

Minutes of the Veneta City Council Work Session

April 11, 2005 - 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Brooker, Darrell Carman, Thomas Cotter, Fred Miller, Ric Ingham, James Dean, Earle Ellson, Larry Pierce, Andy Smith (arrived 6:45 p.m.), and Jeneca Jones (6:45 p.m)

Mayor Brooker called the work session to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. ADOPTION OF PUBLIC SAFETY WORK PLAN

Mayor Brooker reviewed the issues discussed at the last work session:

School Coverage: The Council agreed the time the deputies spend at the high school and middle school is minimal and that they should continue to respond to emergencies and patrol the middle and grade school area during the time students are out. Fred Miller said he agreed the safety of the kids should not be jeopardized but he would like some discussions to take place with the current school officials.

Current Contract Coverage: Sgt. Trapp said most of the deputies spend their time on traffic and following up on complaints. The deputies do not have the time or resources to do investigative work unless they have some leads. Deputies driving the streets and being visible may be one of the best deterrents. A large number of crimes in the community have been auto thefts and car break-ins which are often crimes of opportunity. The current contract covers three deputies and 1/3 of a sergeant which does not provide 24/7 coverage. It would be cost prohibitive to have full time coverage or add another deputy. One possibility that was discussed was to increase the sergeant from 1/3 to 1/2 time. To add less than a full FTE there has to be another agency willing to share the other percentage.

Darrell Carman said he would like to see a cost/benefit study to see the actual benefit of what the City would be getting for the added cost. He would like to see some statistics that show the crime rate in relation to the amount of coverage.

Thomas Cotter said it was his understanding that the deputies are assigned to work the times of day that generally have the highest crime rate. He pointed out that they do not have enough time to make any major changes for the next fiscal year.

Mayor Brooker agreed that they should do a cost/benefit study before making any major decisions.

James Dean asked if the City is subsidizing the County or vice versa. In response, Mayor Brooker said the City pays the full cost for the three deputies and 1/3 sergeant; however, there is a benefit of having the services of the County detectives and forensics when needed. Ric said he felt there hasn't been a direct subsidy by the County; however, they do provide training, records retention, dispatch, and evidence management that may not be fully covered under the contract.

Mayor Brooker agreed with James Dean that the first thing they need to do is identify what can be done in this years budget to address public safety and then decide on how to address the long term needs.

Thomas Cotter said they should begin setting some funds aside to put towards the future.

Mayor Brooker said the work plan lists four strategies. The group chose the first strategy, police coverage, as being the #1 priority and agreed they need to do an assessment of the City's current coverage and needs. He said they also need to talk about the other three strategies which are crime prevention, code enforcement, and increasing street safety. He said those are all areas the City will need to spend money on. Mayor Brooker said the law enforcement budget comes directly out of the General Fund.

Andy Smith said just having deputies visible is a deterrent. He said he thinks it is important to look at alternatives such as establishing a police force.

Mayor Brooker said the first thing the City needs to do is determine what the best coverage for Veneta would be and how to get it. He said the second strategy to establish a crime prevention program could possibly provide more for the money spent. He said rather than adding another deputy it may be more cost effective to have a part-time crime prevention coordinator to work with Neighborhood Watch and provide public education on crime prevention. He said they may need to start with a volunteer program. He said the City should consider setting some money aside in the budget for crime prevention.

James Dean said it is important for the City to have a positive image. In response, Thomas Cotter said he felt the types of problems Veneta has are very similar to what other cities of comparable size are facing.

Mayor Brooker said there are also non-criminal things the City needs to deal with as part of public safety, such as code enforcement and safe streets. He said the City won't be able to do everything in the short term but should begin setting some money aside in the budget. This year the budget should include money to do a cost/benefit analysis for police coverage and possibly a part-time crime prevention coordinator. He said code enforcement could possibly be included in a crime prevention program. He said there is a definite need to increase street safety with additional street lighting, sidewalks, and better emergency vehicle access; however, those are longer range projects that the Council should begin talking about.

Ric said the City has completed the street assessment and CIP. Once the East Veneta Study has been completed the Citizen's Advisory Committee will make recommendations for amending the Transportation System Plan (TSP). When the TSP is updated they should address the issue of increase street safety.

Mayor Brooker proposed making a recommendation to the budget committee that they establish a line item for a cost/benefit study for police coverage and a part-time crime prevention officer. Darrell Carman said the cost/benefit study should include the other strategies to determine what is most efficient.

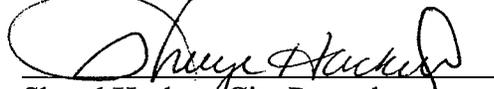
2. ADJOURN

Mayor Brooker adjourned the work session at 7:00 p.m.



T. J. Brooker, Mayor

ATTEST



Sheryl Hackett, City Recorder
(minutes prepared by SLHackett)

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