

Minutes
Aurora City Council Meeting
Tuesday, January 11, 2022, 6:30 P.M.
City Council Chambers, Aurora City Hall
21420 Main Street NE, Aurora, OR 97002

STAFF PRESENT: Mary Lambert, Finance Officer; Mark Gunter, Public Works Superintendent; Emily Gilchrist, City Attorney; Pete Walker, Marion County Sherriff's Office; Stuart A. Rodgers, City Recorder

STAFF ABSENT: None

VISITORS PRESENT: *In-person:* Jonathan Gibson, Bill Graupp, Steven and Julie Mikulic, Scott Mills, Jan Peel, Charles Roper, Joseph Schaefer, and Heather Wechter, Aurora; Mike Byrnes, Portland; *Zoom:* Ali Ryan Hansen, Andrea Heid, Deann Sealy, Jan Molzger, Ruthie Magnus, Mike Birrenkolt, Sheila Brownell, Tina Zech, and Zach, Aurora; Britta Mansfield, Willamette Falls and Landings Heritage Area; Krista Carter, Marion County; Mike Connors, Portland; Jake Weigler and Megan Wever, Praxis Political; Courtney Dausz, Mersereau Shannon; Brendan Watkins, Piper Sandler

1. CALL TO ORDER OF THE AURORA CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Mayor Brian Asher called the meeting to order at 6:35p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Brian Asher-Present

Councilor Wendy Veliz-Present (Zoom)

Councilor John Berard-Present (Zoom)

Councilor Tara Weidman-Present

Councilor Mercedes Rhoden-Feely-Present

3. AFFIRMATIONS

Mayor Asher hoped all had a nice Christmas break and noted the city had its first power outage of the season but came through it well. The generator was up and running with Mark Gunter's help.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

a) City Council Minutes—December 14, 2021

b) Planning Commission Minutes—December 7, 2021

c) Parks Committee Minutes—No Quorum in December

d) Historic Review Board Minutes—November 18, 2021

Motion by Councilor Mercedes Rhoden-Feely to accept the consent agenda, which motion was seconded by Councilor John Berard, and approved by all present (less Weidman).

5. VISITORS-NA

6. CORRESPONDENCE

a) Willamette Falls and Landings Heritage Area Coalition Request

Executive Director Britta Mansfield provided an overview of her organization, noting that the Willamette Falls and Landings Heritage Area Coalition seeks to drive tourism to all cities within its 56-river mile region from Eagle Creek to north Keizer. The organization is close to receiving National Historic Area designation and wants to be able to support museums like the Old Aurora Colony. Given its limited capacity as a small non-profit, with more partner buy-in to this organization Mansfield noted that they would be in a position to provide marketing support for museums, assist with local events, and drive money to the local economy. Councilor Wendy Veliz noted that larger cities are allowed membership or representation on the board of directors. Britta Mansfield responded that the organization's board is looking at a more equitable approach to representation for its members. Mayor Asher said the Council would have further discussion at next month's meeting and will get back with Mansfield.

Councilor Mercedes Rhoden-Feely motioned, given a focus on the bond at this meeting, to table or continue HRB Member Appointment and Budget Officer and Budget Committee Member, OLCC Liquor License Renewal, all Old Business including Short-Term Rentals, Determining Next Steps for 21440 Main Street, Council Communication with Community as well as the Public Hearing and all Staff Reports. Councilor Berard seconded the motion, and it passed by all present.

7. NEW BUSINESS

a) Public Safety Report

Deputy Pete Walker noted that effective yesterday, he is at the city full time and replacing Deputy Ovchinnikov. Deputy Walker mentioned he followed up on parole and probation checks, and he confirmed that they are a part of the monthly statistics. Walker also noted there was one check in the last month as well as one in the last week that Mayor Asher had identified. Walker also referenced enforcement of traffic laws and some ideas on bike rodeos and other ways to connect with the Aurora community. He reminded of the importance of staying off cell phones while driving.

Councilor Wendy Veliz expressed concern of a drone flying over her neighborhood. Mayor Asher, in light of the city's recent experience with filming for the bond, noted that drones are not allowed to fly in the airspace without permission and that there was a limited window of time to fly around the city even with permission. The City Recorder said that either the deputy or staff could follow up with Tommy Moore at the City of Woodburn to consult on drone rules as they relate to privacy and will provide any feedback to Council. Councilor Berard asked if there were a set of recommendations that could be posted and distributed based on the events of 2021 for residents of the city to guard against potential problems and adopt appropriate practices based on data. Are we doing everything we can to create a safe environment, Berard asked. Deputy Walker will do research and report back to Council. Councilor Veliz noted from the meeting chat feed that Aurora resident Andrea Heid also experienced a drone flying overhead.

b) Becoming a Storm Ready Committee (White Paper): Marion County, Krista Carter
Krista Carter, Marion County liaison to Aurora, addressed the Council about having a

Storm Ready Program, one known to save lives. Basically the program is intended to empower residents to make better decisions before and during bad weather situations. Marion County received a grant from the Ford Family Foundation to purchase National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) radios, one of which would be no cost to the City of Aurora. The purpose of having a NOAA radio is to know what is going on after hours. An application is required, and Carter would like to sit down with Council to discuss and assist in filling out the application if there is a desire to move forward. There is an email group and websites to go to for storm updates. When the radio sounds an alarm, the city would know to provide updates to local residents across confidence levels of high, moderate, and low. Having this program would lower flood insurance premiums through this program. Carter has contact with Councilor Tara Weidman and City Recorder Stuart Rodgers. Staff could serve as contact for checking weather alerts as well as the Raptor mapping system and for placement of a rain gauge at city hall. Councilor Veliz thanked Carter for her work, and Carter noted that Marion County was nominated for and received an award for Emergency Management Program of the Year through the Oregon Sheriff's Association.

c) GO Bond Info Session Slideshow & Invitation for Public Input

Mayor conducted a presentation of slides included in the packet. The City Recorder reminded that February's meeting would include a resolution to support ballot language presented in draft form at this evening's meeting.

There was a question from a community member about interim city plans, given the ice storm event when there was a scramble for a generator solution, until the bond projects would be complete. Mayor Asher noted that the city purchased a new generator for \$67,000 which came online during the electrical outage the other day. The city has rebuilt another generator at the sewer treatment plant and there is another one for pumping water. The city also has a generator that is portable for purposes of hooking up to wells.

Another question related to site selection for the new city hall, and Mayor Asher referenced the lot next door to city hall. It was noted there is a city hall building fund, that the city has been saving for several years to purchase property. Mayor Asher also explained that the city has engaged an architect to develop some preliminary designs for such a structure, to include considerations for parking, utilities, possibly a police station, and other possible elements. Mayor acknowledged that Council does not know what the new city hall will look like. City Recorder Rodgers noted that staff has reached out to other cities like Silverton and Mosier that have recently considered a civic center to include city hall and community center space. Mayor Asher noted that the house next to city hall is uninhabitable and would take about \$30,000 of repairs to get it rentable.

A community member suggested the city needs to implement updated system development fees to offset the cost to residents from local growth. Mayor Asher noted that the Planning Commission has already started to review SDCs toward addressing an update of these fees.

Ali Ryan Hansen joined the conversation with a suggestion for Council to develop a

meaningful public participation process for designing the new community center to ensure that the community's needs are being met. Hansen asked a question of what other funding sources there are and whether these have been secured, and if these depend upon taxpayers kicking in and if there is a funding gap. Mayor Asher noted that the city engaged an architect for purposes of a preliminary assessment of the current city hall location and newly acquired lot next door. Mayor Asher said the city has funding through the federal government and most recent state legislative session, particularly a commitment of \$15 million and another \$500,000 for a well that will cost about a million dollars. The city has another \$100,000 in savings. About \$9 million of funding is going toward wastewater and about \$6 million is going toward water improvements, including a million-gallon water tank and pump on the north end of town to take advantage of gravity flow. This money is all grant funding, requiring no payback. Mayor also noted that the city is currently in negotiation for another \$6.5 million, including \$1.5 million for replacement of water lines up Airport Road to increase water volume for fire safety purposes, part of which funding will be through Marion County. Given the cost of construction and overall funding needed for these infrastructure projects means the city needs supplemental funding through a bond to take care of the problems the city has, including stormwater issues.

Heather Wechter noted the need to include consideration for classes and concerts and other functions in a community center. Mayor Asher added that a resident involved in scouting must drive to Wilsonville for meetings because his children do not have a place locally, highlighting a community center need.

Mike Byrnes asked about a budget for the community center, and Mayor Asher noted that it would be \$1.5 million for the building itself, possibly \$2 million total including construction. Councilor Rhoden-Feely noted the city is looking for other funding opportunities and to design the building for future growth, including a concept of building out only a first floor and leaving unfinished the second floor with an elevator shaft. Rhoden-Feely said the bond is simply a source of funding for some of the projects included in the overall funding the pie chart represents at \$30 million dollars.

On a question regarding the water tower and its stability relative to a new building right next to it, Mayor Asher noted that the architect has this under consideration. Utilities through Verizon and the old jail are also part of an analysis of feasibility and preliminary design. Mayor Asher noted that the city is slowly losing revenue from the water tower, including two companies that merged. It is likely that over the next several years remaining revenue will also be gone.

Ruthie Magnus asked if it was possible to separate out the different elements of the bond, particularly water and wastewater from the community center. Councilor Rhoden-Feely noted use of city hall for a charging station during the ice storm the previous year, as well as a city-hosted spaghetti dinner that had to take place at the Legion Hall in town because city hall could not accommodate such an event. During that storm, the city could not host regular Council or other meetings at city hall. It was also noted there is mold in the city hall building, and Mayor Asher has mentioned there is asbestos. The structure is not ADA compliant, so the city is not adequately serving everyone in the community.

Councilor Rhoden-Feely also noted that the city has taken a conservative approach in consolidating multiple projects in a single bond. She mentioned that the Council represents all volunteer efforts, and Mayor Asher said that going for a bond has consumed many hours and city resources. Mayor Asher also said that trying to build the community center at a separate place and time would become significantly more costly. In conclusion of his response to Magnus, Mayor Asher said the Council is trying to make the bond affordable and make sense for everybody.

A community member said that the pie chart shows exactly what people want to know and should be included in the next water bill. Councilor Veliz suggested an example of, say, a \$400,000 home and associated \$1,200 annual taxes.

It was explained that the bond represents a flat rate on the value of a house with the city assessing a payment across a number of homes. As value of a house increases, the rate would decrease, and as more people pay into the bond, the overall rate would decrease. So the estimate for the bond is an estimate over the next 20 years.

If the bond fails, the city could go out for a loan as an alternative. The loan amount would be reflected on water bills. The city anticipates additional homes being built, and Mayor Asher noted there is plenty of in-fill available as well as space within the urban growth boundary for growth. The mayor referenced a new building in town that will have eight new residences, including associated water bills.

Councilor Rhoden-Feely said the Council position early on was that the bond amount would not exceed \$7.1 million and that the estimated levy rate would be \$3/\$1,000. In the meantime, interest rates have gone down, meaning the cost of borrowing this money has gone down such that if the city maintains an estimated levy rate of \$3/\$1,000, the principal amount would be \$7,835,000. But given information shared with residents, the amount in printed materials is \$ 7.1 million, so it is confusing. The question is whether to bring the rate down to \$2.71, ten cents less than what residents paid this year, or keep the rate at \$3.

Brendan Watkins of Piper Sandler joined the conversation and said he strives to be exceedingly careful, conservative, and that the \$3k/\$1,000 for \$7,835,000 still looks good as an interest rate assumption. Also, another place Piper Sandler likes to remain conservative is with keeping property value growth assumptions below the Oregon statutory max.

Councilor Rhoden-Feely, outlining a counterpoint, believes it would be better received by residents to maintain \$7.1 million and show voters that the savings the city got in the market can be passed along to them. The rate would go from \$3/\$1,000 to \$2.7/\$1,000, demonstrating the city works hard to pass along savings to local taxpayers. She understands the city could use the \$700,000 but noted that the city was not planning to have such an amount. The \$700,000 could help accomplish some of the bond tasks, but Rhoden-Feely maintained that the lower rate would be better received.

In discussion between community members and Council, it was recognized that inflation

will keep increasing construction and other related engineering costs and bond fees. One community member said the Council should keep its original commitment, meaning to stay with the \$7.1 million dollar projection. Some background of the first bond was provided by a community member with a suggestion to be careful of project management, given the challenges with project managers who did not work out and left the wastewater treatment plant project early and will full payment.

The City Recorder noted that the community center will be included in the title of the bond, and Councilor Rhoden-Feely mentioned the need to add stormwater to the title. Discussion between Rhoden-Feely and Praxis Political's Jake Weigler suggested the possible addition of a new city hall as part of a community center project, with follow-up by Weigler, Rhoden-Feely, and the Recorder for input to a final draft.

Councilor John Berard believes from the start the Council has been consistent in maintaining the same rate. He would keep the bond at the mill rate which has been consistent, persistent, and clear with the communication the city has provided since the beginning of the bond work. Berard clarified he wants to keep the historic rate or accept the higher bond yield at \$7.835 million.

Councilor Veliz supports going with the lower rate, making a change to demonstrate respect of residents' money. Councilor Berard asked Councilor Veliz if she thought the Council has been clear about its communication in demonstrating the need for the bond. Councilor Veliz said she appreciates the work of Rhoden-Feely and Mayor and many others, a very difficult lift to get to this point, but she also acknowledged that information including the pie chart was late in being presented, close to the time of placing the bond on the ballot. Councilor Veliz noted the need to incorporate feedback from the community in qualifying the bond amount and making sure to communicate the value of the bond to residents. Further, Veliz prefers to separate out the water and wastewater infrastructure elements as one bond and the community center as a separate type of infrastructure. Veliz noted unpredicted costs or estimates which may change significantly in the future and balancing this with fulfilling a commitment to residents of building the water and wastewater projects.

Mayor Asher said the Council has been very busy behind the scenes and has done the best it can in getting out timely bond information to the Aurora community. Residents have been paying \$3/\$1,000 for the last 20 years, and the current Council has been working to establish the same rate for a new bond by searching for other money to maintain that rate. With costs increasing over time, it would not make sense to push this bond out to a next 20-year bond and place a significantly greater cost on others later. The bond represents an investment for the children and long-term residents of Aurora. Mayor Asher does not feel that going out for another bond is the way to go, and he noted with inflation that costs for taking care of current needs will increase.

A community member noted the big issue that will come up among voters with combined infrastructure in one bond is that support may erode for the entire bond.

If the Council takes the city hall and community center out of the bond, Rhoden-Feely

noted, this removal would not change the amount of the bond. Guaranteed, the current city hall building will not be standing in 10 years. Also, hearkening to a 2018 survey, Rhoden-Feely said that feedback to a question of “What would you do to best improve Aurora?” led the city to consider proceeding with plans for a community center. Rhoden-Feely has not gotten negative feedback about a community center; rather, feedback she has received focuses on whether the bond initiative will pass a vote. Rhoden-Feely, addressing the Council, spoke of the need to provide direction on the amount. The question of bond rate related to bond yield will return for a decision at February’s Council meeting.

8. PUBLIC HEARING

It was determined to continue the hearing at February’s Council meeting.

Councilor Mercedes Rhoden-Feely moved to open the hearing at 8:44pm for public testimony for anyone wanting to address the Council today and leave the record open so that anyone wishing to defer to the February 8 Council meeting that this public hearing would be continued until then with the record left open and no decision made today. The motion was seconded by Councilor Berard and approved by all present.

The City Recorder checked online to ensure no guests wanted to contribute. Attorney Mike Connors indicated that it would be best to wait until the February Council meeting for the Public Hearing.

Planner Wakeley noted that public comment can still be received and entered into the record through the next Council meeting on 8 February, and Mayor Asher closed the Public Hearing at 8:02pm and will reopen it on Tuesday, 8 February.

9. NEW BUSINESS, CONT’D

a) Historic Review Board Appointment: Julie Sixkiller

Mayor Asher moved to appoint Julie Sixkiller to the Historic Review Board, and the motion passed unanimously by those present.

Mayor Asher welcomed Ms. Julie Sixkiller to the HRB.

b) Appointment of the 2022-2023 FY Budget Officer

Mercedes Rhoden-Feely motioned to nominate Mary Lambert as the Budget Officer, seconded by Councilor Berard, and the motion was approved unanimously by those present.

c) Budget Committee Member Appointment

Lambert noted that there is no one yet for Budget Committee.

d) Oregon Liquor Control Commission License Renewals

This item will be continued at February’s Council meeting.

10. OLD BUSINESS

- a) Short-Term Rental

This item will be continued at February’s Council meeting.

- b) Determining Next Steps for 21440 Main Street

This item will be continued at February’s Council meeting.

- c) Council Communication with Community

This item will be continued at February’s Council meeting.

11. ORDINANCES, RESOLUTIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

- a) Resolution 816 of the City Council of the City of Aurora, Oregon, Amending Resolution No. 796 and Adopting a New Schedule of Fees for Planning and Zoning Applications

Finance Officer Mary Lambert explained that every time the city planner or city engineer increased their fees, staff would have to do a new resolution as part of rates updates annually for positions that require it. Councilor Rhoden-Feely’s preference is to bring the updated fee schedule before the Council annually. Because of change of city engineer and several people that work at different rates, a city engineer range would work better.

Mercedes motioned to continue the fee schedule discussion to February, Mayor Asher seconded, and all present approved.

12. REPORTS

Staff Reports were continued for the February Council meeting.

13. ADJOURN

Mayor Asher adjourned the meeting at 9:08pm.



Brian Asher, Mayor

ATTEST:



Stuart A. Rodgers, City Recorder