

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY OF CONNELL, WASHINGTON
CONNELL, FRANKLIN COUNTY, WASHINGTON
February 07, 2024

The Regular meeting of the Connell City Council was called to order by Mayor Lee Barrow at 6:00 pm in the City Hall and was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Lee Barrow and Councilmember's: Joe Escalera, Pat Barrera, Shelly Harper, Preston Hart, and John White.

STAFF PRESENT:

Fire Chief Ken Woffenden, Treasurer Teresa Steele, City Administrator Cathleen Koch, City Clerk Marissa Ortiz, Public Works Director Hallie Tuck, Police Chief Chris Lee, and City Attorney Heidi Ellerd.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Harper moved to approve the consent calendar as presented:

- a) Minutes of the Special Council Meeting January 22, 2024
- b) Accounts Payable 2/7/24 for \$74,028.13
- c) Check Register 12/31/23 for \$102,606.70
- d) Payroll Register 1/19/24-1/19/24 for \$90,143.44

Councilmember Escalera seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Harper moved to approve the agenda with an amendment:

(Added Memo #8a – Discuss the City Administrator Contract).

Councilmember Escalera seconded the motion. Motion carried (4-1 vote).

COMMENTS/NON-AGENDA ITEMS

City staff and the general public were among the attendees who spoke during the comment portion of the meeting.

Kelly Hogan - expressed her disapproval of all the criticism against Cathleen, the City Administrator.

Dodie Phillips – stated her support for everything Cathleen, the City Administrator, had accomplished for the city.

Vicki Barrow – said she was in support of City Administrator, Cathleen Koch.

Kara Booker – clarified the reason she questioned the requirements of approval on her current building permit.

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Chris Lee – expressed his concern for the lack of respect towards the city during the last few months.

Katrina Kunkel – gave her opinion regarding the City Administrator during her time as a councilmember.

Cathleen Koch – stated that she was committed and in support of the City of Connell and was from the start of when she arrived.

Kathy Trowbridge – said her reason for not publishing a clarification from the city in the Franklin County Graphic Newspaper.

Marissa Ortiz – voiced her opinion that Cathleen was a great City Administrator.

Helen Tobin - acknowledged she was in favor of Cathleen, the City Administrator, and the division within the city needed to stop.

Jim Colclasure - stated that a recall on officials could be carried out by RCW.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

WATER/SEWER LATE FEE PRESENTATION

According to the City Council's request, city staff gave a PowerPoint presentation on the issue of late fees for water and sewer utility bills. The content focused on the utility process, financial impact, comparison of late fees with surrounding cities, and an analysis of delinquent accounts. Furthermore, the public outreach and education on payment solutions and the proposed alternatives to the current fee structure were also included.

Motion: Councilmember Hart moved to approve the proposals to utility late fees; waive one late fee a calendar year, remove interest fees on delinquent accounts, and reassess in one year after gathering additional information. Councilmember Barrera seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

COMMENTS/NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Guillermo Cisneros – said he had an issue with utility late fee charges, specifically the tiered system charges.

Sarah Gallo – stated that she was against the utility late fee tiered system, stating she was unable to pay the bill by the deadline.

HVAC SERVICE AGREEMENT

Hallie Tuck, Public Works Director, submitted three quotes for the completion of the HVAC service agreement. The city's current contract expired on December 31, 2023. The three quotes were presented by Campbell & Co., Total Energy Management, and Jordan Mechanical Group.

The following were the service provider price quotes:

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- Total Energy Management - \$2,191.26/quarter, \$8,765.05/year
- Campbell & Co. - \$872.45/month, \$10,010.00/year
- Jordan Mechanical Group - \$859/quarter, \$3,436/year

Motion: Councilmember White moved to approve the service contract with Jordan Mechanical Group, JMG. Councilmember Hart seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

CITY ADMINISTRATOR EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

The Councilmembers continued to discuss the City Administrator employment agreement.

Mayor Barrow – stated that he had full confidence in Cathleen’s ability, she had an amazing work ethic and had been attacked without cause.

Councilmember White – expressed his appreciation for the City Administrator, he pondered his decision, which was to have her continue to perform her duties.

Councilmember Barrera - was a fan of Cathleen, and could see she was doing her job professionally, therefore respected and supported her for that.

Councilmember Hart – stated that he had no evidence that Cathleen was not doing her job, and everyone had to unite and get through it.

Mayor Pro Tem Harper – said observing the city's staff in support of Cathleen said it all, and believed we could get past this.

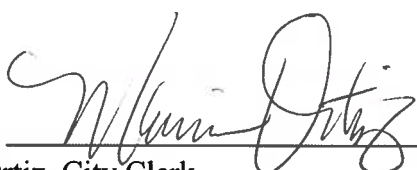
Councilmember Escalera – said he was tired of the whole situation and did not want to continue hearing about it.

Mayor Pro Tem Harper initiated a motion to put the matter to rest.

Motion: Mayor Pro Tem Harper voted to approve and continue the term of the employment agreement between the City of Connell and the City Administrator. Councilmember Hart seconded the motion. Motion carried. (4-1 vote).

MEETING ADJOURNED

There being no further business before the City Council of Connell Mayor Barrow adjourned the meeting at 7:46 pm.

ATTEST: 
Marissa Ortiz, City Clerk


Lee Barrow, Mayor