



CITY OF SWEET HOME CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

December 01, 2020, 7:00 PM
Sweet Home City Hall, 3225 Main Street
Sweet Home, OR 97386

WIFI Passcode: guestwifi

PLEASE silence all cell phones – Anyone who wishes to speak, please sign in.

Mission Statement

The City of Sweet Home will work to build an economically strong community with an efficient and effective local government that will provide infrastructure and essential services to the citizens we serve. As efficient stewards of the valuable assets available, we will be responsive to the community while planning and preparing for the future.

Meeting Information

The City Council will hold a City Council work session at 7:00 p.m. In order to protect residents, staff, and elected officials due to the novel COVID-19 virus, this meeting will be held virtually. The City of Sweet Home City Council is streaming the meeting via the Microsoft Teams platform and asks the public to consider this option. There will be opportunity for public input via the live stream. To view the City Council meeting live, visit live.sweethomeor.gov. If you don't have access to the internet you can call 541-367-5128 and choose option #1 to be logged in to the call.

This video stream and call in options are allowed under Council Rules, meet the requirements for Oregon public meeting law and has been approved by the Mayor as Chairperson of the meeting. All votes will be conducted by roll call.

Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 PM.

Roll Call

PRESENT

Mayor Greg Mahler
President Pro Tem Diane Gerson
Councilor Cortney Nash (absent)
Councilor Dave Trask
Councilor James Goble
Councilor Lisa Gourley
Councilor Susan Coleman

STAFF

Community Services Officer Sean Morgan
Police Chief Jeff Lynn
City Manager Ray Towry
Administrative Assistant Julie Fisher
Community and Economic Development Blair Larsen

The location of the meeting is accessible to the disabled. If you have a disability that requires accommodation, advanced notice is requested by notifying the City Manager's Office at 541-367-8969.

MEDIA

Kelly Kenoyer

New Business:

Homelessness Roundtable

City Attorney Snyder cited case law regarding homelessness specifically Boise and Grants Pass rulings related to sleeping, sitting, and lying down in public places. City Attorney Snyder also discussed SHMC related to littering, and time, place, and manner.

Police Chief Jeff Lynn and Community Services Officer Sean Morgan reported how the City is regulating the public property and still affording those who are homeless their basic rights to sleep, sit, and lie. Chief Lynn discussed the time, place, manner restrictions as they relate to homeless sleeping in our community.

Pastor Bethany Young, Pastor of the Nazarene Church, presented to the group on actions the church has taken to accommodate homeless, partnering with One Sweet Home during the COVID Shelter in Place mandate. From that beginning, the homeless camp has evolved to what it is today. Pastor Young explained the situation is not what their vision for the homeless is, however they are working with the occupants to make the area cleaner and safer. Services have been able to visit the site and some of the temporary residents have transitioned to other more permanent housing. The predicted upcoming cold winter has prompted additional conversations leading to an extreme weather shelter plan. The Nazarene is working on plans to transition all residents off the streets.

Chief Lynn added that there have been unintended advantages to having the 13-15 homeless in one area together. Sean Morgan reported on successes the police have had bringing services to those transients, specifically mental health, housing aid, Veteran, and addiction services.

Beth Lambert, neighbor to the Nazarene Church, spoke to the disruptions the homeless community next door has caused her business and her rental property.

Mayor Mahler stated he has received many complaints of the same issues from businesses and neighbors. Mayor Mahler spoke to some of the successes Eugene has had with their homeless shelter. Mayor Mahler suggested looking at options including vacant buildings.

Councilor Goble reported that the City has made it very clear that the City did not want a homeless camp and is bothered that a warming shelter on private property has turned into a homeless camp. He has heard and received a lot of complaints but understands the homeless issue.

Councilor Trask spoke to issues he saw firsthand when at a business in the area, he was also concerned about the location being at the city entry.

Councilor Gerson asked if the City was consulted when One Sweet Home built tent platforms. She was also concerned about the usage of tarps. Police Chief Lynn stated he was aware those were being built.

Councilor Coleman acknowledge the area is an eyesore for our community, but also acknowledge how tragic it would be if someone was to die from exposure or cold.

There was discussion on liability regarding involvement by the City. City Manager stated staff has not been directly involved with any of the physical work, and only are trying to connect those individuals to services. City Manager Towry stated the site was accidental, however has made it easier for services to connect to the homeless.

Councilor Gourley suggested a partnership with One Sweet Home to find long term solutions to make a difference for everyone in the community.

Mayor Mahler added that if each church in Sweet Home would aid one homeless individual to help them get to their appointments, find resources, or help with finance, it might help the issue. Councilor Coleman stated One Sweet Home is made up from multiple churches working together on the issue. Pastor Bethany Young added a City representative has been attending the One Sweet Home meetings helping clarify options and laws in Sweet Home. Pastor Young added what has happened

was not planned and happened due to the COVID crisis, and they are working on trying to manage the crisis and manage a better solution moving forward. Pastor Young stated this is a short-term solution for an immediate state and not permanent.

Community and Economic Development Director Blair Larsen stated what is a deterrent to one business, is a boom to another. The congregating in other areas has diminished, and an economic benefit to the downtown area. CEDD Larsen stated there is a benefit to having a location set aside specific for this issue. One location, less visible, but accessible to services, would be a better option according to CEDD Larsen.

City Manager Towry stated the City will continue to work with One Sweet Home and Pastor Bethany on a location that would be better. CM Towry acknowledged the City is limited on funding and staff, but still trying to be supportive of the groups working toward a solution.

City Manager stated the purpose of the work session was to let the community know of the successes, and the continuance towards a better solution.

Beth Lambert stated that having the homeless in one place is also an attraction for drug dealers. Mrs. Lambert spoke towards liability, stating the City has condoned the homeless camp, breaking multiple ordinance, and will assume some liability if there is a tragedy on the property.

Chief Lynn gave solutions that Mrs. Lambert could take to help the issues, including trespassing individuals, however, Mrs. Lambert stated they were afraid of retaliation.

Dr. Larry Horton stated the weather will be in the low 30's the rest of the week and asked if those individuals will be allowed to remain at the Nazarene Church the remainder of the week? He also asked who will be responsible for finding a new location, and what time frame? Mayor Mahler responded there is a sense of urgency, however he does not have a time frame. Dr. Horton stated our community has always come together with solutions.

Mayor Mahler requested the Ad Hoc Committee for Community Health review the issue and add the topic to the next meeting agenda.

Council Business for Good of the Order

None

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 PM.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Manager – Ex Officio City Recorder