

May 14, 2020

MEETING HELD TELEPHONICALLY DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Steve Sexton called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance. Council members present: Bill Aslett, Keith Chaplin, J. DeGloria, R. DeGloria, Scott Green, Chris Loving, and James Stavig. Staff present: Kelly Blaine, Geoff Hawes, Leif Johnson, Mike Luvera, Kristen Morrison, Marv Pulst, Joe Stewart, Rob Toth, Greg Young, and Sarah Ward.

MINUTES:

A motion was made to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2020 Council meeting by **Councilors Aslett/ Chaplin**. All in favor; motion carried.

AUDIT OF BILLS:

A motion was made by **Councilors Aslett/Green** to approve Accounts Payable invoices to be paid as of May 14, 2020 in the amount of \$297,338.48, and Payroll Expenses for Pay Period Ending April 30, 2020 in the amount of \$476,691.78. All in favor; motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

City Attorney Leif Johnson explained that members of the public may submit comments or questions by mail to City Hall at 833 S. Spruce Street, ATTN: Greg Young or by email to administration@burlingtonwa.gov.

L. Johnson read a public comment submitted by Frank Draper on May 13, 2020, wherein Draper requests removal of a late fee from his bill from the City. **Finance Director Joe Stewart** discussed the procedure for late fee removal, stated that Draper's request will be honored, and he has emailed him to let him know.

Mayor Sexton discussed his correspondence with the State Department of Revenue, wherein the State has given some lenience to impact payments from retailers, delaying payments. **Mayor Sexton** discussed a "sneak peek" (given by a State Department of Revenue) at the City's May sales tax revenues based on March numbers: compared last year, the month of May is down 35%. **Mayor Sexton** stated another snapshot of these revenues will be available in June.

Mayor Sexton discussed his correspondence with Congressman Larson's office, wherein he learned of a \$375 billion HEROES Act, funds which will be made useable based on population.

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Mayor Sexton discussed his correspondence with State Representatives regarding the possibility of the State relaxing restrictions on restricted funds so that they might be used for operations, and that there is a draft bill which will be ready for the Special Session in August.

Councilor Stavig asked whether the HEROES Act funds will be funds for which the City will be required to apply for; **Mayor Sexton** discussed the process of funds disbursement from the Federal level to the City level.

Councilor J. DeGloria requested a dollar figure for the 35% decrease in sales tax revenue in March; **Finance Director Joe Stewart** stated it is a decrease of approximately \$272,000.

Interim City Administrator Greg Young discussed the City's short term actions in response to COVID-19, including the reduction of staff, staff hours, and other efforts including Personal Protective Equipment. **Young** discussed the unknowns of the City's financial picture, but stated that a better idea of numbers will be available in July. **Young** discussed staff furloughs, not rehiring the Parks & Recreation Director or Human Resources Director positions, and the direction given to Department Directors to remove expenditures. **Young** discussed all cost-saving measures to date will save the City \$640,000, which could potentially offset some revenue losses. **Young** stated the current plan is applicable only for the near future, and can only mitigate what is known.

Mayor Sexton discussed having special Council meetings for discussion on COVID-19 impacts on the Thursdays during which a regularly scheduled Council meeting is not held, and whether Council would prefer a full Council for these meetings. All Councilmembers spoke in favor of having the full Council present.

Councilor Chaplin inquired on the status of the RCO grants; Young discussed the delaying of the process, the challenges of the irrigation system, that it's not practical to apply for RCO grants at this time, but will report back on these issues next month.

Councilor Stavig inquired on how the City pays unemployment fees, and whether the City paying these fees is common. Discussion was held on how Washington State unemployment fees are assessed.

Councilor Aslett discussed the challenges currently faced by the City because of the need for additional funding, which was present before the pandemic, as well the issues

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caused by COVID-19. Councilor Aslett stated that there will be a great number of meetings needed to discuss solutions.

Councilor J. DeGloria discussed the need for budget amendments as a first step to give City administration guidance.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilor Green stated that he would like to get everything back to normal, and that he is not afraid.

Councilor Chaplin discussed a desire for the City to not continue with capital projects which require the City to have a monetary match to grant funds, and to pull back and not spend funds.

Councilor Loving discussed being in agreement with Councilor Chaplin. **Councilor Loving** requested the appointment of Interim City Administrator Greg Young to the position of City Administrator be added to the next regular Council agenda; **Councilors Aslett**, and **Chaplin** remarked in favor of the request.

Councilor Aslett discussed the state of overgrown vegetation on Burlington Boulevard and asked that it be trimmed up a bit.

MAYOR'S UPDATE:

Mayor Sexton discussed an upcoming event, wherein Washington state potato farmers will be donating 1 million pounds of potatoes statewide; 100,000 of which will be donated on Tuesday, May 19 at the Cascade Mall, with traffic control provided by Burlington Police Department and Mount Vernon Police Department. **Mayor Sexton** discussed the need for volunteers for the event—information for which will be sent to Councilmembers via email.

Mayor Sexton discussed the City's current weed suppression system, which includes the product Roundup, and discussed the idea of having a presentation given to Council on this system, and to discuss possible alternatives.

SPECIAL PRESENTATION:

No Special Presentation.

PROCLAMATION:

No Proclamation.

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COMMITTEE & BOARD REPORTS:

No Committee & Board Reports.

OFFICERS REPORTS:

No Officers Reports.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

No Unfinished Business

NEW BUSINESS:

Sewer & Stormwater Fees – COVID -19

City Attorney Leif Johnson discussed the a proposed resolution which is based off the concerns which have been expressed by businesses and the public in paying utilities and other fees because of a sudden loss of income, in the wake of COVID-19. **L. Johnson** stated that although the City cannot waive utility fees completely, it is within Council's discretion to relax some of the recovery requirements for fees, and waive some late fees entirely, and that the proposed Resolution would limit some late fees associated with sewer and storm fees, and authorize the Finance Department Director or their designee some additional discretion to arrange payment plans or take other reasonable steps, as necessary.

Councilor Aslett discussed the possibility of having a dollar amount cap when waiving fees.

A motion was made by **Stavig/J. DeGloria** to approve the Resolution to provide relief for sewer and stormwater fees due to COVID-19. All in favor; motion carried.

Eviction Moratorium

City Attorney Leif Johnson discussed the proposed resolution which would place a moratorium on the legal process of eviction of tenants from City-owned properties.

Interim City Administrator Greg Young stated that this moratorium does not remove the obligation to pay, but requires the City to take no legal action to evict a tenant.

Councilor Stavig questioned why a moratorium was needed in this case; **L. Johnson** explained that it would be needed in order to completely stop the eviction process.

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A motion was made by **Councilors Stavig/R. DeGloria** to approve the resolution to establish a temporary moratorium on commercial and residential evictions for City owned properties. All in favor; motion carried.

Interim City Administrator Greg Young discussed the NORA Race track lease, as well as the City's lease of the Canton Restaurant parking lot, which expires on July 1, 2020.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

No Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Sexton adjourned the meeting at 8:07 p.m.

Joe Stewart
Finance Director

Steve Sexton
Mayor