

LEAVENWORTH CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION MINUTES

August 13, 2024

Mayor Florea called the August 13, 2024 Study Session to order at 5:31 PM.

Council Present: Mayor Carl J. Florea, Sharon Waters, Clint Strand, Anne Hessburg, Zeke Reister, Shane Thayer, Rhona Baron (arrived at 6:27 PM) and Travis McMaster.

Staff Present: Matthew "Selby", Chantell Steiner, Maggie Boles, Andi Zontek-Backstrum and Andrea Fischer.

1. Chamber Report

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Troy Campbell reported that July 2024 was not as good as 2023 for footfalls, but it was better than 2022. He surmises it is due to the excessive heat that we had in July which prohibits a lot of people from spending time outside.

Locals night for Oktoberfest is on October 4, 2024 and is free, however it is required to sign up, so they know how many to expect. The first 700 locals that arrive who are registered will get a free hat pin. Festbier, the most popular beer, will be available again at Oktoberfest and will be available in cans. The Chamber is hiring for Oktoberfest and accepting applications.

The Carvings for Causes is still happening with bids being taken until August 31, 2024. The proceeds will be divided between Okandogs and the Royal Bavarians and so far between all the carvings, they are at \$1,800 currently.

The Chamber is holding a free training "Exceeding Customer Expectations" on September 16, 2024 for Chamber members with a morning and afternoon session. They have not settled on a location to hold it yet. Director Campbell is incredibly excited to bring this training to Leavenworth.

He mentioned that this is the 60th anniversary of the Bavarian theme.

2. Wildfire Recovery discussion with Medical Lake Mayor & City Administrator

City Administrator Selby introduced Mayor Terri Cooper and City Administrator Sonny Weathers from the City of Medical Lake to report on their experience as a City with the Gray Fire that happened in August 2023 and the recovery efforts in the aftermath. We learned what we as a City can do to be better prepared in the case of a fire in Leavenworth.

Mr. Weathers attempted to share a video for the Council about the fire and the lack of planning for a fire. Unfortunately, the video didn't play in its entirety due to internet lag. He will share the link with the Council via email.

He went through the entire process of the fire starting with how the fire began. It was caused by a lighting bolt on the hottest day of the year. There were 638 personnel assigned to this fire which grew to 10,085 acres before being contained in September 2023. Medical

Lake lost 240 homes and 326 total structures with one fatality. The City does not have a lot to do while the fire is happening, only to support the central command, as it is important that the City shows up for the meetings, to keep the needs of the community top of mind; Emergency Management is not always thinking in those terms.

Recovery is an expensive endeavor. In Medical Lake, they have spent \$13 million on cleanup, \$29 million on infrastructure improvements and \$33 million on temporary housing. Wildfires are treated differently than other disasters, which means that there is not an organized cleanup effort that comes in; everyone is responsible for their own area.

For cleanup, they assessed hazards, removed trees, removed debris and conducted safe disposal of hazardous waste.

For improving infrastructure, they connected more private residents to City water and sewer, increased fire flow with 70 fire hydrants added, and improved the connected network of roads to eliminate the one way in, one way out that was prevalent during the fire.

One challenge is finding temporary housing to accommodate displaced families as well as identifying several places for evacuation shelters, in case one is not available.

Items that were identified to reduce risk and vulnerability are to create backup power for critical infrastructure during a power outage, prioritize safety, address Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) management and defensible space around homes, improve preparedness by conducting outreach and education to residents, as well as improve public information and warning systems. It is vital to have the internet and figure out how to get internet if it is lost.

The action steps that Medical Lake has taken to prepare for when another fire (or other disaster) might happen again are in readiness, to develop relationships with the County Emergency Management, the Health Department, nonprofit organizations who will aid in the recovery process and to establish a disaster recovery fund in their annual budget to start the recovery ball rolling while waiting for the County, State and Federal agency money to arrive. Preparation includes being familiar with our hazard mitigation plan and educating the community. Advocating for a long-term recovery group at the State level and communication for emergency notifications and as an incident command liaison.

The Council thanked Mayor Cooper and Mr. Weathers for their presentation.

Editors Note: Staff would like to add for the record that the City of Leavenworth is currently actively involved in the Hazard Mitigation update with Chelan County, maintains a great relationship with Chelan County Emergency Management who performs tabletop exercises regularly with City attendance and the City has hosted an event which included the Washington State Department of Natural Resources, US Forest Service, Chelan Co. Fire District #3, and Chelan Co. Emergency Management. We have received a grant and are anticipating the arrival of three backup generators for the water system, which will keep water online in case of a power outage. The City has adopted the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Code, with new homes being built to that standard and Fire District 3 can be requested

to suggest ways homeowners can create more defensible space around homes for free. The City has published many educational FireWise articles on our website to help City residents have the best chance of making it through a fire with minimal damage.

Study Session adjourned at 6:47 PM.

APPROVED



Carl Florea
Mayor

ATTEST



Andrea Fischer
City Clerk