

# LEAVENWORTH CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

## November 12, 2019

Mayor Cheryl Kelley Farivar called the November 12, 2019 Study Session to order at 8:30 AM.

Council Present: Mayor Cheryl K. Farivar, Mia Bretz, Margaret Neighbors, Sharon Waters, Clint Strand (left at 10:05 AM), and Jason Lundgren.

Staff Present: Joel Walinski, Chantell Steiner, Herb Amick, and Lilith Vespier.

Mayor Farivar excused Councilmember Carolyn Wilson.

### 1. Chamber Report

Chamber Boardmember Paula Helsel and Chamber Director Nancy Smith updated the Council on the Christmas Lighting planning efforts for lighting, busses, characters, and food vendors. She noted the planning underway for Icefest in January and the upcoming Chamber Board meeting in November. She stated that German TV is planning to be in town soon and that the Chamber has heard from Stevens Pass on their intent to continue with the Ski & Stay Program with local lodging facilities; the Chamber will be available to assist as needed.

### 2. Chamber Contract Review

City Administrator Joel Walinski updated the Council on the upcoming renewal of the Chamber of Commerce Contract; the current contract ends on March 31, 2020. Director Smith provided the Council with a PowerPoint Presentation. She identified the function and services of the Chamber Visitor Center noting statistics regarding the number of days open, which is 361 days a year, the amount of people that visit, call, email and utilize the Chamber website. She stated that visitors and residents utilize the staff and facilities for a variety of purposes; some of the more utilized services includes general information, website access, visitor guide/rack card distributions, and business and lodging referrals. Director Smith reviewed many other services that are provided on a daily basis and detailed some of the media relations activities, such as managing arrangements with bloggers, travel writers, photographers, and media editors. She reviewed options for economic development related partnerships, such as special projects, Christmas Lighting Parking, Historical Tours, consideration of new industries, purchasing a promotional utility vehicle, and providing excellent customer service for better retention. She detailed some of the bigger challenges for Christmas Lighting festival parking that includes location needs for visitors, busses, and employees. She reviewed some of the long-term goals for improving infrastructure and outdoor recreation amenities, expanding the historical tour with the Museum, and exploring new industry options. Mayor Farivar stated that the Council will have more discussions in committees with the anticipation of the contract renewal occurring within the next quarter; she asked Councilmembers to consider any additional information needed from the Chamber. Council requested a detailed actual budget for calendar year 2018 for all expenditures.

### 3. Initial Review of 2020 Planning Commission Docket

Development Services Manager Lilith Vespier identified the draft 2020 Planning Commission Docket and stated that she has included a Process Outline to assist in understanding the purpose, types, and process of the amendments. She identified some of the docket items completed in 2019 and updated the Council on the current progress of the Missing Middle Housing recommendations that have come from the Housing Task Force. She noted that the City has received the \$45,000 Housing Grant to assist in further review of the missing middle. She began reviewing the 2020

Docket items that are currently not in any particular order; she stated that the Council will prioritize these in January after meeting with the Planning Commission. She reviewed the mandated items that include the Shoreline Master Program Update, the Housing Action Plan, and the Fire Adaptive Planning. Council requested that an estimate of time for completion be included for each docket item. Council briefly discussed staffing levels, options for additional staffing when needed, and consideration for adding further enforcement of code violations. Manager Vespier briefly noted each docket item within the Comprehensive Plan Updates, Projects, and Code Amendments, many of which are carryover from the 2019 Docket.

#### **4. Water Utility - Leavenworth Municipal Code Changes**

Finance Director Chantell Steiner reviewed the changes incorporated to the water utility sections that will be presented for approval after a public hearing at the November 26, 2019 meeting. She stated that a majority of the changes are being made to ensure compliance with State law as well as standard practices that the City has been doing. She identified the new language to include the one month per year, per account, forgiveness of late fees that has been one of the past practices and the additional new language regarding the three years of limitation on billing adjustments.

#### **5. 2020 Rate & Fee Schedule Review Changes**

Director Steiner briefly reviewed the inclusion of the 1997 building code permit fees, the monthly utility late fee of \$15, and clarification to the other license and permits for motorized and non-motorized vehicles. Administrator Walinski updated the Council on the cemetery updates occurring and the need to consider future funding of the cemetery endowment fund for full build-out. He explained the process to identify rates that will generate the revenues needed for ongoing maintenance when revenues are no longer available. He explained the past history of Ward's Funeral Home and the services that they provided to the customers. He stated that since Ward's has closed, the City staff has been fulfilling service needs that did not occur in the past; including coordination, site locating, and in some cases some levels of funeral service type planning. Due to this transition staff has recommended inclusion of a flat hourly fee for these services when requested. Administrator Walinski discussed the need to plan out the remaining land, which will then be used to determine the future revenue target that will assist in determining the current fee structure needed. Public Works Director Herb Amick noted that the land has been previously platted out; however, the original plan was not necessarily platted how the City would like to see the remaining sections utilized. Staff will discuss further suggestions for rate adjustments at the Parks Committee.

#### **6. Hazard Mitigation Plan**

Development Services Manager Lilith Vespier reviewed her discussion with the County regarding the City's suggested changes not being included; she noted that the lack of inclusion was an oversight and the City's suggestions are intended to be incorporated. She stated that the primary goals of the plan are to improve public safety, minimize impacts of hazards, and look at retrofitting buildings. Staff recommends the Council continue with adoption of the plan to ensure compliance and ability to compete for grant related funding opportunities.

#### **7. Lodging Tax Budget Request – Leavenworth Area Promotions (LAP)**

Leavenworth Area Promotions (LAP) representatives Karl Ruether and Brad Schmidt provided the Council with a PowerPoint presentation of the services provided by the LAP Committee. Mr. Schmidt reviewed the goal of branding and advertising categories that includes such items as magazines, newsprint, social media, travel guides, promotions, influencers (travel writers/bloggers),

and vehicle wraps. He identified the new promotional piece, Der Wordbook, that is engaging visitors in being a part of Leavenworth. He then reviewed statistics of the Chamber Website with about 1.6 million sessions and nearly 3.9 million-page views, of which 80% are new visitors. He identified the statistics on the Chamber's Facebook and Instagram accounts noting that increases are occurring in social media and You Tube videos. He then reviewed the past eight years of lodging tax revenue increases versus LAP's total of the dollars collected, which has been decreasing in percentage of the full budget over time; actual dollars are not decreasing, just the percentage of total funding. Mr. Schmidt identified the areas where LAP dollars are expended noting the need for consideration of cost increases with current vendors. He stated that the LAP Committee has provided the following three options for increases:

- Option 1 maintains the current LAP Budget of \$644,000 plus increases for ad buys, website updates, and increases for social media, video production and distribution for a total request of \$791,520; an increase of \$147,520.
- Option 2 maintains the current LAP Budget of \$644,000 plus increases for ad buys, website updates, and increases for social media, for a total request of \$721,280; an increase of \$77,280.
- Option 3 maintains the current LAP Budget of \$644,000 plus increases for ad buys for a total request of \$695,520; an increase of \$51,520. Mr. Ruether noted that this option basically maintains the status quo and allows an 8% increase in the cost to purchase ad buys.

Mr. Schmidt spoke to the Council about the necessity to continue funding of advertising efforts even during times of increases in revenues. He spoke to the recession that hit in 2008 noting that Leavenworth was fortunate to see such a small downturn of only 4% while other communities were devastated by larger decreases. Director Smith spoke to the suggested options stating that they are recommendations; however, if the City wants to look at funding some items that the Chamber maintains that is an option as well.

Councilmember Bretz stated that as a member of the LAP Committee she has a minimum goal of maintaining the LAP funding and would suggest consideration of Option 2 to allow for some new innovative campaigns that could focus on respect, change, and identifying who we are to our visitors. Mr. Ruether concurred stating that the creation of a Leavenworth Application for social media could help expand the knowledge of who we are and what we do. Councilmember Lundgren added that he would like to see LAP's mission statement and to find ways to measure success and to work on defining that success together. Mr. Ruether stated that the lodging and retail tax revenues are the main engine of the community, and to some extent the measure of success. Mr. Schmidt discussed the need to continue maintenance of advertising during good and bad times; the danger of pulling back, is the time that it takes to come back, advertising takes time and is not an instant impact in most cases. Council discussed the history of the Bavarian Village as a branding tool and how it is still part of the overreaching goal and includes taglines such as Destination Leavenworth. They discussed the change over time of the shops, Bavarian dress, and providing the experience for the ever-changing visitor.

## **8. Wastewater South Interceptor**

Public Works Director Herb Amick updated the Council on the South Interceptor portion of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Project. He stated that the engineers are at 75% design and that the easement locations have been identified. He briefly explained how the pipe is upsized through the process of "pipe bursting". Administrator Walinski explained how large of an impact pipe bursting

has; for each location, it will need a hole dug that is twice the size in area as the depth of the pipe. For instance, this could be a 40-foot wide hole for a pipe that is 20 feet underground; there will need to be several locations for entry. He identified some areas that will need special consideration for maintaining service at all times, such as the hospital, the contractor costs will take this into consideration for creating temporary sewage disposal. Administrator Walinski stated that the purpose of this replacement is mainly due to the age and deterioration of the original pipeline; however, the City is planning to expand the size of the pipe for future growth considerations.

## 9. Waste Assessment

Administrator Walinski stated that the City's garbage trucks are nearing time for replacement, which triggers the question to consider what options are available for making changes for the future. This includes consideration of what garbage is going into the waste stream and if there are other options to consider for garbage and recycling opportunities. He noted that the data collection is the key point of the assessment to help the Council make good informed decisions. He then reviewed the two proposals that the City received from Green Solutions and Bioenergy, Inc. One challenge that the City already faces is that we bill customers based on volume while the City pays the County based on weight. This is one factor that should be considered when developing how businesses are charged in the future. With the removal of glass in recycling, weight has increased; this is another factor that may need consideration. Cardboard is another type of recyclable that may need to be looked at more closely on how it is collected and disposed of.

## 10. Council Open Discussion

Staff provided an update on the Holidays on Ice Rink that may be opening before Thanksgiving. There was a brief discussion on rates that have not been publicly provided.

Councilmember Waters asked that the City include information on snow shoveling assistance for senior and disabled individuals'; Mayor Farivar asked her to provide the information to Executive Assistant Sue Cragun for inclusion in the next City Council Newsletter.

Councilmember Lundgren updated the Council on the Request for Proposal (RFP) that the Upper Valley Park & Recreation Service Area is working on; the RFP will be included in the Board meeting packet that will also be available on the City's website.

Mayor Farivar gave a brief update on U.S. Representative Kim Schrier's listening tour this past Sunday at City Hall that went well with good participation. She stated that Ms. Schrier plans to continue having more listening tours in the future.

Study Session adjourned at 11:48 AM.

**APPROVED**



Cheryl K. Farivar  
Mayor

**ATTEST**



Chantell Steiner  
Finance Director/City Clerk