

CITY of LA GRANDE
City Council Regular Session

February 7, 2024

**Council Chambers
La Grande City Hall
1000 Adams Avenue**

MINUTES

COUNCILORS PRESENT:

Justin Rock, *Mayor*
David Glabe, *Mayor Pro Tem*
Nicole Howard, *Councilor*
Molly King, *Councilor*
Mary Ann Miesner, *Councilor*
Denise Wheeler, *Councilor*

COUNCILORS ABSENT EXCUSED:

Corrine Dutto, *Councilor*

STAFF PRESENT

Robert Strobe, *City Manager*
Stacey Stockhoff, *City Recorder*
Keri Quinn, *Assistant to the City Manager*
Gary Bell, *Police Chief*
Timothy Bishop, *Economic Development Director*
Michael Boquist, *Community Development Director*
Carrie Bushman, *Library Director*
Emmitt Cornford, *Fire Chief*
Heather Rajkovich, *Finance Director*
Stu Spence, *Parks and Recreation Director*

**CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE/
ROLL CALL/AGENDA APPROVAL**

Mayor ROCK called to order this Regular Session of the Council at 6:00 p.m. Roll Call was taken and a quorum was determined to be present.

CONSENT AGENDA

- a. **Consider:** Approving Regular Session Minutes; January 3, 2024
- b. **Consider:** Approving OLCC Liquor License; La Grande Liquor Store and Smoke Shoppe
- c. **Consider:** Authorizing Mayor to sign Letter for Audit Finding Corrective Plan

MIESNER asked if the applicant for the liquor license already had a license, to which BELL responded that the license was for a change of ownership for the store. Even though the applicant already had a liquor license, they needed a new one for purchasing the store.

The following Motion was introduced by MIESNER; HOWARD providing the Second:

MOTION

MOTION: I move that we accept the Consent Agenda as presented.

VOTE

MSC: 6-0 (Yes: ROCK, GLABE, HOWARD, KING, MIESNER and WHEELER; No: None)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Eli COX, student from La Grande High School and local Boy Scout, introduced himself and stated that he was attending the meeting to learn about city government to earn his Citizenship in the Community Merit Badge.

Shane ROLLINS, resident of Cove, stated he was running for Union County Sheriff. He gave a brief description of his career in the military and believes his leadership would benefit the Sheriff's Department.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- a. **Consider**: Ordinance; First Reading:
Amending Goal 9 Chapter of the La Grande Comprehensive Plan

RULES OF ORDER

Mayor ROCK announced that the Public Hearing was open at 6:05 p.m. and asked City Recorder STOCKHOFF to read the Rules of Order in their entirety.

STAFF REPORT

Mayor ROCK requested the Staff Report.

Michael BOQUIST, *Community Development Director*

BOQUIST stated that the Goal 9 – Economic Development Chapter of the City of La Grande Comprehensive Plan Ordinance 3255, Series 2022, was proposed to be amended, with the entire Goal 9 Chapter being repealed and replaced with the updated Economic Opportunities Analysis that was completed in September, 2023, along with updated economic development goals and policies which were reviewed and recommended for approval by the Urban Renewal Advisory Commission (URAC) and Planning Commission.

MIESNER asked if anyone attended the Planning Commission Meeting and spoke in favor or opposition of the proposed amendments, to which BOQUIST replied that people attended the meeting to hear what the process entailed; however, there was no public testimony.

BOQUIST briefly described the next steps in the process if the proposed Ordinance was approved, including the Goal 14 phase.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

None.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

MIESNER asked if the information presented was online and accessible for the public, to which **BOQUIST** stated it was available on the City website, specifically on the Community Development page.

Upon Mayor **ROCK**'s request, City Recorder **STOCKHOFF** read the proposed Ordinance by Title Only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA GRANDE, UNION COUNTY, OREGON, AMENDING THE STATEWIDE GOAL CHAPTER 9 OF THE CITY OF LA GRANDE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; RECODIFYING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN; REPEALING ORDINANCE NUMBER 3255, SERIES 2022, AND ALL OTHER ORDINANCES OR PARTS OF ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; AND DECLARING AN EFFECTIVE DATE

Mayor **ROCK** announced that the Public Hearing would be continued to March 6, 2024, at which time the proposed Ordinance was scheduled to be read a Second Time by Title Only and considered for Adoption.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Consider:** Resolution; Approving Increase in Refuse Collection Fees; Waste Pro

STAFF REPORT

Mayor **ROCK** requested the Staff Report.

Robert A. Strobe, *City Manager*

STROPE noted that the City received a call from Darin Larvik, operator of Waste-Pro, and requested that the City consider an increase in fees to be effective March 1, 2024, if approved. The requested increase was 3.4%, which was in line with the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for 2023. Larvik provided a letter which outlined the basis for the increase:

- Fuel was down 7% on a year over year basis
- Labor costs up 15%
- Equipment cost replacements increased with significant lag time for delivery
- Recycling to market prices decreased resulting in a decrease in revenue
- Disposal/Landfill costs were up 5%

STROPE stated that in January, 2023, Waste-Pro requested and received a 7.1% increase. The Franchise Agreement (Ordinance 3248, Series 2020) required increases be approved by Resolution of the City Council. The proposed

Resolution showed the current and proposed rates in the legislative format with the current rates lined through and the proposed rates underlined. Note that new rates were rounded to the nearest \$0.05 and the increases for 300 Gallon service included the added cost of wind stabilization rings on the containers.

MIESNER asked if there was a reduced price for a weekly pickup service for those who were on reduced rates for water and sewer, to which STROPE was not sure and stated that Darin LARVIK would be at the meeting shortly to answer questions.

Mayor ROCK postponed this discussion pending the arrival of Darin LARKVIK.

b. Consider: Adopting Retreat Summary and City/District Manager's Top Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

STAFF REPORT

Mayor ROCK requested the Staff Report.

Robert Strobe, *City Manager*

STROPE noted that the City of La Grande City Council, City Manager, and Department Directors participated in the Council's Annual Goal Setting Retreat on Monday, January 22, 2024. During this Session, goals and priorities for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, were identified and discussed in preparation for developing the proposed Budget for the next Fiscal Year. Those goals and priorities were included in the summary of the Council Retreat 2024, and would serve as direction and guidance from the City Council. Additionally, the City Council established the City/District Manager's Top Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

STROPE stated that the Urban Renewal Agency would also adopt the same top priorities and approve the City and Urban Renewal Economic Development summary at their Regular Meeting.

STROPE discussed in brief the different work sessions that would be scheduled in 2024, and reminded the Councilors that an updated calendar could be viewed on the Monthly Report that he would be sending to them in the next couple of days.

MIESNER asked if the City Charter amendment would be on the November ballot, to which STROPE answered that was the intention. She also asked if the gas tax work session would include electric cars in the discussion, to which STROPE stated yes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

The following Motion was introduced by HOWARD; GLABE providing the Second:

MOTION

MOTION: I move that the City/District Manager's Top Priorities for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, as discussed during the Annual Council Retreat on January 22, 2024, and outlined on the attached City Council Retreat Summary, be adopted as presented.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

VOTE

MSC: 6-0 (Yes: ROCK, GLABE, HOWARD, KING, MIESNER and WHEELER; No: None)

a. **Consider:** Resolution; Approving Increase in Refuse Collection Fees; Waste Pro

STAFF REPORT CONTINUED

City Manager STROPE resumed the Staff Report for item 7.a. when Darin LARVIK arrived.

MIESNER asked if there was a reduced price for a weekly pickup service for those who were on reduced rates for water and sewer, to which LARVIK explained that this service was only for those on a monthly pickup, over the age of 70, and within a certain income range.

LARVIK explained there was a 3.4% increase to all services; however, there were two items that had a larger increase which included 300-gallon tubs and the yard and a half size dumpster. The 300-gallon tubs all had a ring installed to help stabilize them in the wind which added an additional cost. The yard and a half size container rate increased due to the fact those rates had not been adjusted in years.

A discussion was held on the appropriateness of the dumpsters being in front of residential homes and the safety concerns of them being in the street.

LARVIK confirmed that the stabilization rings on the containers were installed before delivery to the customer.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

MOTION

The following Motion was introduced by GLABE; HOWARD providing the Second:

MOTION: I move that the proposed Resolution increasing fees for refuse collection by Waste-Pro be Read by Title Only, Put to a Vote and Passed.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

Upon Mayor ROCK's request, City Recorder STOCKHOFF read the proposed Resolution by Title Only.

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF LA GRANDE, UNION COUNTY, OREGON, ADOPTING A HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE PROGRAM; AUTHORIZING A COMMINGLED CURBSIDE RECYCLING PROGRAM; ESTABLISHING FEES FOR VARIOUS REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICES, INCLUDING A FUEL COST ESCALATOR; AND REPEALING RESOLUTION NUMBER 4829, SERIES 2023; ALL OTHER RESOLUTIONS OR PARTS OF RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT HEREWITH [4857]

VOTE

MSC: 6-0 (Yes: ROCK, GLABE, HOWARD, KING, MIESNER, and WHEELER; No: None)

c. Consider: Appointing Citizens to the Arts Commission, Library Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission

Justin ROCK, *Mayor*

The following Motion was introduced by ROCK; HOWARD providing the Second:

MOTION

Motion: I move that Caitlin Burke be appointed to the Arts Commission, for a three-year term, which will expire December 31, 2026.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

VOTE

MSC: 6-0 (Yes: ROCK, GLABE, HOWARD, KING, MIESNER and WHEELER; No: None)

The following Motion was introduced by ROCK; HOWARD providing the Second:

MOTION

Motion: I move that Susan Dennis be appointed to the Library Advisory Commission, for a four-year term, which will expire December 31, 2027.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

MIESNER asked why her application was not filled out in the section that was for describing why they would like to volunteer, to which BUSHMAN answered that Susan had

been a patron of the library for years and would be a good person to have on the commission.

A brief discussion was held regarding this section of the application and how it would help explain why the applicant wanted to volunteer, to which Council consensus was reached that this section would be required to be filled out with an answer before being considered for appointment to a committee or commission.

VOTE

MSC: 6-0 (Yes: ROCK, GLABE, HOWARD, KING, MIESNER and WHEELER; No: None)

The following Motion was introduced by ROCK; GLABE providing the Second:

MOTION

Motion: I move that Steven Antell and John Briney be appointed to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Commission, each for a three-year term, which will expire December 31, 2026.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

MIESNER noted that one of the applicants did not fill out the section in the application that described why they wanted to volunteer, to which SPENCE explained that John Briney has been on the committee and was re-applying for reappointment.

VOTE

MSC: 6-0 (Yes: ROCK, GLABE, HOWARD, KING, MIESNER and WHEELER; No: None)

UNION COUNTY COMMISSIONER UPDATE

Commissioner Matt SCARFO spoke about Oregon's legislative short session that began Monday, February 5, 2024. He had spoken to senators, representatives and the governor on the wastewater project for the fairgrounds and received positive feedback.

SCARFO noted there was a Greater Idaho Meeting scheduled on Wednesday, February 14, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. in the Union County Commissioner's Chamber.

SCARFO stated he was going to Washington D.C. for a National Association of Counties (NACO) Conference and would be meeting with federal lobbyists trying to obtain federal dollars for projects in our community. He offered the Councilors the opportunity to share with him any project ideas so that he could present their requested projects to lobbyists while attending the conference.

SCARFO mentioned he would help gather those needed from the County offices for the work session related to animal control since that was a priority that came out of the Council's retreat.

SCARFO discussed an access issue to MERA that a few concerned community members had shared with the local newspaper. He stated that the Owsley Canyon Road access point was closed due to safety reasons, however, the Fox Hill access point was accessible.

WHEELER asked what the status of Measure 110 was in regards to Oregon's legislative short session, to which SCARFO replied the main discussion during the short session was deciding whether to change the misdemeanor description for crimes related to drug use.

A brief discussion was held about Measure 110 and the pledge for treatment centers that never came to completion.

HOWARD mentioned the MERA issue and noted frustration in the community about the closure. A suggestion was made to communicate these closures through different avenues, to which SCARFO responded that winter time was the slowest for MERA, so this was when maintenance was to be performed. He would pass along the frustrations on the communication regarding the road closures.

A brief discussion was held about the timetable and amount of money that would be needed for completion of the sewage project at the fairgrounds.

GLABE expressed that there would be a few various projects that he would like SCARFO to mention at the National Association of Counties Conference, to which SCARFO reminded the Councilors to send him a list.

STAFF COMMENTS

Chief BELL noted that advertising was out for different positions at the Police Department, including a 911 Dispatcher and a Police Officer Position.

BELL stated there was a crisis state-wide concerning drug overdoses. In 2023, there was a call increase in our community for overdoses that was up 3% from the last calendar year. To put into perspective, it was an increase of 500% from calendar year of 2020. These numbers have not captured the entire picture; it was only for calls to the City's 911 Dispatch Center.

In regards to previous concerns about the current location of the Warming Station, GLABE asked if the Police Department was receiving any calls on this location recently, to which BELL replied they have been negligible. There was patrol in the area during the Warming Station's opening and closing times, regular patrols go through the

area as well and additional street lighting was placed after a discussion with neighbors.

WHEELER mentioned that patrons of the Warming Station were sorting through other people's trash bins, to which BELL replied that if someone had a complaint regarding this situation, they call dispatch so the police can help mitigate those types of issues.

BELL mentioned calls for service that were categorized as being related to persons experiencing homelessness have increased throughout the community, not just in the neighborhood where the Warming Station was located. They were up 25% in 2023, compared to 2022, which equated to a 429% increase from 2020.

SPENCE noted the Riverside Park playground replacement project was going great. A brief discussion was held about the amount of money that was still needed and the potential sources of where it would come from.

BUSHMAN stated that on February 17, 2024, at 4:00 p.m., Poet Laureate Anis Mojgani would be doing a reading at Cook Memorial Library and invited everyone to attend.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

STROPE stated that earlier in the week he had a conversation over the phone with representatives from Senator Merkley and Senator Wyden's office about the Eastside Water and Sewer project which would be submitted for federal funding. An application was in process and due February 25, 2024.

STROPE mentioned he would be sending the Monthly Report to the Councilor's the following week.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

GLABE announced he had the cash prize from the Chili Cook-off that the Councilors won first place for, in October 2023, and the Councilors wanted to donate the cash prize to fund city streets.

There being no further business to come before this Regular Session of the Council, Mayor ROCK adjourned the meeting to the Urban Renewal Agency Session at 7:05 p.m. The Council is scheduled to meet again in Regular Session on Wednesday, March 6, 2024, at 6:00 p.m., in the Council Chambers of City Hall, 1000 Adams Avenue, La Grande, Oregon.

Stacey M. Stockhoff
City Recorder

Justin B. Rock
Mayor

APPROVED: _____