

CITY of LA GRANDE
City Council Regular Session

March 6, 2024

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

MINUTES

COUNCILORS PRESENT:

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

COUNCILORS ABSENT EXCUSED:

Denise Wheeler, *Councilor*

STAFF PRESENT

Robert Strobe, *City Manager*
Stacey Stockhoff, *City Recorder*
Keri Quinn, *Assistant to the City Manager*
Gary Bell, *Police Chief*
Michael Boquist, *Community Development Director*
Carrie Bushman, *Library Director*
Kyle Carpenter, *Public Works Director*
Emmitt Cornford, *Fire Chief*
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; February 7, 2024

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, DUTTO, HOWARD, KING, and MIESNER; No: None)

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Casey BROWN addressed a concern about her daughter's walk to school. A lack of sidewalks and stop signs at the intersections were a concern from Cedar Street to Central School.

DUTTO asked if the discussion had been held to add signage to these intersections a year prior, to which STROPE suggested that the other citizens in the audience that have the same concerns should speak before questions are answered afterward by the Public Works Director.

Sarah ANDERSON stated she would like to see a more integrated and systematic approach to transportation in La Grande, mainly for infrastructure related to walking and biking. She felt that more signage and clearer markings for streets, mainly where pedestrians were crossing were needed. She would like to see prioritization of routes to and from schools.

Meghan MOORE noted concern about the sidewalk safety of Central School. She suggested having improved sidewalks about a mile out from schools for a safer walking path. She felt that walking sidewalks should be priority, biking also worthy to talk about, and planning for improvements.

Will ANDERSON stated that he attended the Parking, Traffic Safety and Street Maintenance Advisory Commission meeting in January to speak on the same issue as the other parents spoke before him. The concern brought up was the lack of updated sidewalks around the present location of Central Elementary School.

Shannon DONOVAN noted pedestrian safety concerns including lack of sidewalks, disconnected sidewalks, lack of signing, and poor lighting. An emphasis was made about intersections and the need for signage.

Clyde TOOHEY, a student in La Grande, walked to school on a regular basis and noted a lack of sidewalks and stop signs.

Kathleen CATHEY stated she was running for County Commissioner. She gave a brief description of her career and the work she has done for various community groups within Union County. Issues she would work on included; access to mental health, health care, addiction treatment, and housing.

In response to the sidewalk and signage concerns, CARPENTER explained that the adjacent sidewalks to properties are the homeowners' responsibility. DUTTO asked how to get homeowners to put in sidewalks, to which CARPENTER answered that the City can send letters pertaining to sidewalks but did not have the authority to force a homeowner to put in said sidewalk unless there was a proven safety hazard backed up by statistics.

A brief discussion was held on various sidewalks around La Grande that the City has funded and improved, problems associated with asking homeowners to add or improve sidewalks, other problematic areas in town with high foot traffic and no sidewalks, and the small budget the City has to work with to improve any said sidewalks.

CARPENTER spoke about uncontrolled intersections and how all signage in La Grande followed the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). He also noted studies have shown if you sign every intersection, it had the potential to conversely affect the drivers to the point they would ignore the signs or would move through them at a quicker pace to get through them.

In response to DUTTO's question, CARPENTER affirmed that the Parking, Traffic Safety and Street Maintenance Advisory Commission held a discussion to place yield signs along Cedar Street and they would be placed this spring.

A discussion was held on the viability of signs in uncontrolled intersections.

GLABE asked which methods for traffic control around crosswalks would be best, to which CARPENTER answered there were various ways to mark the crosswalks; however, the issue was funding and the competition for grants.

MIESNER asked if there was a route to Central Elementary for the children. CARPENTER mentioned that the Safe Routes to School study was performed in 2019, this was due to Central's location change. Second Street was identified by the study as the best route because of the infrastructure in place already.

CARPENTER stated Greenwood Street was another street identified by Safe Routes to School as a way for kids to get to the downtown area. There were planning grants through the Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) being applied for and the hope was to tie the South side and North side for safe routes. He noted that the effort from staff was there but the process was slow moving.

GLABE asked how a Local Improvement District (LID) worked, was it a cost sharing agreement between property owners and the City or would it be paid for in full by property owners. CARPENTER answered the LID's for sidewalks were still the full burden of the homeowner; however, the City negotiated a lower cost on repairs and could also act like a bank by financing those costs which

the homeowner could make payments when the LID was due.

GLABE asked if there was anything preventing citizens from gathering the funds themselves and helping owners along a specific route in conjunction with an LID, to which CARPENTER noted that was highly acceptable. He recommended certain improvements that could be made to help aid in communicating better with the public on projects that were on a list for repair and also adding bike pavement markers to the roads that cyclists travel on often.

HOWARD questioned if there were a way to attach an agreement to improve or fix the property's sidewalk to the deed of a home when the property was sold, to which STROPE stated that it would be looked into.

STROPE mentioned LID's were property owner initiated in cooperation with the City. One could choose to form a single LID to put all of the sidewalks in at the same time within a specific footprint, this would be most successful when the members of the community were the ones implementing the process. He explained the process of there would be a 10-year payback, it would be paid much like property taxes or it could be paid upfront and that's where citizens gathering the funds themselves could come in to play for some families. This does take a lot of agreement on the parts of the property owners.

Shannon DONOVAN suggested road dieting be part of an infrastructure change and challenged the thought of grant funding not being available. She also mentioned there were no signs on L Street so there would not be an over-signage issue in the area.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

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

RULES OF ORDER

MAYOR Rock announced that the Public Hearing was still open for the Ordinance to be read for a Second Time by Title Only and considered for adoption at 6:52 p.m.; and that the Rules of Order for this Public Hearing were read in their entirety during the Regular Session of February 7, 2024.

STAFF REPORT

Mayor ROCK requested the Staff Report.

Michael BOQUIST, *Community Development Director*

BOQUIST explained 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.

BOQUIST stated that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 9, 2024, to consider this request and the Commission voted unanimously to recommend approval to the City Council. During the hearing, there were two members of the public that asked questions of the Commission, inquiring how this Goal 9 project affected their residential property which it did not. Neither party offered testimony in support or opposition to the request.

BOQUIST noted the City Council held a public hearing on February 7, 2024, and read the proposed Ordinance for the First Time by Title Only. There were no parties offering testimony regarding this request.

GLABE noted grammatical errors within the document and advised City Staff to fix the document.

DUTTO referenced Goal 9 Policy Number 23 within the report and asked why the Urban Reserve Area was removed, to which BOQUIST informed it was something larger cities do and it pertained to looking at the next 50 years, Urban Growth Boundaries look at the next 20 years. He further explained that the City has never outgrown its 20-year plan.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

None.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

Mayor ROCK closed the Public Hearing at 6:57 p.m.

MOTION

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

MOTION: I move that the proposed Ordinance amending the Goal 9 Chapter of the La Grande Comprehensive Plan be read for the Second Time by Title Only, Put to a Vote, and Adopted.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

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 [3269]

VOTE

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

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. Consider: Resolution; Authorizing City Staff to Apply for Grant to Replace Playground at Riverside Park

STAFF REPORT

Mayor ROCK requested the Staff Report.

Stu Spence, *Parks & Recreation Director*

SPENCE explained that the Parks and Recreation Department's Master Plan efforts in 2021, identified the Riverside Park Playground replacement as the number one priority for the department. Staff successfully recruited a committee to lead the fundraising and design efforts. With over 1,000 social media and in-person interactions, the citizens selected a unique inclusive design that includes a 12-foot tower complete with wheel chair ramp inside. The committee had been working hard raising money and, along with supplemental grants from staff, were very close to reaching their goal. At time of construction, all funds would be secured. This Oregon State Parks Local Government Grant program would provide 60% of the funding for the project equating to approximately \$390,000.

In response to DUTTO's question, SPENCE stated that checks for donation to the playground could be made out to City of La Grande.

SPENCE briefly discussed the process for this type of grant with the State of Oregon and how they were funded.

GLABE asked for an update on the Riverside Greenway, to which SPENCE noted that a fence would be installed by June of this year.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Mayor ROCK voiced support for the Resolution.

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

MOTION

MOTION: I move that the proposed Resolution authorizing the City Manager to sign the grant application for the Riverside Park Playground replacement be Read by Title Only, Put to a Vote and Passed as presented and that the City Manager be authorized to accept the grant and sign any related documents, if awarded.

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, AUTHORIZING CITY OF LA GRANDE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT STAFF TO APPLY FOR A LOCAL GOVERNMENT GRANT FROM THE OREGON PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT FOR THE CONSTRUCTION AND REHABILITATION OF THE PLAYGROUND REPLACEMENT AT RIVERSIDE PARK; AUTHORIZING CITY MANAGER ROBERT A. STROPE TO SIGN THE GRANT APPLICATION AND ANY DOCUMENTS RELATED TO ACCEPTING THE GRANT IF AWARDED [4858]

VOTE

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

b. Consider: Appointing Citizen to Library Commission

Justin ROCK, *Mayor*

Mayor ROCK explained that chapter 357 of Oregon Revised Statutes requires that a public library be governed by a Library Advisory Commission consisting of not less than five (5) members, serving for four (4)-year terms. The Library Advisory Commission was charged to serve as advocates of the F. Maxine and Thomas W. Cook Memorial Library and its services and programs. Commissioners also review the Library Budget and consult with, advise and make recommendations to the Library Director, City Manager, and City Council.

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

MOTION

Motion: I move that John Anderson be appointed to the Library Advisory Commission, for the remainder of a four-year term, which will expire December 31, 2024.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

None.

VOTE

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

UNION COUNTY COMMISSIONER UPDATE

Commissioner Matt SCARFO stated the Oregon Legislative Short Session was to be completed by the end of that week. He explained that \$74 million dollars was up for spending and \$704 million dollars in requests from all over the State. At this time, he was unsure whether the funding for the fairgrounds was going to be approved, but was adamant about continuing to ask for the funding and would not give up.

STAFF COMMENTS

BOQUIST gave updates on two grants, one was a code-analysis grant for residential elements that were in the land use code. He stated that land-use laws change frequently and this grant would allow the code to be fully updated with State laws. The second was a pre-application for a Transportation and Growth Management (TGM) grant that would provide an update for the transit, walking and bicycling plan for the City. This would include updated maps for walking and biking, the whole project for the updated plan would cost approximately \$200,000.

CITY MANAGER COMMENTS

STROPE notified the Council that language for the City's Charter amendment was being worked on and wanted to get consensus of the Council as to whether or not to move all candidates for Mayor and Council positions to the fall election.

GLABE asked if five people ran for Mayor, would all five go to the General Election and the top vote getter would be elected as Mayor, to which STROPE acknowledged that this was correct.

A discussion was held on what would happen in various scenarios with the proposed Charter change.

STROPE stated each of the Council positions that were up for election this year were running unopposed and anticipated stability on the Council for the next two years.

STROPE mentioned there would be a work session to discuss the Charter amendment, scheduled in April. GLABE noted that he would like to see good communication to the citizens so they are better able to make an informed decision when they vote, to which STROPE stated the City's attorney would help craft language so it would be clear exactly what was intended to be changed.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

GLABE presented to the Council an idea for discussion of obtaining a grant writer for the City, either through a salaried position, commission, or consulting basis.

STROPE mentioned it would depend on what was going on within the City and how it would be structured.

SPENCE noted he had experience in previous jobs with consultants that performed grant writing. He felt it could be a challenge timewise to get them up to speed of the specifics within the particular department.

STROPE lastly noted that a grant writer for a specific or complex grant could be beneficial.

There being no further business to come before this Regular Session of the Council, Mayor ROCK adjourned the meeting at 7:18 p.m. The Council is scheduled to meet again in Regular Session on Wednesday, April 3, 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: _____