

Anacortes City Council Minutes – November 16, 2020

Mayor Laurie Gere called to order the Anacortes City Council meeting of November 16, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers Jeremy Carter, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Carolyn Moulton, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall and Matt Miller all participated in the meeting in absentia via video conference.

Announcements and Committee Reports

COVID-19 Update: Mayor Gere shared current case statistics for Anacortes, Skagit County, Washington State, and the nation. The mayor compared Skagit County case counts to the metrics required to move to Phase 3 of the Safe Start Washington Plan. Mayor Gere then shared highlights from new, stricter COVID guidelines issued by the Governor's office in response to increasing case counts across the state. She encouraged the community to support local businesses during this difficult time.

Mr. Young asked again whether staff had received any guidance from the state on offering local purchasing preference in response to the economic impacts of COVID. City Attorney Darcy Swetnam said no but that she would follow up and report any developments.

Public Works Committee: Ms. Moulton reported from the committee meeting earlier in the evening. She reported on topics discussed including successful completion of the Skagit River raw waterline project, the wastewater treatment plant outfall project, and new measures of Public Works staff public service interactions.

Public Comment

No members of the public wished to address the Council on any topic not on the agenda.

Consent Agenda

Mr. Miller moved, seconded by Mr. Young, to approve the following Consent Agenda items. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

- a. Minutes of November 9, 2020
- b. Approval of Claims in the amount of \$3,458,246.90

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:
EFT numbers: 98635 through 98668 and 98680, total \$173,692.82
Check numbers: 98669 through 98679, total \$3,269,954.39
Wire transfer numbers: 275951 through 276259, total \$14,599.69

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Continued Public Hearing: 2021 Budget

Finance Director Steve Hoglund provided additional background on the proposed budget. Mr. Hoglund's slide presentation was added to the packet materials for the meeting. He responded to councilmember questions about unfilled staff positions and deferred expenditures on pavement overlays, equipment replacement funds and fire protection level of service investments.

Police Chief John Small and Police Captain Dave Floyd addressed the question of filling unfilled patrol officer positions and the possibility of hiring some sort of social worker. Councilmembers discussed this topic. Mr. Walters requested a complete list of staff positions included in the proposed budget.

Mayor Gere invited members of the public to address Council on the proposed budget. She asked speakers to limit their comments to three minutes to give everyone a chance to address the Council. *[Written public comments on this agenda item that were received prior to the meeting were included in the packet materials for the meeting, including written comments by some of the speakers who also addressed Council during the meeting.]*

Troy asked about the criteria for police department accreditation. He said he was taken aback by the officers' poor training. He suggested spending on more training for existing officers rather than filling additional officer positions.

Eli Barrett spoke in support of adding a social worker to the city staff to better serve both the community and the police officers.

George Cudworth spoke in favor of adding mental health workers to the police force and eliminating "the cult, gang or brotherhood of the Thin Blue Line." Mr. Cudworth alleged police mishandling of a recent call to the corner of 12th Street and Commercial Avenue.

Keiko McCracken encouraged Council to "dream large" and make the budget protect and promote the future of Anacortes in ways that may not be what had worked in the past. Ms. McCracken described the challenges for officers responding to special needs citizens.

Rochelle Kealoha spoke in favor of filling at least one of the open police officer positions with an embedded social worker to strengthen service to the community and assist the officers in the police department.

Reverend Drew Frisbie spoke about those on the margins of society and said police have not always been trained to respond to them. He supported adding a social worker to the Anacortes Police Department.

Elizabeth Scholze asked Council to replace one police officer with a social worker. Ms. Scholze described the CAHOOTS project in Eugene, Oregon.

Kayla House supported adding a social worker to the Anacortes Police Department. Ms. House cited 911 call statistics for call types that she felt would be better served by a social worker than a patrol officer.

Sarah Roberts suggested that a social worker on the police force could serve a broader segment of the community with a wider range of interventional techniques. She urged making that part of the 2021 budget.

Katie Eastman said that a social worker position has been needed for a long time. She urged finding a way to leverage social workers currently on staff at other agencies or hiring someone per diem. Ms. Eastman emphasized police partnerships with all practicing mental health providers in the community.

Evan Saxton demanded that the city hire at least one social worker to work with the Anacortes Police Department. He cited examples of embedded social workers in neighboring jurisdictions. Mr. Saxton distinguished such programs from demands for police defunding.

Karen Gallardo suggested that having an embedded social worker respond to calls in the company of a patrol officer could deploy police resources more efficiently. She urged adding a social worker immediately.

Juliet Paramor reiterated her demand that an embedded social worker be added to the police department in 2021. She stressed the importance of investing in social services city wide.

Kate Clark discussed an analysis of 911 call statistics that several of the evening's speakers had referred to. She noted that unfilled positions in the budget included many that would help to provide social support for at risk community members, particularly during the pandemic. She urged forming a committee to make a plan to support at risk community members.

Dennis Clark observed that Council had heard three hours of public comment about one \$109K item in the \$73M budget and suggested that Council scrutinize the rest of the budget.

No one else wishing to speak, Mayor Gere closed the public hearing. She indicated that Council would continue its deliberation on the budget the following week.

OTHER BUSINESS

Access - Anacortes Fiber Internet Business Plan

Fiber Manager Jim Lemberg reported on the fiber utility's business plan, referring to the packet materials for this agenda item. He responded to councilmember questions during the course of his presentation and agreed to perform additional pro forma analyses suggested by Council.

Mayor Gere invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item. No one present wished to address the Council.

Access - Anacortes Fiber Internet Update

Administrative Services Director Emily Schuh provided the regular monthly update on Access Anacortes Fiber Internet. Ms. Schuh's slides were added to the packet materials for the meeting. She reported on customers in service, pending orders and revenue received. She noted the take rate by district, which was exceeding a 41% take rate in the pilot zones. Ms. Schuh also reported on the status of construction by zone, special projects with the Samish Indian Nation, Island Hospital, and Chandler's Square, and financial and network expansion projections for 2021.

Mayor Gere invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item. No one present wished to address the Council.

There being no further business, at approximately 9:05 p.m. the Anacortes City Council meeting of November 16, 2020 was adjourned.