking the day off would use vacation time, comp time, personal time or leave without pay.

c) Minutes of October 17th, 2024 Regular Council Meeting and November 13th, 2024 Special Council Meeting.

d) \*Approve Contract with WA Department of Commerce for Periodic Update Grant - **Interim City Administrator Ben Shumaker** presented the grant contract with Washington Department of Commerce for Periodic Update Grant (critical areas ordinance) in the amount of \$10,000.

**MOTION** to approve consent agenda items a-d made by **Councilmember Lauser**, seconded by **Councilmember Oldfield**.

Voting aye: Councilmembers **Johnson, Cox, Oldfield, Lauser, Rice**

**5. SHERIFF'S OFFICE REPORT:**

a) Sheriff's Report - The Skamania County Sheriff's report for activity within Stevenson city limits for October 2024 was presented for council review by Undersheriff Tracy Wyckoff. Updates on staffing levels, training, and administrative changes were provided.

**6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

a) Public Hearing 2025 Proposed Property Tax Levy – **City Clerk/Treasurer Anders Sorestad** presented and explained resolution 2024-445 and ordinance 2024-1222 proposing the maximum 1% property tax increase for public comment and council consideration. These are both time sensitive and must be approved by November 30th to take effect in 2024. An annual 1% increase in property tax is the maximum permitted by Washington State.

Public hearing opened at 6:15

**Public comments:**

Mary Repar questioned if the tax could ever be lowered if property values dropped. Ann Leuders asked if there is an option to bank the taxing capacity of the city if they skip a year.

Public hearing closed at 6:19

**MOTION** to approve resolution 2024-445 authorizing an increase in property taxes for fiscal year 2025 was made by **Councilmember Oldfield**, seconded by **Councilmember Lauser**.

**Councilmember Cox** provided clarification about what the 1% would add to a property tax bill.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Lauser, Rice, Johnson, Cox, Oldfield**

**MOTION** to approve ordinance 2024-1222 fixing the amount to be raised by ad valorem taxes and levied for fiscal year 2025 was made by **Councilmember Lauser**, seconded by **Councilmember Johnson**.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Lauser, Rice, Johnson, Cox, Oldfield**.

b) Second Hearing 2025 Proposed Budget - **Clerk/Treasurer Anders Sorestad** presented and explained the 2025 proposed budget and associated documents. Major changes include updating the Tourism Fund for approved grant awards. The 2025 budget needs to be approved by the end of 2024.

Public hearing opened at 6:20

No public comments were received.

Public hearing closed at 6:21

**MOTION** to approve ordinance 2024-1223 adopting the 2025 budget as presented was made by Councilmember Oldfield, seconded by Councilmember Johnson.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Johnson, Cox, Oldfield, Lauser**

Voting nay: **Councilmember Rice**

#### **7. SITUATION UPDATES:**

a) **Lower Public Works Shop, Asbestos Remediation - Public Works Director Carolyn Sourek** provided information on the roof replacement project for the firehall. Asbestos has been discovered, which requires a specialty contractor and chain of command process for removal and disposal, adding an additional \$25,000 to the current project cost of \$22K. Council was informed there are funds in the equipment service budget that could be used, but budget amendments may be needed.

#### **8. COUNCIL BUSINESS:**

a)\***Transportation Benefit District -Tax Proposition, For/Against Committees – Interim Administrator Ben Shumaker** presented and explained the staff memo and process regarding the establishment of committees and appointment of up to four individuals to serve (pro and against) related to the Stevenson Utility Rate Reduction, Street Repair, Infrastructure Investment Proposition 1 which will appear on the February 2025 ballot. If the city does not appoint committees to represent opposing views, the county will solicit individuals to serve.

**Councilmember Cox** and Cara Owen were suggested as members of the 'For' committee, and **Councilmember Oldfield** was suggested to serve on the 'Against' committee.

**MOTION** to create For and Against Committees related to Proposition 1 and appoint members as discussed was made by **Councilmember Johnson**, seconded by **Councilmember Lauser**.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Johnson, Cox, Oldfield, Lauser**

Voting nay: **Councilmember Rice**

**b) \*Preparing for Joint Meeting with Fire District II - Interim Administrator Ben Shumaker** initiated discussion of the December 10th joint meeting location and City Council. He surveyed Councilmembers regarding their ability to be at the meeting in person. He invited them to share information on what they wanted to see in the next interlocal agreement between the City and Fire District and how to approach changes in apportioning costs as the District moves to being independent. **Councilmember Lauser** suggested increasing the stipend amount volunteers are paid.

## **9. INFORMATION ITEMS:**

a) Financial Report - The Treasurer's Report and year-to-date revenues and expenses through the prior month was presented for council review.

b) Planning Commission Minutes for the prior month were presented.

## **10. CITY ADMINISTRATOR AND STAFF REPORTS:**

### **a) Ben Shumaker, Community Development Director**

- i. Permitting is down, but the first wave from Chinedere is beginning. With 50 or so lots permits for new housing starts may become steady.
- ii. Getting online permitting going for planning related permits.
- iii. A contract for critical ordinance update has been approved. The State Department of Ecology has awarded the city \$20K over two years for the work.
- iv. Planning Commission is reviewing Conditional Use permits issued to businesses and organizations. The reviews are held every October and November in even numbered years.

### **b) Carolyn Sourek, Public Works Director**

- i. Tree fall damaged the roof of the water segmentation basin, panels are being replaced.
- ii. Waste Water Treatment Plant work is advancing.
- iii. First Street opens November 22nd.
- iv. Spruce up Stevenson in the fall was successful.
- v. Dump truck to be sold at auction this month
- vi. PW staff John Dexter has earned his Level Two water treatment plant operator and his Water Distribution Manager certificates.
- vii. Part for the sewer plant has arrived after a multi-year delay.
- viii. Eight ADA parking slots have been demarcated on 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Streets.
- ix. Port meeting, desire from commission to get regular updates from City and Public Works.

### **c) Ben Shumaker, Interim City Administrator** provided the following updates:

- i. He thanked the Council for their patience with the meeting packet as there have been several City Hall staff members recently go on leave.
- ii. The city has hired an individual with experience to fill in for utility clerk. No budget amendment will be needed for that hire.
- iii. A budget analysis will be done before the December 2024 Council meeting to determine if there are any amendments needed prior to year end.

- iv. City Hall staff is working to ensure all financial checks and balances are in place. Invoice tracking and approval is being improved to help the utility clerk and Deputy Clerk Treasurer categorize expenditures.
- v. Changes to the small works roster will help small businesses be fully prepared to do work for the city if called on. The EDC and Chamber will help with coaching and information.
- vi. Possible parking changes on Russell Street are at an early stage of being considered. City staff is talking with businesses about parking needs and ways to increase inventory.
- vii. **Shumaker** suggested policy changes regarding hostile architecture and public records would best be initiated once a full time city administrator is in place. They could be addressed at a strategic planning session in spring of 2025.
- viii. With the budget completed he will be working on public outreach for the sewer ordinance.

**d) City Clerk/Treasurer Anders Sorestad** reported on the Tourism Advisory Committee meetings and their review of new applications for lodging tax distributions.

**Carolyn Sourek, Public Works Director** provided an addition to her report. She was contacted by People For People regarding the possible hire of an individual to help with maintenance. People for People will pay the wages for the individual placement. She is waiting for the individual to contact her to arrange an interview.

## **11. VOUCHER APPROVAL**

a) \*October 2024 payroll and November 2024 AP checks were audited and were presented for approval. October payroll totals \$133,225.49 which included EFT payments. November 2024 AP checks 18168 thru 18243 total \$895,405.87, which included EFT payments. The AP check register with fund transaction summary was attached for review.

**MOTION** to approve vouchers as presented was made by **Councilmember Lauser**, seconded by **Councilmember Rice**.

Voting aye: **Councilmembers Johnson, Cox, Oldfield, Lauser, Rice**

## **12. MAYOR & COUNCIL REPORTS**

**Councilmember Cox** reported the TAC committee met twice. \$575,035 was provided to local organizations. Quarterly/bi-yearly applications are being considered. Projects that support shoulder season events would be encouraged. The Opioid Abatement Committee is processing applications for County Commissioner approval to distribute funds for approved programs or activities that work to reduce opioid use.

**Councilmember Johnson** reported Bonneville Hot Springs is opening with a lot of job openings available.

**13. ISSUES FOR THE NEXT MEETING:**

**Councilmember Rice** asked to have the water meter issue noted at the beginning of the meeting placed on next month's agenda if no resolution occurs following the upcoming meeting with city staff and the property owners. A brief discussion followed regarding alternative options to address the matter. **Public Works Director Sourek** welcomed anyone interested to talk with her.

**14. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENT:**

>Mary Repar asked for and received further clarification on the hiring process for a new city administrator. She stated the Homeless Housing Council should provide more reports to the City Council. The Department of Commerce needs to include elders in their 5-year plan on homeless housing. Policy changes are needed regarding how to increase affordable housing for Stevenson.

>Debra Taylor spoke further about meeting on site with city staff regarding the water meter on their property.

**15. ADJOURNMENT - Mayor Anderson** adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m.

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Scott Anderson, Mayor

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Date