

**City of Lowell, Oregon**  
**Minutes of the City Council Regular Session**  
**June 6, 2023**

The Regular Session was called to order at 7:01 PM by Mayor Bennett.

**Members Present:** Mayor Don Bennett, Gail Harris, Tim Stratis, Maureen Weathers, Jimmy Murray

**Staff Present:** CA Jeremy Caudle, Public Works Director Max Baker

**Public Comments:**

- **Mike Cobiskey, 110 N Hyland Lane** — Council received a letter and included in the packet re Rolling Rock Park. The citizen asked staff to present those comments to City Council.
- **Larry Senn, 38506 Pengra Road** — Brought in a Snoopy Cartoon commemorating the anniversary of D-Day. He stated that he was frustrated that the Code enforcement has been put on hold. Relating d- Day to code enforcement. He would like to see our wonderful community remain wonderful.
- **Robert Martin, 426 E 1<sup>st</sup> St** — Issue with the East 1<sup>st</sup> road after the water main break. He has had to replace multiple air filters and there are many drivers creating the dust.
- **Don Jackson, 492 E 1<sup>st</sup> St** – Would like a time frame as to when East 1<sup>st</sup> will be after the water main
  - **CA responded with an update-** he has looked into the dust controlling products that this citizen brought to his attention and plans to speak to the Public Works director about them. He further stated that the city is working to get the responsible party to resolve this situation.
  - **Mayor Bennett stated** that this is not an issue that has laid dormant , the city is working to get the situation corrected.
- **Andrea Larsen, 657 N Moss St**— she stated that Code enforcement, Law enforcement, speeding are issues. If you don't enforce codes, it means nothing. Like the bathrooms being locked up there should enforcement and punishment and they should pay for it. Speeding tickets should be writing tickets for the speeders.
- **Hall O'Regan, 62 E 3<sup>rd</sup> St**— Wishes that the Council and the Mayor would start taking pride in our little town. Hopefully if you start people will get the hint. I pay taxes for services not rendered; specifically, the restrooms at Paul Fisher Park that have been shut down for months. He is aware of the vandalism problem. The property sales money should correct the issue of the broken restrooms, the fountain and the missing swing set.

**Council Comments:** None

**Presentation:**

- Presentation by Andy Vobora, Vice President of Stakeholder Relations with Travel Lane County.

**Regular meeting recessed at 7:38pm**

**Public Hearing called to order at 7:38 pm**

- **Resolution #800**, “A resolution authorizing the sale of real property located at map and tax lot #19-01-14-24-04500 and authorizing the City Administrator to execute all documentation necessary to complete the sale.

**Public Comments:**

**Council Comments: None**

**Public Hearing on Resolution 800 closed at 7:41pm**

**Public Hearing called to order at 7:41 pm**

- **Resolution #801**, “A resolution to establish water and sewer rates to be effective July 1, 2023.”

**Public Comments:**

- **Bill George 125 Marina Vista Dr.**— Comments regarding the rate increase and the reasoning for it. He is well aware of the need to update the water plant. The increase of this amount would be very difficult for his renters and others in the city. He has asked the council to stop and reconsider the increase.
- **Andrea Larsen, 657 N Moss**—Questions the how the rate increase will affect the people who are on a fixed budget and lower income citizens.
- **Hal O’Regan, 62 E 3<sup>rd</sup> St.** – “Stated that he feels like everybody is trying to put the screws to the citizens of our town”
- **George Wild, 200 Marina Vista Dr**—agrees with previous statements regarding how the increase will affect the lower income citizens.

**Council Comments: None**

**Public Hearing on Resolution 801 closed at 7:51pm**

**Public Hearing called to order at 7:51 pm**

- **Resolution #802**, “A resolution declaring the city’s election to receive state revenues for fiscal year 2023/2024.”

**Public Comments: None**

**Council Comments: None**

**Public Hearing on Resolution 802 closed at 7:53pm**

**Public Hearing called to order at 7:53 pm**

- **Resolution #803**, “A resolution to adopt a budget and impose and categorize taxes for fiscal year 2023/2024”

**Public Comments: None**

**Council Comments: None**

**Public Hearing on Resolution 803 closed at 7:55pm**

**Public Hearing called to order at 7:55 pm**

- **Resolution #804**, “A resolution certifying services.”

**Public Comments: None**

**Council Comments: None**

**Public Hearing on Resolution 804 closed at 7:56pm**

**Regular session reconvened at 7:56 pm**

**Old Business:**

- **Councilor Weathers made a Motion to approve Resolution 800, a resolution authorizing the sale of real property located at map and tax lot #19-01-14-24-04500 and authorizing the City Administrator to execute all documentation necessary to complete the sale". Seconded by Councilor Harris. PASS 5:0**

**Other Business:**

**Council discussion regarding Water Sewer Rate increase and possible options to any changes.**

- **Councilor Stratis** would like to raise the assistance amount to be higher than the 30% that is sits currently. And to relook at expanding the demographic we offer the assistance to – Medicare, disabled, senior citizens, others on fixed income- so that we can help as many people as possible. To go as far as we can to make sure people don't fall through the cracks.
- **Councilor Weathers** asked if the Covered Bridge estates – the affordable housing – was commercial or residential. Are the renters in that program eligible for the utility assistance program? It looks like we may be burdening to already burdened. How will the impending increase affect them?
  - **CA** stated that the current guidelines for the Utility assistance are structured that you need to have an account with the city to qualify for the assistance.
- **Councilor Stratis** suggested that we possibly could work with those residents. And in that regard how would the Sanipac increase affect them as well.
- **Councilor Weathers** stated that she has spent time comparing similar sized cities and how they handle franchise fees. She was made aware that this started in 2021-22. Suggested looking at reviewing the city's cash management options in savings.
- **Councilor Murray** Asked what the intention of the Franchise fee and what does it for serve?
  - **CA** stated that the intention behind the franchise fee was for the city to have a cost accounting, franchise fees are attributed to all other utilities. To provide additional resources to the general fund. Stated that he was happy to do an analysis for the next council meeting.
- **Councilor Harris** Agreed that franchise fees are not a bad, but if there is relief to be found regarding the increase of the utility fees that we don't have to have such a large increase to the fees, then this should be looked at.
- **Mayor Bennett** Supports holding off on the Franchise fees. He feels sensitive to the lower income residents and is willing to look into options for lessening their load. Maybe look at CDs for savings at a larger interest rate.
  - **CA** mentioned that in order to fully benefit the city with the intensive cash management approach would require a weekly if not daily look to make sure there was enough in the account to cover cash flow.
- **Mayor Bennett** said that he did not wish to cause more workflow for the CA.
- **Councilor Harris** reminded the council that they should go back and review the rates and not raising them as high.
  - **CA** asked for direction as to what the council would like to see at the next meeting regarding the rates and the budget.

- **Councilor Weathers** asked if we could reverse the franchise fee back to the water and sewer accounts. Before the end of the fiscal year.
- **Councilor Harris** offered direction to the CA – Asking to analyze the franchise fees and what that would do the water fund and how that would affect the general fund. To revisit not raising the sewer rates or at least not as high.
- **Councilor Murray** He would like to have an ending fund balance stated. Picking a number without picking a goal is hard to accomplish.
- **Councilor Weathers** would like to cut the rate increase by half of the suggested rate.
  - CA proposes that he remove the franchise fees for the next budget year and update the rates to reflect that. That will look at any cuts or options that could be made to try to bring down the increase at least a half.

**Mayor Comments:** None

**Councilor Comments:** None


**Community Comments:**

- **Andrea Larsen, 657 N Moss St** – Commented that she thought that the council was on the right track with rethinking the increases.
- **Bill George 125 Marina Vista Dr.** Hoped that the council could look outside the box for savings options. He thanked the council for their willingness to rethink the fees

**Adjourn: 8:50 PM**

Approved:   
Don Bennett, Mayor

9-28-23  
Date

Attest:   
Jeremy Caudle, City Recorder

9/28/23  
Date