

Anacortes City Council Minutes - April 15, 2024

Call to Order

Mayor Pro Tempore Carolyn Moulton called to order the Anacortes City Council meeting of April 15, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers TJ Fantini, Ryan Walters, Anthony Young, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Bruce McDougall and Amanda Hubik were present.

Pledge of Allegiance

The assembly joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Announcements and Committee Reports

Mayor Pro Tem Moulton spoke about the tragic loss of life last week in the community and extended the Council's sympathies to all those affected. She then mentioned mental health resources available for those in distress. Mayor Pro Tem Moulton announced upcoming city events on Saturday, April 20th, including Spring Clean-Up Day at the D Avenue Operations Facility from 9am to noon, the Earth Day Celebration on Commercial Avenue between 4th Street and 9th Street in downtown Anacortes with a street festival and live music at 4pm, Procession of the Species parade at 5pm and the Luminary Light parade at 8pm. She recapped the A Avenue Landfill public meeting hosted by the Department of Ecology just prior to the City Council meeting with public comment on the remedial site plan being open through April 23rd.

Economic Development Committee

Mr. Young reported from the Economic Development Committee meeting held on April 9th. The topics discussed included the vision for the city and development of the strategic economic development plan, primary data collection and analysis, plans for secondary data collection, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, the intention for the report to be actionable, and cooperation with Western Washington University.

Finance Committee

Ms. Moulton reported from the Finance Committee meeting held April 11th. The topics discussed included water rates and regional wholesale compliance, and 2023 budget reconciliation.

Housing Affordability and Community Services Committee

Mr. Walters reported from the Housing Affordability and Community Services Committee meeting held April 11th. The topics discussed included the upcoming May 9th visit by the Senate Local Government Committee and the proposed Habitat for Humanity project on West 5th Street. He mentioned that there should be a public discussion on the issue to ensure that the public is receiving accurate information regarding the project, citizen concerns can be heard, and that the public can be educated regarding the housing challenges the Anacortes community is facing. He added that Habitat for Humanity are currently conducting due diligence work, and they are at a point where the number of units must be known to continue with site development and permitting. He then mentioned the committee's intention to tour other Habitat for Humanity developments in Skagit County and added that there would be additional community outreach by the Council regarding the project prior to bringing the lease before the Council for decision and disposition.

Mr. Fantini pointed out that community concerns are about stormwater drainage from the alley, breaking the precedent of leasing city-owned land for housing, off-street parking, number of units and that he looked forward to a discussion about those concerns before the full Council. He also mentioned requests for a neighborhood meeting on the project, and pointed out that such a forum would likely be able to enhance community awareness of the housing challenges in the community. Mr. Fantini mentioned that, by his count, the Council had received 25 comments expressing concerns about the project, compared to 3 in favor of the project as presented. He advocated continuing public discussion about the project, as it is being undertaken on publicly

owned land.

Mr. Walters confirmed the committee's awareness of those concerns and mentioned that staff had not yet put the issue on the Council agenda, and that it requires two Councilmembers to place the item on the agenda, which could happen in the near term. He continued that as policymakers, the Council do not have the ability to schedule neighborhood meetings, and rely on staff to schedule those events.

Ms. Cleland-McGrath confirmed that the committee intends to have a meeting on-site to address neighborhood concerns, specified that there are 8 off-street parking spaces and emphasized that Habitat for Humanity would need to develop the parcel in accordance with the Anacortes Municipal Code. She mentioned ten Skagit Self-help homes built in the 1990s in the same neighborhood that are now on the open market, and that the proposed lease arrangement would ensure that the Habitat for Humanity homes would remain permanently affordable housing for the community.

Skagit County Law and Justice Council

Mr. Fantini reported from the Skagit County Law and Justice Council meeting held April 9th. The topics discussed included a presentation from Pioneer Human Services and Skagit Detox on substance abuse issues, mentioning that he and other Councilmembers had asked why the services were only available to individuals over 18 years old.

Port / City Liaison Committee

Ms. Cleland-McGrath reported from the Port / City Liaison Committee meeting held April 10th. The topics discussed included the event center, the access agreement for the contractor to Port property for the Wastewater Treatment Plant outfall relocation project, opportunities for cooperation and coordination on capital projects, the move of Port offices to the Anacortes Professional Center, the Port Executive Director recruiting process, the Comprehensive Plan update, the Altair Americus Memorial Park improvement project, and closer cooperation between the Port and City for storm water management.

Ms. Moulton announced that the executive session scheduled for this evening would be postponed until next week due to reference materials not being ready far enough in advance for Council review.

Mr. Fantini announced that the first annual Firefighter Awards were held last Friday evening.

Public Comment

Mayor Pro Tem Moulton invited the public to comment on any item not on the agenda.

Public comment was given as follows:

Patricia Dever of Anacortes commented on the proposed Habitat for Humanity project on West 5th Street, expressing concern that the proposed parcel was originally intended to serve as a public park and that children in the area would continue to play in the street and be exposed to vehicle traffic.

Debbie Cole of Anacortes expressed opposition to the proposed project on West 5th Street, mentioning that there is inadequate street parking and asked who would organize the neighborhood meeting.

Tom Sweeney of Anacortes commented on the proposed Habitat for Humanity project on West 5th Street, expressing opposition, citing surface water in the vicinity of the project, that there are too many units for a parcel of that size, inadequate street parking, and asked if there had been an environmental impact study completed for the project site.

Kellee List of Anacortes commented on the proposed Habitat for Humanity project on West 5th Street, reading

two quotes from Councilmember Walters mayoral campaign, pointing out that the neighborhood had not received adequate information about the project and that the proposed design does not blend well with the existing neighborhood. She asked if the Anacortes Housing Authority would manage the parcel, if there would be fences around the property, where tradespeople would park their vehicles and store their tools. She urged the Council to reconsider the project and come back with a plan that is in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and preserves the small town charm. She expressed dismay that a Councilmember had termed neighbor concerns as "ridiculous".

Dan O'Donnell of LaConner commented on the Finance Committee meeting proceedings from the previous week.

John Lewis of Anacortes commented on the proposed Habitat for Humanity project on West 5th Street, acknowledging the need for affordable housing in the community, but expressing disapproval of the project as it currently stands. He suggested reconsideration of the scope to reduce development density.

Xuhua Mu of Anacortes commented on the proposed Habitat for Humanity project on West 5th Street, addressing the limited parking and pedestrian safety. She then provided anecdotes of interactions with area residents who disapproved of the design space for a family's needs. She also spoke about refuse receptacle locations being outside as a potential cause of increased litter in the neighborhood and that senior citizens will not be eligible to live in the development. Finally, she cited three areas of affordable housing including burdened families, the homeless, and Section 8, asking how the City Council will address each segment.

Carol Oglesbee of Anacortes commented that Anacortes housing guidelines are good, but warned that the more housing is provided, then more will be expected by the public. She complimented the city's recent homeless outreach efforts.

Brian Wetcher of Anacortes asked how Habitat for Humanity goes about prioritizing where to develop land in the community, and if the Councilmembers were aware that Habitat for Humanity owns several parcels in the city that could also be developed.

Consent Agenda

Finance Director Steve Hoglund requested that the Council remove item 5.b. from the Consent Agenda so that he could explain an invoice from Cogent Communications. Mr. Walters moved to remove Item 5.b. from the Consent Agenda.

Ms. Hubik moved, seconded by Mr. Young, to approve the following Consent Agenda item. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

a. Minutes of April 8, 2024

Finance Director Steve Hoglund provided details regarding the resolution of a disputed invoice with Cogent Communications LLC and asked that the Council approve the invoice.

Mr. Walters moved, seconded by Mr. Fantini to approve the voucher list as presented in the packet with the addition of the invoice from Cogent Communications in the amount of \$18,132.18. The motion carried unanimously by voice vote.

The following vouchers/checks were approved for payment:

EFT numbers: 109064 through 109150, total \$1,186,422.08

Check numbers: 109151 through 109175, total \$268,780.77

Wire transfer numbers: 344503 through 345468, total \$128,955.98

Other Business

Skagit Transit Presentation

Skagit Transit Executive Director Crystle Stidham and Marketing and Public Affairs Liaison Cheryl Willis gave a presentation on the organization's Long Range Transit Plan, referring to a slide presentation that was included in the packet materials for the meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Moulton invited members of the audience to comment on this agenda item.

Barbara Smart of Anacortes asked if Skagit Transit had done outreach to the schools to encourage young people to use public transit and praised the local para transit service for enhancing senior mobility.

Stephen Orsini of Guemes Island expressed excitement about Skagit Transit outreach for the island and asked if a small van could be deployed to Guemes to enhance mobility for island residents, including connecting with Skagit Transit line 409 on the Anacortes side, thereby reducing parking restrictions on the Anacortes Guemes Island ferry landing and supporting the environmentally friendly goal of reducing the number of single-occupancy vehicles on the roads.

Cindy Kamp of Guemes Island thanked Skagit Transit for its outreach to the island and advocated for further connection with Route 409 into Anacortes and beyond. She also expressed enthusiastic support for micro transit and addressed plans for ferry landing renovation that could limit the ability of public transit to approach the ferry embarkation point close enough for those with mobility challenges.

Discussion topics included:

- Transit connection renaissance.
- Increased accessibility for the entire community.
- Opportunity to shape the future vision of transit.
- Coordination with the State and Skagit County ferries.
- Route alteration(s) to suit community needs.
- Findings reported to the City Council.
- Goal of Skagit Transit outreach.
- Micro mobility or zone-based transit.
- Youth outreach.
- Transit system security.
- Guemes Island service.

Parks and Recreation Update

Parks and Recreation Director Jonn Lunsford provided an update on Parks and Recreation departmental activities, referring to a slide presentation that was added to the packet materials for the meeting.

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

Discussion topics included:

- Public comment matrix.
- Wildfire mitigation or prevention strategies in the Anacortes Community Forest Lands (ACFL).
- Current data on ACFL as a carbon sink.

- Pickle ball court location(s).
- Mobility access plan for Little Cranberry Lake and other local lakes.
- West 6th or West End park.
- Recreation Conservation Office park scoring criteria.
- Ace of Hearts dog park.
- Council involvement in parks processes.
- Alternative funding sources to supplement grants in fiscally constrained environment.

Contract Award: Wastewater Treatment Plant High Efficiency Diffuser System #24-110-SEW-001

Public Works Director Andrew Rheume introduced contract 24-110-SEW-001 with Ovivo USA, LLC to replace the diffuser in Basin #2 at the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

RYAN WALTERS moved, seconded by TJ FANTINI, to approve contract #24-110-SEW-001 with Ovivo USA, LLC.

Vote: Ayes - ANTHONY YOUNG, RYAN WALTERS, CHRISTINE CLELAND-MCGRATH, CAROLYN MOULTON, BRUCE MCDOUGALL, AMANDA HUBIK, TJ FANTINI. Nays - None. Result: Passed

Adjournment

There being no further business, at approximately 8:26 p.m. the Anacortes City Council meeting of April 15, 2024 was adjourned.