

MEETING OF THE CITY OF CONNELL, WASHINGTON  
CONNELL, FRANKLIN COUNTY, WASHINGTON

January 19, 2016

The regular semi-monthly meeting, of the Connell City Council was called to order by Mayor Blackwell at 6:00 pm in the City Hall and was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Bruce Blackwell, Mayor Pro Tem Monty Huber, and Councilmember's: Rhonda Quinton, Kathy Silva, Joe Escalera and Ray Minor.

MEETING RECESSED

The Mayor recessed the meeting until 6:10 pm to be reconvened at the Connell Community Center.

MEETING RECONVENED

The Mayor reconvened the meeting at 6:10 pm and the following was heard before the Council:

STAFF: Attorney Dan Hultgrenn, City Administrator Jed Crowther, Public Works Director Larry Turner, Police Chief Chris Turner, Accounting Clerk Jeri Reinauer and City Clerk/Treasurer Maria Peña.

VISITORS: Kathy Bingham, Franklin County Graphic; David Jepsen, Anderson Perry Association; Jeffrey Uttecht, DOC; Citizens, Steve Kinne, Schuy Kinne, Consuelo Rivera, Martha Corona, Rafael Alvarado, Alma Alvarado, Jilayne Jenks, Terry Utecht, Ron Lawler, Kim Tanner, Jason Tanner, Rebecca Jones, Chris Jones, Eddy Ochoa, Pat Barrera, Sergio Marroquin, Maria Huerta, Orion Raabe, Beatriz Villagomez, Regina Grassl, Bertha Todd, Jami Todd, Frankie Meraz, Isabel Pedraza Tapia, Horacio Pedreza Olayo, Philip Krigbaum, Shelly Chounard, John White, Miguel Lacera, Guadalupe Arrez, Elijio Arrez, Paul Clark, Helen Tobin, John Lindner, Carol Lindner, Gary Geissler, Maria Belen Nunez, Roy Kirkpatrick, Jo Kirkpatrick, Estevan Pena, Claudia M. Bingham, Margarita Sanchez, Rubit Lopez, Enrique Lopez, Pedro Roman, Silvia Roman, Leo Roman, Kaniththa Oudomvong, Karen Huebert, Jan Mc Gary, Hortencia Castillo, Eladio Castillo, Juan Villagomez, B Booker, Julissa Garibay, Miriam Bermudez, Carolina Perez, Juventina Artiaga, Matilde Gonzalez, Nasario Amador Morales, Nancy Schultz, Brandi Fox, Elida Fernandez, Jonathan Fox, Abel Pena, Maria Tejada.

APPOINTMENTS

- A) Civil Service Commission – Regina Janosky
- B) Hotel Motel Committee – Mayor Pro Tem Monty Huber Chair, Burl Booker, Cassandra Hart, Jim Paul, Regina Janosky
- C) Finance Committee – Councilmember Rhonda Quinton & Mayor Pro Tem Monty Huber
- D) Tree Advisory Board – Manuel Galvez, Linda Bailie, Becky Daggett (Secretary), Kim Phanthavong (City Representative), Ken Sellereite (Chair)

**Motion:** Councilmember Quinton moved to approve the appointments as presented.  
Councilmember Escalera seconded, motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT CALENDAR

**Motion:** Councilmember Huber moved to approve the Consent Calendar as presented.

- a) Minutes of the Regular Council Meeting January 4, 2016
- b) Minutes of the Town Hall Meeting January 11, 2016
- c) Accounts Payable December 30, 2015 for \$78,446.76
- d) Accounts Payable January 19, 2016 for \$156,336.50

Councilmember Quinton seconded motion. Motion carried unanimously.

CITIZEN COMMENT/JNON-AGENDA ITEMS

Eddy Ochoa spoke in favor of lifting the marijuana ban and provided handouts for the Council. Mr. Ochoa had information with him on how the tax worked. Mr. Ochoa spoke about Prosser's marijuana tax, stating that he spoke to someone at the State, and that their revenue would likely double for the next year and would be \$150,000 to \$160,000 for 2018. Mr. Ochoa commented that yearly sales in Connell would likely be \$252,000 and that the 37% tax the city would receive was \$93,240 not including the state portion of the tax. Mr. Ochoa referred to an email from Dr. MacRae, who had a degree in mathematics and statistics, and commented according to the email the City of Connell would generate several million of revenue the first year and after the ban the revenue might be \$600,000 to \$1,000,000 annual range. Mr. Ochoa also provided a Federal Enforcement Priorities Checklist that listed eight priorities with the number one goal listed as preventing the distribution of marijuana to minors.

Maria Pena spoke against lifting the marijuana ban and asked that the Council judge well between facts and assumptions. One assumption was that by having a legal pot store in town it would shut down an illegal vendor. Ms. Pena also pointed out that not all vendors followed the rules, there were 22 failed compliance checks and 152 violations issued by the Dept of Liquor & Cannabis Board for their last fiscal year. Another assumption was that the City would receive \$100,000 per calendar year. The City would not receive any revenues in 2016 as those distributions had already been determined by the State and wouldn't receive revenues until 2018 which would be based on 30% of the 37% tax. Ms. Pena also commented that Mr. Ochoa had not discussed the business he intended to open in Connell. There were other issues that needed to be discussed such as the growing of marijuana in Connell.

Regina Grassl spoke in favor of lifting the marijuana ban and provided a handout with the FY 2016 Distributions to Local Governments for Marijuana Enforcement from Dept of Liquor & Cannabis Board along with the 2015 City Organization Chart and the City's resolution setting salaries for 2016. Ms. Grassl commented that she believed how it all started was because of the pool. She proceeded to inquire if Council was aware that the total monthly estimate for 22 employees was \$1,600.20 and that the total yearly estimate was \$1,274,400? The pool cost was \$102,000. Ms. Grassl commented that it was all about the money. She contacted the City of Pasco and provided that in 2015 they charged \$33-\$35 for swim lessons, non-resident season pass was \$75 for a youth, \$125 for an adult, \$350 for a family up to 6 people. She also contacted Othello whose family pass was \$245 for 7 members and again noted that it was all about money.

Elida Fernandez spoke against lifting the marijuana ban and thanked the Council for the opportunity to speak and proceeded to add that wasn't it lovely that it was all about the money. That it was really sad, to sell ourselves to money to continue to keep the pool open. She

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expressed that it was her job as a parent and as a community member, because it took a village to raise our children, to be responsible. She often said that it was not all about money. It was about establishing and keeping a good moral town. It was posted all over Facebook how kids were excited about it coming to town. It was time we took a stand for what was correct and did the right thing. Where did the Council stand? What was the message that would be sent to our children, our community and our surrounding communities? That we were bidding for money or that we wanted to raise good children to be productive tomorrow and not have to go to rehab.

Rebecca Jones spoke against lifting the marijuana and expressed that she was adamant that she did not want a pot store in our community. She spoke about coming from a family that used and abused it and that she did not want to see another family go through what she went through as a child. Council did not understand the responsibilities and especially the consequences that came with putting a marijuana store in our community. Ms. Jones worked with children every day. She was appalled that Council could even think about selling out. It would not bring in anymore money only more trouble and the city did not need it. Council could bring in better businesses and could do better in this town. Kids could be given better jobs and a moral upbringing. She moved her family here to get away from it in Pasco. She did not want the City selling out to money as it would not be enough for anything.

Helen Tobin spoke but noted that she was not stating if she was for or against the ban. She commented that she noticed that when City Administrator Jed Crowther posted the minutes for the Town Hall meeting that Maria Pena had a whole paragraph and quotes and that Mr. Crowther did not reference any comments from the pro marijuana and that she felt he was biased. That she has seen bias on decisions that happened with the pool. That Mr. Crowther was presenting Council with not complete minutes from Town Hall meeting and that Katherine Bingham did a better job with the Graphic. She asked Council to please do their research. To go online, call Prosser, call Othello, call Moses Lake, for Council to do their own research and find out for themselves and make their decisions based on that because they were going to get a lot of facts that were not backed up by anything. Ms. Tobin requested that they do their research if they had not already.

Councilmember Escalera noted that there was a DARE program put in place to teach kids to say no to drugs. He also commented that Council had addressed the moratorium three times and that no one had shown up. The time came and Council voted to ban it. Councilmember Escalera stated that he was sticking with his decision to ban it.

Councilmember Quinton advised that she had talked to a lot of community members and that she agreed with Councilmember Escalera and was going to stick with the ban at this point.

Councilmember Silva also commented that nobody had showed up to the meetings concerning the ban and that everyone was showing up now that it was brought up to lift the ban. She expressed that she was torn because she knew that the City of Connell needed the money. She thought it should be put on a ballot but was advised that the City could not do that yet. As far as the ban, she stood by it.

Councilmember Minor addressed that Council had gone through a big process and spent money. Perhaps Council sounded biased now but at the time when it was researched they saw both sides and listened to both sides. No one came forward to say that they wanted it. To go back to redo it

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would cost money and he felt that they would end up with the same conclusion. As far as he was concerned they were not removing the ban.

Mayor Pro Tem Huber thanked everyone for attending. He stated that the laws were constantly changing and that hopefully soon there would be some clarity on the laws so that there could be enforcement on illegal operations. Personally he had never been for the marijuana. One of the reasons he had chosen Connell was for the way of life. The moral upbringing for his children in a small town was very important to him. He had no interest in changing that.

Mayor Blackwell closed the public comment portion by advising that he wasn't for or against it. He advised that his job was that when someone came to him saying that would like to address the people of Connell at a Town Hall meeting was to let them know of the meeting that was coming up. He was happy that everyone showed up and aired out the issue. Council's said they did not plan on reversing the ban anytime soon. The issue would be put to rest six month to a year. When it came time to revisit the issue it would follow the same process. Everything would happen in front of the public. That was the reason for having Town Hall meetings was for issues like this to come up.

Councilmember Quinton excused herself from the rest of the meeting.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**Motion:** Mayor Pro Tem Huber approved agenda as presented. Councilmember Silva seconded motion. Motion carried unanimously.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

**PUBLIC HEARING –Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

Mayor Blackwell recessed the regular meeting at 6:51 pm and opened a Public Hearing to review the Community Development Block Grant program.

**STAFF REPORT:** City Administrator Jed Crowther provided that the main purpose of the hearing was to obtain citizens views and respond to proposals and questions. The hearing would cover community development and housing needs as well as the availability of CDBG Funds.

The hearing would target two categories within CDBG. The first category was Housing Enhancement Funds (HEF). The City Council approved staff submit a request for \$200,000 to HEF for street work to be done for the Connell Family Housing Project. The second category was a General Purpose Category. Potential projects for this category included: Well #6 replacement, water line improvement, wastewater collection system improvement, sewer lift station/sewer lines serving Country Estates, sewer system upgrades, other CDBG- eligible projects.

The Mayor then opened the meeting for comments from the public.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

-Paul Clark addressed Council regarding the low-income housing project by the old elementary school commenting that he believed it was a great project that was needed by the community but that Council would find a great deal of opposition for this project and

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asked Council to consider an alternate location.

-Rebecca Jones commented that her concern was she didn't want more low-income housing that would bring more trouble.

-Elida Fernandez noted that she was raised in a farming community and they did not have energy at the end of the day to go causing problems.

- Bertha Todd addressed that it was really hard finding a place to rent because they didn't qualify because they made too much and then the actual rent was too much. There was a need for middle-income housing as well.

-Claudia Bingham commented that there was a need for housing and felt that it was a great idea.

Mayor Blackwell then opened the hearing for discussion by the Council.

COUNCILMEMBERS COMMENT PORTION OF THE HEARING:

-Mayor Blackwell advised that the City had tried to get people in to build housing but that there weren't enough residents to support building additional housing.

- Councilmember Huber noted that working for the Sherriff's department he was familiar with the low-income housing project in Pasco and not seen a lot of issues there. They had strict regulations. He was concerned with the traffic at the proposed location.

- City Administrator Crowther advised that the proposal would still need to go through rezoning hearings. At that point the connection points for traffic would be laid out. He also discussed buffering.

- Councilmember Minor addressed the issue of a need for middle-income housing stating that by having additional low-income housing it would hopefully make the town more accessible for other plants, leading to more jobs, leading to more incentives for builders to build additional housing for the middle-class.

- Councilmember Silva noted that Council was working on it.

- Councilmember Escalera expressed that he felt the housing development would benefit the City.

Mayor Blackwell closed the Public Hearing at 7:20 and opened the regular meeting.

WATER SYSTEM PLAN UPDATE – Dave Jepsen, Anderson Perry

Mr. Jepsen provided that regarding WUE measures the City staff recommended posting WUE information on the City's website and providing new customer with water system informational packets. In regards to water service areas four different service areas would be defined within the City. Mr. Jepsen also discussed system assessment and improvements noting that the City would eventually need more reservoir storage and source capacity placed into service. He also provided an update on Well #6 and the City's options. Mr. Jepsen reviewed system finances and project funding, recommending the City set aside \$200,000 in an emergency fund. He also went over the remaining tasks.

BENTON-FRANKIN COMMUNITY ACTION CONNECTIONS- Cathy Merrill Holle  
Tabled

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS MASTER WORK CREW AGREEMENT

Pat Barrera from the Department of Corrections was present and answered questions

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regarding L&I invoicing for the inmate crew.

City Administrator Crowther noted that city staff had met with DOC staff and reviewed the contract regarding hazard assessment, safety training, and sexual misconduct training. The sexual misconduct training had been waived.

**Motion:** Councilmember Silva moved to approve the Master Work Crew Agreement with Department of Corrections. Mayor Pro Tem Huber seconded motion. Motion carried unanimously.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

City Administrator – Jed Crowther

- 1) Currently working on a business opportunity

Police Chief- Chris Turner

- 1) Had a vacant officer position
- 2) Monthly training was taking place
- 3) Evaluations had been completed

Public Works Director-Larry Turner

- 1) Public Works department was quiet all was working well

City Clerk-Treasurer-Maria Pena

- 1) Year end was wrapping up, would have month end for December at the next meeting.
- 2) Staff received the \$106,000 reimbursement for the police radio equipment.

MEETING RECESSED

The Mayor recessed the meeting at 7:51 pm to go into an executive session for 10 minutes to discuss pending litigation.

MEETING RECONVENED

The Mayor reconvened the regular meeting at 8:02 pm and the following was heard:

**Motion:** Councilmember Escalera moved to approve settlement of the Mckee V City of Connell case in the sum of \$463.80. Mayor Pro Tem Huber seconded motion, carried unanimously.

MEETING ADJOURNED

There being no further business before the City Council of Connell, Mayor Blackwell adjourned the meeting at 8:03 pm.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Rose Courneya, Deputy City Clerk/Treasurer

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Bruce Blackwell, Mayor