

Minutes of the Veneta City Council

February 22, 2016

Present: Sandra Larson, Tim Brooker (arrived at 6:38), Victoria Hedenstrom and Thomas Laing

Absent: Thomas Cotter

Others: Ric Ingham, City Administrator; Shauna Hartz, Finance Director; Kay Bork, Community Development Director; Darci Henneman, City Recorder; Sgt. Chris Doyle - LCSO; Joan Mariner - Fern Ridge Review, Sarah Cunningham, Lydia Aguilar, Melanie Nichol, and Phillip Rakowski - Oregon State University

1. CALL TO ORDER THE VENETA CITY COUNCIL

Mayor Larson called the Veneta City Council to order at 6:32 p.m.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

3. TEAM VENETA – OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENT PRESENTATION

Instructor, Sarah Cunningham introduced herself and provided a brief background on the Oregon State University's Strength Weakness Opportunity Challenges (SWOC) analysis of Veneta. She said studies were conducted in the communities of Veneta, Sweet Home and Alsea. The three students presented their findings from the ethnographic research conducted on Veneta. This year's program theme was Rural Resilience. The research allowed the students to learn about rural life.

Lydia Aguilar introduced herself and said she conducted 30 minute interviews with four residents. She said she spent two weeks in Veneta which gave her an opportunity to explore family life in Veneta, interact with community, tour the homeless camp, and spend time at the Service Center and Mid Lane Cares.

Melanie Nichol introduced herself and said she focused on the economy and business interests in Veneta by interviewing a few business members. She said many people she spoke with mentioned Ric Ingham's name in a very positive way.

Philip Rakowski said his focused research revealed that Veneta is a close knit community and today's Veneta is very similar to Veneta when it was founded in the early 1900s. He said when there's a need - the community responds to it.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ms. Aguilar said people were genuinely willing to talk and she specifically wanted to talk with low income families and in some cases a 30 minute interview was a challenge.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Mr. Rakowski said volunteerism is huge in Veneta. He said the needs of the community or a community member are being met. When Veneta was founded, a barn was donated to be used as a lumber yard and community hall. He said the area does the best that it can for what it has. He said in an interview with Pat Coy's assistant pastor, he told him about the local grocery store owner in the 1980s who gave him a job when he needed one.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Mr. Rakowski said some of Veneta's homeless residents said they're here because Veneta offers better services and they would do more for their community if they had the opportunity to do so.

In response to a question from Ingham, Ms. Aguilar said residents she interviewed said they wanted more affordable groceries and would like to see more extra-curricular activities for their kids. They said there

used to be more services available and they expressed concern for that. They did say Veneta has a great youth sports program but many go to Eugene for other sports activities.

In response to a question from Bork, Ms. Aguilar said people didn't really elaborate about the need for affordable housing and a resident drove her around a middle class housing development. She said she would provide that housing data.

Ms. Cunningham said this is the first time they've researched three communities at once. She said she would be glad to provide specific information once personal information is removed. She said the power point and the class room presentations can be made available.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ms. Nichols said the biggest drawback she encountered is everyone's frustration about the condition of Highway 126 but they all realize improving the Highway will be a huge undertaking with a high price tag. The good news is the interviewees were in Veneta because they wanted to be here and a common goal was to find a way to stay viable. She said not having a choice when it came to grocery shopping was a common complaint and many indicated they go to Eugene for major shopping.

In response to a question from Ingham, Ms. Nichols said existing businesses felt the City was pro-development and that it supported businesses. She said business owners she interviewed said they were very appreciative of the time Mayor Larson has spent making sure that people were being treated fairly and that she reaches out to residents and business owners.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ms. Nichols said business owners interviewed said they were happy to be Veneta and would rather struggle to stay here than move. The most common negatives were dealing with Highway 126 and traveling elsewhere to do major shopping.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ms. Nichols said public safety came up in a couple of interviews.

Ms. Aguilar said most interviewees commented that they wanted to raise children in a smaller community and as far as crime, nothing happens in Veneta that wouldn't happen in other communities.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ms. Aguilar said she interviewed the owner of the medical marijuana dispensary who said they're happy to be here, they feel supported, and want to be a responsible member of the community. She said no one she interviewed brought up medical marijuana.

Ms. Nichols said many interviewees talked about backyard chickens and its impact verses medical marijuana. She said Sweet Home and Alsea residents were more concerned about medical marijuana. She said Veneta doesn't have an identity crisis.

The Council thanked the group for the presentation and the effort they put into the study.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

MOTION: Tim Brooker made a motion to approve the consent agenda as presented. Victoria Hedenstrom seconded motion.

VOTE: Thomas Laing, aye; Sandra Larson, aye; Victoria Hedenstrom, aye; Tim Brooker, aye.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said the large expenditure to EWEB was for water purchases and not electricity.

The consent agenda as approved included Minutes for February 8, 2016, Accounts Payable - To be Paid – Payable through February 16, 2016, Civic Calendar for March 2016, Public Works Activity Report for January, 2016.

5. COUNCIL BUSINESS AND REPORTS

a. Business

(1) Lane County Sheriff's Office Activity Report for January

Sgt. Doyle said January calls went down but that's somewhat typical after the holidays. He said there were no significant calls for services.

In response to a question from Tim Brooker, Sgt. Doyle said no particular neighborhood stood out as having concentrated crime.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Sgt. Doyle said Lane County Sheriff's Office doesn't have an anonymous mapping system.

In response to questions from Mayor Larson, Sgt. Doyle said there were several burglaries after the homicide at the Jeans Rd. residence but after the family removed most of the valuables, that activity has settled down. Sgt. Doyle said a case number may be issued after a welfare check has been conducted if a deceased or mental subject is identified or if they receive a referral from the Dept. of Human Services (DHS) for negligence or abuse of a child. He said the detective sergeant will assign a deputy to investigate an allegation which generates a written report.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Sgt. Doyle said calls come to the detective sergeant and get assigned to a deputy geographically. He said because Deputy Nelson has an extensive investigative background, he conducts the investigation, interviews, and follow up for Veneta.

Sgt. Doyle said the school district has requested more traffic patrols for the Veneta Elementary school zone. He said deputies will conduct morning and evening patrols and will also follow random school buses to check for bus violations.

Sgt. Doyle said he has accepted the lieutenant position so Sgt. Halvorson will be returning to Veneta as the acting sergeant.

Mayor Larson congratulated him on the promotion.

b. Council/Committee Liaison Reports

Thomas Laing said Mid Lane Cares has decided to not accept the Trillium grant because it was too difficult to find a suitable space for the clinic. He said Mid Lane hired a new bookkeeper and has a new mailing machine. The Benefit by the Glass event will be held at the Deep Woods Event Center on June 12th at 1:00 p.m. and the Mr. Falcon contest will be in the Elmira High School gymnasium on June 8th at 7:00 p.m. He said the Lions Club and VFW will purchase a defibrillator for the Service Center and Mid Lane Cares has decided it will not have the community garden at the Community Center.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Thomas Laing said they're getting a Community Garden Project Manager and are working on relocating the community garden.

Tim Brooker said there was a lot of information provided at the last Lane ACT meeting and they talked about the legislative reports. He said the next Steering Committee meeting is Wednesday, February 24th.

Mayor Larson said while attending the School District Board meeting, everyone was informed that due to failed contract negotiations, district school bus drivers may go on strike in March. She said she and Bork attended one day of a three day Smart Growth Principles conference in Portland. She said several sessions focused on rural communities which gave her a lot of ideas. She said attending the

conference made her realize Veneta is doing okay and we have a positive approach to growth and development in our community.

STAFF REPORTS

- a. City Administrator.....Ric Ingham
(1) Request from Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce for Rural Tourism Marketing (RTMP) Funds

Ingham said the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors is requesting continued financial assistance to operate the visitor's center. In the past, the Chamber has received funding for the visitor's center, tasting room, and registration costs for events like Wings and Wine. He said the request is for a total of \$4000; \$3000 for operating expenses and \$1000 to offset expenses related to changing its name from Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce to Veneta-Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce. He said we have not drawn down all of the RTMP funds received from Lane County so the fund balance continues to build.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Hartz said we have about \$14,000 in RTMP funds.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said the Chamber is identified as a visitor center in the Travel Lane County Guide. He said ODOT will not allow the Chamber to install a sign because the hours of operation do not meet the minimum requirements. He said during the summer, four to five people visit the center daily and hopefully they're spending a few dollars in our community.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said currently, Wineries without Wall (WwW) is in a state of hiatus and he's not sure if it will come back. He said the most current vineyard has chosen to pull out.

MOTION: Tim Brooker made a motion to approve awarding the Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce \$4,000 from the City's Rural Tourism Marketing Program in support of stipulated services during the 2016-2017 fiscal year. Thomas Laing seconded the motion which passed with vote of 4-0.

- (2) Update on Fern Ridge Chamber of Commerce Name and Bylaw Change

Ingham said based on the request from the City, the Chamber Board has agreed to change its name but in doing so, the Bylaws will need to be approved with a majority vote of all Chamber members. He said the vote will take place at the March 9th Chamber quarterly luncheon, and if approved, the Board will start implementation of the name change; stationery, signage, etc. He said the Chamber will also take the opportunity to make some other updates to the Bylaws.

- (3) Adoption of 1/16 – 6/17 Work Plan

Ingham reviewed the 18 month work plan which includes the last six months of FY 2015-16 and the frame work for the upcoming FY 2016-17.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said we would need to apply to the R.A.R.E. program and be awarded a second year if we wanted Claudia to stay for an additional year.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said it's up to the Council if it wants to offer financial assistance to 8th St. property owners for the cost of sewer improvements but in doing so we open ourselves up to scrutiny from other property owners who were not offered financial assistance from the City for sewer improvements.

Mayor Larson said in a way we are assisting 8th St. residents by trying to come up with some creative thinking for the project.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Ingham said 27 properties paid \$220,000 for the E. Bolton sewer improvements but there are only six to seven properties that would pay \$150,000 for the 8th St. sewer improvements.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said proposed sidewalks for 2nd and 3rd St. would be south from Broadway to Dunham.

Ingham said since the FRCPD did not get on the ballot, staff is assuming the Council would like to resume adopting the Transportation Utility Fee (TUF) Ordinance. Staff provided a timeline with a first reading of the ordinance in April and the second reading in April or May and a fee resolution being passed in late May or June with an effective date of July 1, 2016. He said since the TUF was not implemented January 1, 2016, we have lost six months of revenue. That being said, the following issues should be discussed: 1) Increase the residential monthly fee to \$3.50 or start it at \$3; 2) Implement a graduated scale or a flat fee; and 3) Because the residential monthly rate would increase by 33% over a two year period and the monthly commercial rate would only increase by 16%, in order to make it equitable, should the monthly commercial rate be \$8 rather than \$7. Ingham asked for consensus if this should come back as a full agenda item. Staff would still like to update the billing system in March, draft newsletters, outreach to the non-utility account holders, and work with the Council to make sure the other remaining policy issues are addressed so staff can update the draft ordinance.

In response to a question from Mayor Larson, Hartz said she would provide the Council with projections based on a July 1 implementation date and change the commercial account rate if the Council decided to implement the graduated increases.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Hartz said we have roughly 100 commercial water accounts.

Ingham said we have about 1700 properties in the City of which 1650 are already receiving some kind of utility bill and about 50 to 60 that currently aren't receiving a utility bill. He said we need to update the billing system to include those addresses in order to receive the storm water charge and TUF fee.

MOTION: Tim Brooker made a motion to adopt the 2016-2017 Work Plan from January 2016 to June 2017. Thomas Laing seconded the motion which passed with a vote of 4-0.

(4) Questions from Councilors

Victoria Hedenstrom said she has several roosters crowing in her neighborhood and some of her neighbors are complaining that rats are running down the street.

Ingham said he will follow up with Teresa on Wednesday but nothing has been brought to staff about either of those issues.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Thomas Laing said many rural residents spoke in opposition of the FRCPD (District) at the public hearing.

Mayor Larson said residents in two school districts, other than Fern Ridge and Crow Applegate, said they already pay taxes for their school districts so they opposed the District. Also, residents with large properties have higher assessments and indicated the District will increase their property taxes too much.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said support of the District seemed to be split at the two Lane County Board of Commissioners (BOC) meetings held in Eugene but when the BOC held a meeting in Elmira - in the heart of the area – some 40 people spoke in opposition of the District.

Tim Brooker said many rural residents said they felt the District was created solely for Veneta and that Veneta was the center of the activity. He said you couldn't convince them that deputy response times would double or triple when coming from Eugene.

Ingham said he thought many residents felt it was pushed too quickly. He said he appreciated the proponents' efforts, but \$1.67 per thousand was too much and he felt it could easily be brought down to less than \$1.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said our law enforcement contract will likely increase by about \$20,000.

Ingham said he and Mayor Larson will meet with Commissioner Bozievich this week and then reach out to Mr. Reister. He said with Sgt. Halvorson coming back, we'll see if people want to continue to talk about the District.

Tim Brooker said Lane County has spent \$100,000 on this process thus far and they may be rethinking the District because they want to recoup some of those funds.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said supposedly Lane County has a six million dollar shortfall and the sheriff's office will see 60% to 70% of that. He said unfortunately Lane County won't have the funding to hire the cadets it sent through the academy.

In response to a question from Tim Brooker, Ingham said we've been trying to talk with other communities that have a three cent gas tax. He said the BOC should be pushing all the cities to go with a five cent gas tax. He said 80% of all gas sold in Lane County is in Eugene and its unfortunate we can't get any traction around that.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said the only city that is likely to have a gas tax on an upcoming ballot is Bend.

Tim Brooker suggested Mayor Larson bring it up at the next Mayor's Roundtable meeting.

Ingham said six months ago the Council felt the TUF was the best route to cover those street preservation and improvement costs. He said with the Transportation System Plan (TSP) update starting this spring, staff would like to establish an active citizen group to assist Bork with those updates, put the capital improvement list together and identify focused projects and costs and then get feedback from that committee on what the best alternative is to fund the projects. He said that process will take at least a year and would likely give us the time to get something (a gas tax) on the May 2017 or November 2017 ballot. He said there's potential damage in trying to rush through it.

Tim Brooker said the revenue is not there to continue with major street improvements.

In response to a question from Victoria Hedenstrom, Ingham said last year's outreach resulted in a lot of folks saying the FRCPD (District) wasn't a bad idea but most of the people speaking out against the District were residents living outside City limits. He reviewed the timeline for

implementing the TUF which would take effect July 1, 2016. He said if the Council feels we should do additional outreach, staff is happy to do so.

OTHER

Ingham said at the February 2, 2016 meeting the Planning Commission denied an application for a land partition which the applicant has since appealed. He said the Council is the appealing body and in order to fit the timeline, the appeal needs to be heard by the Council between March 7 and March 9, 2016.

In response to a question from Thomas Laing, Ingham said the partition is on Jeans Rd. just west of Jessie James Ln. He said two lots are in City limits and provide access to eight additional lots which are in Lane County. He said the main reason for the denial was a stop sign wasn't required at the intersection of Jeans. Rd.

After a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Council to hold a special Council meeting at 6:30 p.m. on March 7, 2016 for a Public Hearing on the applicant's appeal of the Planning Commission's denial of the land partition.

Ingham said staff has planned to have the Council packets for the March 7th special meeting delivered five days prior to the meeting. He said notice of the special meeting will go out tomorrow morning. He said the March 14th Council and Urban Renewal Agency meetings will be work sessions only.

Councilor Laing replaced the American flag in the Council room. It was provided by VFW Post 9448.

8. ADJOURN

Mayor Larson adjourned the Veneta City Council at 8:20 p.m.


Sandra H. Larson, Mayor

ATTEST:


Darci Henneman, City Recorder
(Minutes prepared by DHenneman)