

**City of Rainier**  
**Regular City Council Meeting**  
**June 7, 2021**  
**6 p.m.**  
**Rainier City Hall**

**OPEN BUDGET HEARING – ACCEPT PUBLIC COMMENT – CLOSE BUDGET HEARING**

Mayor Jerry Cole opened the public hearing at 6:17 p.m. No public comment was given. Councilor Connie Budge said the budget document has improved from previous years. Cole said it's a good start and easier to understand. There are more ideas that can be added for next year's budget. The hearing was closed at 6:18 p.m.

**OPEN PUBLIC HEARING REGARDING NUISANCE HOUSE AT 516 EAST E STREET – ACCEPT PUBLIC COMMENT – CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING**

Cole opened the hearing at 6:19 p.m. He read an email into the record from attorney Bob Lucas, who is representing the owner's son, Gabriel, on this matter. The owner, Nidia Coy, settled her claim with the insurance company for the house fire and returned to her native Costa Rica. Lucas has agreed to help Gabriel apply for a conservatorship so he can obtain court approval to clean up the property. Gabriel, through Lucas, is asking the city to delay enforcement action that may be costly to the Coys and the city. Lucas suggested that the city revisit the item at its next meeting to see what the status on the conservatorship proceeding is. Judith Taylor, at 520 East E Street, testified that the house is a dangerous nuisance that is falling down. There has been vandalism and children exploring it. Debris blows into nearby houses when the wind blows and the house smells bad. She encouraged council to move forward with declaring the house a nuisance and doesn't see the situation changing. The owner's son hasn't been on board with doing anything about it. The public hearing was closed at 6:23 p.m.

Mayor Jerry Cole called the Regular Council Meeting to order at 6:24 p.m.

**Council Present:** Connie Budge, Robert duPlessis, Mike Kreger, Brenda Tschida

**Council Absent:** Levi Richardson, Jenna Weaver

**City Attorney Present:** No

**City Staff Present:** Gregg Griffith, Police Chief; W. Scott Jorgensen, City Administrator; Sue Lawrence, Public Works Director

### **Flag Salute**

**Additions/Deletions from the Agenda:** Public Works Director Sue Lawrence said she wanted to request approval for a proposed plan by the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership as a mitigation measure for the city's DEQ fines. Cole said that could be added to new business. Council agreed by consensus.

**Mayor's Address:** Cole presented a plaque to Nolan Borders honoring his ten years of service to the city's police department prior to his retirement June 1.

**Visitor Comments:** There were no visitor comments at this time.

### **Consider Approval of the Consent Agenda:**

Consider Approval of the May 3, 2021 Regular Council Meeting Minutes, February 10, 2021 and March 10, 2021 Planning Commission Meeting Minutes and May 17, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting Minutes-Council President Mike Kreger moved to approve the consent agenda. That motion was seconded by Budge and adopted unanimously.

### **New Business**

- a. Appointment to Council Position #1-Cole said there were three applicants but one backed out. The two remaining candidates, Denise Watson and Scott Cooper, were interviewed by the council. Watson said she was appointed to the Parks Committee and is involved with the Ladies of Rainier and its Belly Brigade to feed the homeless. Cooper said he's lived in town for 15 years and has served on the council, the REDCO board, Planning Commission and the previous Parks Committee. He retired January 1 after a career in IT and with the merchant marines and Coast Guard. Cooper said he likes solving problems and would like to be involved in city government again. Kreger asked the applicants what they think is the most negative aspect of public service. Watson said it's the possibility of disappointing someone. It's never easy, but decisions have to be made. Cooper said if you do your job right, you may upset half of the people in town. Budge asked the applicants what training has been most valuable to them. Cooper touted his recent experience on a city COVID Task force helping to sign people up for vaccines who didn't have internet access. He worked with the senior center to get 89 people vaccinated. Watson described herself as organized and said she has training in de-escalation and how to deal with heated matters with a sense of decorum. She's done some volunteer work with the museum and Meals on Wheels. Councilor Brenda Tschida asked the applicants about their skill sets. Watson said

she has an open mind, an ear to listen and is good at fundraising. Cooper said he's done labor relations and during his prior stint on council, he worked to achieve consensus on matters before the meetings. Councilor Robert duPlessis asked what the applicants thought the city is doing well, what it isn't doing well and how they could help it improve. Cooper said the city has done a good job with its greenspace, park and the riverfront trail. The city needs to prioritize what it wants to do and could further improve its greenspaces. Watson said everyone came together during last winter's ice storm but the city's sewer system needs to be improved. The city should have more amenities like laundromats. She would seek consensus and collaborate on solutions. Council deliberated on the appointment. Kreger described them both as strong candidates and said one has been on council before. Kreger was on Planning Commission before council and it helped. Watson would offer a fresh perspective. Budge said she had also been on Planning Commission prior to council. Tschida said the council could use a new perspective. duPlessis cited Cooper's prior experience on council and the REDCO board. Cooper's stint on council came during a tumultuous time for the city. He was a calming presence on council. Watson has done much community outreach and is involved in many groups. duPlessis has been on council for six years and says he's still learning. Kreger moved to appoint Cooper to Council Position #1. That motion was seconded by duPlessis and passed 3-1, with Tschida dissenting.

### **Unfinished Business**

- a. Riverfront Trail Update-Lawrence said she received a bid for a set of stairs to be added to the area near El Taptio to better enable beach access. Cole said it's a nice trail and the bank is stabilized. It will help to have a defined point of entry. That will add another amenity to the area. Budge moved to approve the bid. That motion was seconded by Cooper and adopted unanimously. City Administrator W. Scott Jorgensen said he spoke with the director of the Cowlitz-Wahkiakum Council of Governments about the \$90,000 grant the city applied for to fund the trail's third phase. The director was optimistic that the city would be receiving the funds and the decision should be made June 24.
- b. Fox Creek Update-Jorgensen said he spoke with Rep. Brad Witt's chief of staff and it seems likely that the city will be receiving \$100,000 for the feasibility study. Cole said he spoke with Witt the previous weekend and was told the same.
- c. Senior and Multi-Generational Housing
- d. Stop Sign on C Street-Cole read an email from the Turleys into the record. They complained that people run the sign and don't feel that it's improved the neighborhood or solved the problem and still want it removed. Jorgensen said that Lawrence had ODOT do a noise study. It

is included in the packet. Tschida said people requested the sign. duPlessis, Kreger and Budge all said speeding has been a problem in that area for a long time. Cole suggested looking into the cost of adding speed humps. It would slow people down and direct traffic to B Street. Council agreed by consensus to direct Lawrence to research the cost of adding speed humps to that area.

- e. Geotech Study-Lawrence said she has reached out for additional bids and should have those by the end of the month. The study needs to be done. Its original cost was \$34,000, but some engineering was added and that brought the cost up to \$49,000. The city has incurred \$9200 in costs for the engineering that's already been done. Cole said he was concerned about the cost. The road goes to two houses and the area has been sliding for years. He proposes a scope of work that involves fixing the affected utility lines. What he doesn't want is for the city to spend \$49,000 on engineering, just to be told that fixing the road is expensive, without a plan to pay for it. The scope of the study has to change. If the goal is to decommission the road and fix the utilities, then the scope of the study has to be for that. Lawrence said the affected water line could be adjusted. That's not a big issue. But the sewer line is, because it's more of a main line. It could possibly be re-routed, or a pump station could be inserted there. The city will have to excavate across the slide area to fix the utilities and the Geotech study has to be done in order for that to happen. Should the city dead end the road or fix it? Budge said the slide is the biggest risk and problem. Lawrence said water is going under the culvert and that's causing much of the damage. Cole asked if the city should make that road usable. He isn't sure there will be money on the back end to fix it and wants the scope to be limited to save money. He's not saying don't do the engineering, but the scope needs to be limited. Lawrence said the scope can be done to remove the road. Those houses are still accessible from Second Street. Budge said the water needs to be re-routed so it doesn't adversely affect peoples' properties. But the underlying issues require a Geotech study. Lawrence said that if the city wants to decommission the road, the scope of the study can be redefined. Cole asked Dan Graham, whose property is near the area, what he thinks. Graham said he doesn't care about the road and just wants the slide to stop. Budge said she wants to eliminate the road and stop the sliding. Lawrence said the road can be eliminated and the utility lines placed in the walking path. Pressure from the roadway is contributing to the problem and the culvert was incorrectly installed. There are ways to solve the problem. Kreger agreed that the road should remain closed to traffic. Cole said he wants to see the area dried out, with no road and the utility lines fixed.

### **New Business**

- b. Ordinance 1079--Repeal RV Park Ordinance

- c. Consider Approval of Resolution #21-06-01 Adopting and Declaring the Tax Levy and General Obligation Bond for the Fiscal Year 2021/2022-Budge moved to approve the resolution. That motion was seconded by Kreger and adopted unanimously.
- d. Consider Approval of Resolution #21-06-02 Declaring the City's Election to Receive State Revenues for the Fiscal Year 2021/2022-Kreger moved to approve the resolution. That motion was seconded by Budge and adopted unanimously.
- e. Consider Approval of Resolution #21-06-03 Adopting the Budget and Making Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2021/2022-duPlessis moved to approve the resolution. That motion was seconded by Tschida and adopted unanimously.
- f. Consider Approval of Resolution #21-06-04 Resolution Transferring Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 2020/2021-Kreger moved to approve the resolution. That motion was seconded by Cooper and adopted unanimously.
- g. Consider Approval of Resolution #21-06-05 Authorizing the Mayor to Enter into an Agreement for Local Television Services with Kelso Longview Television, Inc., to Provide Local Public, Educational and Governmental Programming to and from the Rainier Community-Cooper moved to approve the resolution. That motion was seconded by Kreger and adopted unanimously.
- h. Proposed Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership Project-Lawrence said the city has been fined by DEQ. But she's been working with the Lower Columbia Estuary Partnership on an environmental enhancement project. Eighty percent of the fine amount can go towards it. The proposed project would be a benefit for water quality and runoff. It would add infiltration on C Street before 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and do stormwater treatment before going into the ground or Fox Creek. Cole asked if the street is wide enough to accommodate it. Lawrence said it is, and there's a grass strip that can be used. Cole said he supports doing the project. Cooper agreed. Kreger moved to authorize the project. That motion was seconded by Cooper and adopted unanimously.

**Staff Report**-Lawrence said there are fewer than 50 new water meters left to install. Around \$123,000 has been spent on that project and she estimates it has a payback of one to two years. The new meters are capturing water that has been in use and the old ones didn't do that. A form for park reservations is now on the city's website. There was a discussion about having a deposit for park reservations to ensure that the users pick up after themselves. Council agreed by consensus to have that matter discussed by Parks Committee. Police Chief Gregg Griffith said that the hiring process has started for his department's vacant position. Jorgensen said he toured the city's watershed with Cole, outgoing forester Byron Rickert and new forester Patrick McCoy. Much work was done to

prepare for the budget committee meeting and he assisted councilors and Planning Commissioners with filing their statements of economic interest. He submitted a request for grant funding for COVID-related expenses and the city has received those dollars. Jorgensen also organized the ribbon cutting ceremony marking the completion of the riverfront trail.

**Council Reports-**Councilors agreed by consensus that they're pleased with the trail and how it turned out.

**City Calendar/Announcements-**Cole said the next council meeting will be July 12. Rainier Days is scheduled for July 9, 10 and 11, with the parade taking place on the 10<sup>th</sup>.

Cole adjourned the meeting at 8:53 p.m.

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Mayor Jerry Cole

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W. Scott Jorgensen, City Administrator