

The City Council for the City of Junction City, met in regular session and a work session at 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, July 28, 2020, in a virtual meeting format via internet and phone.

**PRESENT:** Mayor, Mark Crenshaw; Councilors Sandie Thomas, Robert Stott, Andrea Ceniga, John Gambee, Dale Rowe, and Bill DiMarco; City Administrator, Jason Knope; City Attorney, Carrie Connelly; Public Works Director, Gary Kaping; and City Recorder, Kitty Vodrup.

## REGULAR SESSION

### 1. Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Crenshaw called the meeting to order at 6:33 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### 2. Changes to the Agenda

None.

### 3. Scandinavian Festival Association Funding Request

Administrator Knope stated that at the last meeting, Council had directed staff to bring back the grant paperwork for the Scandinavian Festival Association (SFA) funding request. SFA would be doing maintenance work on SFA facilities, and their request was for \$2,500 but staff recommended adding \$500 for any unforeseen expenses; the \$3,000 grant would come from State Shared Revenue, Projects to Be Determined by Council, which had \$10,000.

**MOTION:** Councilor Rowe made a motion to approve the grant agreement with the Scandinavian Festival Association and direct the City Administrator to sign the necessary documents. The motion was seconded by Councilor Ceniga and passed by unanimous vote of the Council.

### 4. Scandinavian Festival Association Street Closure Request

Director Kaping stated that the Scandinavian Festival Association (SFA) requested street closure of Greenwood between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> on August 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. to August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m. Reason for the street closure was to promote safe distancing and safety of their volunteer staff that would be doing maintenance work on SFA facilities on both sides of Greenwood Street. The Police Chief, Fire Chief, and Public Works Director had no issues with the closure, as long as emergency vehicles could get through.

Councilor DiMarco noted that he could support the street closure for the maintenance work, but only if it were in a different week, due to Scandia Run and other possible activities that could be occurring in that area during that time.

**MOTION:** Councilor Thomas made a motion to approve the street closure request for the Scandinavian Festival Association on August 7<sup>th</sup> at 5:00 p.m. through August 16<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m., 2020 as conditioned in Attachment B with the nonexclusive use of city streets. The use of city streets will apply to the section of Greenwood Street between 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stott and passed by a vote of 5 to 1, with Councilors Thomas, Stott, Ceniga, Gambee, and Rowe voting in favor and Councilor DiMarco voting against.

### 5. City Attorney Contract

Attorney Connelly announced that she would be muted during this conversation. She added that Recorder Vodrup had distributed contract exhibits to the Council earlier in the day: Exhibit A Billing Procedure Memo and Exhibit B ORS Chapter 279B Public Contracting Requirements Personal Services.

Administrator Knope presented the contract for City Attorney services which had been reviewed several times by the Finance and Judiciary Committee. The City had not had an actual contract with Local Government Law Group (Speer Hoyt), who had served as the City's attorney for quite some time. The Council had made the City Attorney an appointee of the Council, and the contract would provide the necessary language on services and how any issues would be handled. This would be a five year contract with a termination clause.

**MOTION:** Councilor Rowe made a motion to approve the contract with the Local Government Law Group and authorize the City Administrator to sign the necessary documents. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stott and passed by unanimous vote of the Council.

**6. City Prosecutor RFP**

Administrator Knope presented a proposed City Prosecutor RFP (Request for Proposal), which had been reviewed by the Finance and Judiciary Committee. This position had been made an appointee of the Council and it had been a number of years since an RFP had been done. It was the intent to get this on a rotation for RFP review every five years like the City Engineer's contract.

In response to whether the judge could participate in the evaluation, Attorney Connelly stated that there was no legal prohibition to have the judge participate in the evaluation process. Section L in the RFP was changed to allow the Council to be able to craft the process for the evaluation and to conduct the evaluation since this was a Council appointee; the Council would decide how it wanted to award based on the identified criteria.

The Council consensus was to have staff proceed with the RFP.

**7. Adjournment of Regular Session**

As there was no further business, regular session was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

**WORK SESSION****1. Call to Order**

Mayor Crenshaw called the Work Session to order at 7:16 p.m.

**2. Ratepayer Assistance Program**

Director Kaping reviewed that at the May 26<sup>th</sup> meeting, Council discussed having the Public Works Committee talk about a Ratepayers Assistance Program. The City used to have such a program, but it was discontinued in 2016 for a variety of reasons. Some of the things the Committee discussed were how to fund and administer the program, how people would qualify, application deadlines, number of months of assistance or a one time fee, and the amount of the assistance. Staff took a close look at the budget and identified approximately \$60,000 that could be used as seed money to start a Ratepayers Assistance Program.

Director Kaping continued that the Committee had some things they wanted to discuss with the Council as a whole and get feedback on. One of those things was should this be a Pandemic Relief Program or a permanent Ratepayers Assistance Program or a combination of both. The Committee reviewed Ratepayers Assistance program examples from other cities and discussed if funding would be through donations or through a flat fee like the City did in the past of adding \$1.00 to everybody's water bill. The previous Ratepayers Assistance Program code was provided in the packet, and Director Kaping had written notes on possible changes.

Councilor Rowe stated that the Committee liked the programs from Cottage Grove and Veneta. He noted that the question he would have for Council was did they want a Ratepayer Assistance Program or not, because if there was no interest, there would be no need to continue this discussion.

Councilor Thomas stated that she was not sure this was the right time for the program, because of the pandemic.

Mayor Crenshaw asked what percentage of citizens were falling behind on their utility bills. Director Kaping responded that he did not have a percentage but before the pandemic started, the past due amount was \$7,000; now that number was \$45,000. He noted that there was a percentage of the past dues from people who never paid their bill until they were given a door knocker. He did not know if people were not paying their bills because the City was not shutting them off and not giving them a door knocker or if they truly could not pay.

Mayor Crenshaw asked if this should be a permanent program or if they should be focusing on pandemic relief. He noted that the pandemic program the City offered was for small businesses and not necessarily to the citizens or households directly.

Councilor Ceniga stated that after hearing the numbers from Director Kaping, it would be important to have an application process where they could find out as much information as

possible and truly helped those who were in need. She did not want to see people take advantage of the City.

Councilor DiMarco noted that the City had a good relationship with Local Aid in the past, and they had some tools to evaluate folk's situations so that could be something to come back to. He expressed agreement with Councilor Ceniga and added that he felt the pandemic would force them to address a Pandemic Relief Program and figure out how they would mitigate delinquent accounts. The pandemic could continue for a while, and he would not advocate shutting people's water off who were in need during this time. They could look into whether the City would qualify for programs at the federal or state level that could reimburse the City. He added that he felt there were two different issues: the long term program, which he was in favor of and the Pandemic Relief Program. Dealing with a Pandemic Relief Program would help inform how they wanted to approach a permanent program.

Mayor Crenshaw stated that he was hearing comments that were complimentary to Councilor Thomas's comment that this might not be the time to discuss a Ratepayers Assistance Program, but they did need to consider how they were going to get all of the households current. He asked if the Council would be interested in a permanent program or a Pandemic Recovery program.

Councilor Rowe stated that he felt it was up to the City to help the citizens. They had talked a lot in the past about rainy day funds, and Public Works had found a way to seed the program. He would be in favor of looking at a Pandemic Recovery Plan to help people get on their feet and then they could address the long term plan separately from that. He was not in favor of a mandatory assessment on everybody's water bill and thought this should come as a volunteer program with the citizens.

Mayor Crenshaw expressed his agreement with Councilor Rowe.

Councilor Thomas stated that she was thinking along similar lines and using some of the City's money and then using donations, so the taxpayers were not being charged.

Mayor Crenshaw asked if there was an example of a Pandemic Recovery program from another city. Director Kaping responded that the examples he provided to the Committee were for a Ratepayers Assistance Program which would be different from the Pandemic Recovery program, but he could do more research and bring that back to the Committee.

Councilor Rowe asked if the Council wanted the Committee to work on a Pandemic Recovery Program or a long term permanent program or if they were interested in both.

Mayor Crenshaw noted that he liked the term recovery over relief, as relief would imply that they were acting now during these troubled times. Recovery would be once they were getting an all clear and people were able to move forward out of this, but they still had people who had surmounted several months of debt. He noted that he would call on each Councilor on what direction they wanted to give to the Committee.

Councilor Ceniga stated that they needed to have more of a recovery program set up, as a relief program would imply that once the money was used it would be gone. The community members who were struggling right now may continue to struggle for awhile and they needed something in place and to get as much information as they could so people were not taking advantage. She added that she was in favor of a permanent Ratepayers Assistance Program.

Councilor DiMarco stated that they needed to focus on the recovery program but maybe look at that as not being the same as short term relief. Similar to what Councilor Ceniga had said, he did not want to have a short term relief program where they just paid out the \$60,000 at Public Work's expense and the program was over. He would like to see them work on a recovery program that had a wider vision and look at funding sources that they might be using for a permanent Ratepayers Assistance Program. They would have to look at elements of the whole Ratepayers Assistance Program and use some of the tools of that program to adequately take care of the pandemic issue, so using a hybrid approach but focus on recovery. Then they could at some point in the future decide whether they wanted

to continue the program when times were happier and they were dealing with normal problems.

Councilor Gambee asked when Public Works stopped putting out door knockers and how that was decided. Director Kaping responded that they stopped in May and it was a staff position supported by the Council.

Councilor Gambee asked if the \$7,000 in past dues back in March or April were the same group of people that were now 5 months behind instead of 1 month. Director Kaping responded that most of those people were still on the list, but there were some additional people as well.

Councilor Gambee shared that because of this discussion, he looked up one of his accounts and saw that he was 5 months behind, which he had not realized because the City was not sending notices on shut offs like they normally would if someone was past due. He took care of the payment during the meeting and signed up for auto pay, but wanted to point out that it was important to recognize that there was a chance that they were overstating the effect of the pandemic because they did not have all the information yet. He agreed with other Councilors on not adding another tax or fee onto the citizens and was fine with citizens volunteering to chip in and help their neighbors out. He thought the first thing they should do was identify why they were \$45,000 behind instead of \$7,000, and if that was made up of people who were typically past due or if it included new people. Dealing with this situation would be geared towards a relief program and was the first thing to be addressed before it started to affect the Public Works budget. After that, they could discuss a Ratepayers Assistance Program.

Councilor Stott stated that he was all for a Ratepayers Assistance Program but would like to see that tabled and just work on a Recovery Program right now. He agreed with other Councilors that the Ratepayers Assistance Program should be a customer donation based program.

Councilor Thomas stated that she thought they should work on the Recovery Program now and do something later with the Ratepayers Assistance Program that would be donation based or something other than taxing the taxpayers.

Councilor Rowe thanked the Council for their comments and noted that he liked the idea of the immediacy of the Recovery Program, which would be their top priority. After that, they would work on the long term Ratepayers Assistance Program. He asked if they should call the Recovery Plan a Pandemic Recovery Plan and if they should use City money for this program or should it be completely funded through donations.

Mayor Crenshaw stated that it was clear that the direction to staff was to work on a potential recovery program at this time and it was not known when a roll out date would be for that program. On the issue of funding, he was hearing quite a consensus of trying to find alternate funding besides City funds to pay for the program. The Committee did talk about potentially utilizing the \$60,000 from the budget to seed that, and he asked for more thoughts on that.

Councilor Gambee stated that he liked what Councilor Rowe had said that the City had put aside rainy day funds and he thought that should be the place to seed this from and then to determine how much they wanted to seed.

Councilor Ceniga expressed her agreement with Councilors Rowe and Gambee and that they should look at rainy day funds.

Councilor DiMarco stated that he was open to any creative funding thoughts and would like to see them move away from depending on what Public Works had managed to allocate in the current budget. If they were creative enough, they might be able to not tap into that \$60,000.

Councilor Rowe expressed his agreement with Councilor DiMarco and stated that he would like to explore alternatives for funding. He was fine with the City seeding this but was not fine with the City paying for a long term assistance program. He noted that the Committee had heard all the comments loud and clear and had plenty to work on.

Councilor Thomas noted that she was open to whatever the Committee wanted to bring back, being creative.

Councilor Stott stated that he was open to getting the word out and letting people know that they could make donations towards this, and he was not opposed to using some of the reserves if they needed to.

Mayor Crenshaw stated that he liked Councilor Stott's thought on getting the word out that they were working on a program and finding out if there was interest in making contributions. He would also like to explore if it were possible to incorporate something on the utility bill to add a dollar or some nominal amount to their bill as a method of donating to the program. He agreed with Councilor Rowe that it was worth every effort to find an alternative to using City funds because those funds were limited and like Director Kaping had said once they used them they would be gone and the program needed to be more sustainable than that.

Director Kaping stated that he had talked with Director Crocker about the possibility of adding a line on the bill for donations, and Director Crocker was looking into if Springbrook could add that to online payments. He would work with Administrator Knope on any correspondence to the public.

Mayor Crenshaw stated that it was great to advertise that they were looking into doing this but if they started collecting money too soon and were unable to get a program off the ground, then they would be stuck with a lump of monies that they did not know what to do with.

Councilor Rowe thanked the Council for their comments.

**3. Adjournment of Work Session**

As there was no further business, the work session was adjourned at 8:04 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

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Kitty Vodrup, City Recorder

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Mark Crenshaw, Mayor