

Lewiston City Council
Special Council Meeting Minutes
October 28, 2020
Lewiston City Hall – 7:30 P.M.

1. Call to Order

Electronic City Council Meeting called to order by Mayor Beth Mayor Carlson at 7:31 pm October 28, 2020.

2. Roll Call

Present (4): Mayor Beth Carlson, Councilor Dan Robertson, Councilor Carol Boynton, and Councilor Larry Rupprecht. Not Present (1) Councilor Niles Lavey.

Others present: City Administrator/Clerk Cheryl Knight, Fire Chief Tim Dahl, Police Chief Scott Chief Yeiter, Public Works Director Curt Benter, Nick Ebnet and Polly Calhoun (reporter).

3. Discussion topics: 2021 Budget/Wage study

Mayor Carlson commented the wage study was received late. She had wondered if there was another budget document. City Administrator Cheryl Knight commented there was Excel sheet on the back of prior meeting minutes, and an update done 10.15. The wage study came out last evening about 10pm, and she had not had a chance to review it yet today.

Knight stated there were budget items discussed, but direction had not been received from Council for them. They were:

- Increasing Robin Randall's stipend for beautification? The stipend amount was \$1,200 for the last four years.
- \$3,250 budget from Cable to Civil Defense has been approved.
- Removing the dead ash trees using the pool fund monies of \$50,000+. Knight has letters drafted for residents to indicate if they want trees removed themselves or put on the special assessment roll.
- CIP- we are still showing \$127,500 being put into CIP for budget year 2021. This is higher than Mike Bubany's suggested amount of \$60,000.
- 10/14/20 meeting minutes, page two: Mayor Carlson mentioned that with the expenses for the Water Fund being reduced, the transfer could be increased from \$40,000 to \$60,000 to the Sewer Fund. This would potentially reduce the need from the General Fund to the Sewer Fund of \$20,000, and thereby reduce the tax levy.

Knight stated she would update the next budget draft with these items.

- Police Chief Scott Yeiter said that with \$100,000 being put into the sewer budget, this is the only “what-if” money that exists in the budget. Can we assume that there will be sewer repairs, but take it from CIP, and then in the next year budget replenish the CIP for what was spent for sewer in the prior year? The reasoning is that we would have actual expenses, instead of just budgeting \$100,000. Public Works Director Curt Benter stated that we needed to wait until we had solid numbers from Bryan Holtz and his team on what the cost will be for the rehab at the wastewater facility, because this \$100,000 might not be applicable to our budget. We might need to get a low-interest loan to do the upgrades at the wastewater treatment facility. Reducing this \$100,000 could reduce the General Fund transfer to the Sewer Fund, thereby reducing the tax levy. Councilor Rupprecht questioned the grinder pump recently replaced and the funds needed for that replacement ongoing. Benter stated that after talking to Electric Pump, the only amount needing to be budgeted will be \$30,000- \$6,000 a year for five years in CIP.

Public Works Director Curt Benter wanted to review several of his account budgets, so those items are detailed in the Excel sheet at the end of these minutes.

Mayor Carlson wondered if Benter had heard anything about increased costs for chemicals at the WWTP due to COVID? The Hawkins dealer stated all chemical costs would remain the same.

Councilor Rupprecht commented on the decrease to 602-49450-380 Sewer Utility Services account-Knight will investigate that and report back.

Councilor Rupprecht stated a 1% drop in the levy is a \$9,583 reduction in the budget. Benter just dropped 3% from the current levy-leaving us at 10% now. Knight stated that by decreasing the General Fund transfer to Sewer by \$20,000, that could be another 2% drop.

Administrator Knight proposed increasing Robin Randall’s beautification stipend from \$1,200 (paid each of the last four years) to \$1,300. Councilor Rupprecht says that Robin Randall’s work provides something positive for the City and suggests a raise would be in order. Benter felt that \$1,500 would be appropriate-but just a suggestion.

Police Chief Yeiter questioned the summary listing the 2021 levy in yellow- that is what we have changed our preliminary levy too, correct? Yes.

Councilor Rupprecht stated that in order to reach his 4% levy increase, we would have to target \$81,800 to be found and don’t need in the 2021 budget from where we are. Benter’s total

reduction was \$26,500, leaving 55,300. Reducing the CIP from \$127,500 to \$60,000—a reduction of \$67,500—which seems like a lot—which is under Larry’s target rate.

Councilor Boynton asked Administrator Knight about finding \$30,000? It was the 2009A bond money sitting in cash, as the bonds had been paid in full. It is today’s money and has no affect on the 2021 levy. Mayor Carlson stated that \$3,250 is coming off the levy too, as the Cable Fund will pay for that expenditure in Civil Defense. Knight stated that for next year’s summer rec, Fund 208, we levied this year but did not spend anything due to COVID, so we will not need to levy next year.

Councilor Rupprecht stated he was down to a 3% levy amount but said that 4-5% would probably be palatable. It remains to be seen what the CIP will do, as well as the wage study document that was sent out today, that we will not discuss today. Councilor Rupprecht felt that it was a sour pill for our community, and that former Councilor Lavey expressed it the best: that in these times, when people aren’t going to work or have been hit with reductions, we are talking about some pretty major changes in compensation for city employees. This will need to be looked at. He stated that he had looked at compensation paid in each department area through all 35 pages of the document. There was a total compensation increase (including gross salary, the City’s cost of PERA, FICA, Medicare and health insurance-based on the pay itself) of \$55,547 additional cost to the City by following the wage study recommendation as listed on the budget document. This represents a 5.8% increase over 2020. Administrator Knight clarified that the employer paid health premium jumped 9.7%, from \$537 to \$588 per month, per employee. Rupprecht stated the \$55,547 then is just not an increase from the wage study—it includes that 10% jump in health insurance, and the 27th pay period for 2021.

Councilor Rupprecht asked for clarification on how the Council can discuss the contents of a non-public document in a public meeting? Mayor Carlson said that the document and what is in it can be talked about, but not shared. Knight added that you can discuss the non-public document to the extent you need to in order to carry out City business, but it still retains its non-public data classification. Knight said that if the Council adopts the wage study, and the proposed wage grids, then that information becomes public—but the original report it came from still stays non-public. Council can waive attorney privilege on that report, and it could become public, but the attorney does not recommend that. There is no way to have a private meeting to talk about either the report or the numbers in it. Mayor Carlson said that this wage study could be implemented over time. Councilor Rupprecht is concerned how this will be perceived by the City residents, and how to present it to the population. Knight wanted to get the numbers used by Councilor Rupprecht to

compare against a standard 3%, and to find out what is the implementation schedule on the wage study. Councilor Rupprecht read his increases, and the page in the 35-page document it came from. He also commented that the Social Security increase notice he received stated 1.3%, with the Medicare cost going up 4%. Public Works Director Benter wondered why the City wasted their money on a wage study that cost \$3,500 if we were in compliance with the state? There is a big hubbub on this wage study, and if we are going to revert back to the old way of giving a cost-of-living raise, we just wasted money on this study. Knight explained that technically we are in compliance with pay equity for 2019, but without minimum and maximum ranges for each position, they were added in as the current salary. This wage grid would stop the questioning of how much to pay a new employee, and how that pay is in relation to others already in the City. What do we do about raises overall? Knight stated she was surprised the City did not have a wage grid, and that regardless of the job, each job should have a maximum and a minimum pay. This will take the guesswork out of pay decisions going forward. Councilor Rupprecht made several comments regarding pay for exemplary employees, for those doing substandard work, and the wage study in general.

Councilor Rupprecht commented that several council members were not heard from during this conversation, although he did hear from Chief Yeiter, Mayor Carlson, and Administrator Knight. Councilor Robertson stated that he thought we needed to discuss the wage study, in general, and get the department heads on board with it-even if we have not met with Mike Bubany yet. This will be discussed as the first item at the budget meeting on 11/12.

Councilor Rupprecht stated that the Council are the supervisors of the City: all departments, all employees, and all activities. There needs to be more discussion. Mayor Carlson said that a struggle with the City was what Administrator Knight said, what to pay a new employee, and why she was for doing this wage study. Maybe the grid might not have been what she thought it was, but there was lots of good information, the point system, and the beginning and ending wages for each grade, to figure out a wage for a job position.

Other items to consider: Matt's approved ambulance assistant but had no bites on it and Curt was looking for a part-time person and had no bites either. That information is valuable. Also, there was a statement that there might be an exodus from the City, even though not yet seen.

Chief Yeiter added comments that he felt the market rate for the wage study is important. Mayor Carlson stated that although we did get some information from the League, but how do we incorporate that? For Flaherty & Hood to do that will cost \$3,000. These are all good thoughts to be considered by Council as they review the new wage study document received.

Councilor Boynton stated her thoughts about being a new member of City Council, and how she likes to listen and hear all discussion before making a decision and verbalizing that at a Council meeting. She does not appreciate feeling targeted or scolded by a fellow Council member. Yeiter asked again for access to the Flaherty & Hood results from Council.

Councilor Rupprecht motioned to adjourn the special City Council meeting. Seconded by Councilor Roberton. Approved 4-0.

The Council Meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:08 pm on October 28, 2020.

Submitted By:
Cheryl A. Knight
City Administrator/Clerk