

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Shannon McKay called the workshop to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Shannon McKay; Councilmembers Eleanor Brodahl, Kathy Carlton, Kenneth Taylor, Everett Cole, Marc Spohr, Dale Wyman, and Tim Wilson.

Also Present: Department Heads: Curt Andrews, Mike Bailey, Police Chief Steve Dunnagan, Debbie Kudrna, and City Administrator Ehman Sheldon.

PASTOR BOB LUHN – IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION IN OUR COMMUNITY

Pastor Bob Luhn reviewed facts regarding the Washington State Education System academic achievement and statistics, and the Anglo and Hispanic student's WASL scores statistics within the Othello School District. He advised that the facts indicate that no matter what your ethnic background is our youth are receiving above average education in Othello. He concluded that the Washington State education system is among the top in the nation; Othello students score higher than their ethnic peer's state wide and the Othello School District works to assure continual improvement in student achievement. Pastor Luhn asked the Council to affirm that the Othello School District provides our youth an above average education and use these facts as a recruiting tool for people and new businesses to relocate in our community. He asked for support of our teachers and school administrators who provide education to our youth.

ADAMS COUNTY WATER DISTRICT #1 – WATER RATE DISCUSSION

Finance Officer Mike Bailey provided a copy of a letter from Adams County Water District #1 petitioning the City to consider modifying the 50% surcharge for water and sewer services to a rate reflecting a smaller percentage above the actual cost of delivery and maintenance of service to customers outside the city limits. He compiled information from the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) water rate survey to create a spreadsheet of water rates for inside and outside city limits of 165 water providers. Mr. Bailey advised that Othello's rate for water users outside the city limits is 150% of the rate for water users inside city limits and the water rate survey indicated that the average for the 165 water providers for water users outside city limits is 148.38%.

Mr. Bailey advised that the city does not receive property taxes from customers outside the city limits and does not receive the benefit of including these customers in population based State shared revenue. City Attorney Jim Whitaker provided a written response to the Water District's request, and explained that the City Council does not have to justify the imposition of a surcharge on utility services delivered outside its boundaries. A City can surcharge the delivery of utilities to areas outside the City at a rate of 100% without any question.

Dora Beraza, Adams County Water District #1 board member explained that the property owners in the Water District are on limited income, and they have many older citizens. She asked the Council to reconsider the surcharge on the water and sewer rates, as she feels they need to justify the surcharge to their customers.

Mayor McKay explained that the water rates were increased to fund the operation and maintenance of the water utility and provide the utility service to the community. The City had a recent emergency well repair and the Council authorized the repair work for approximately \$84,000. He stated that all customers outside the city limits are charged the 150% rate surcharge.

Eva White, office manager of the Adams County Water District #1 questioned the rates listed on the AWC rate survey. The Othello rates were later clarified. She asked if the City had a ratio study to find how much above the actual costs and maintenance costs do the City customers pay compared to the rates paid by the County customers. City Administrator Ehman Sheldon advised that the City has not prepared this study and the City Attorney has advised that the Council does not have to justify any increase for customers outside city limits. City staff had provided rate studies based upon the costs to pay operational costs and set aside sufficient reserves. Mrs. White advised that Othello has a lot of utility customers outside the city limits. She said that the

Water District is trying to keep costs as low as possible and it is hard to justify the rates to their customers. Mayor McKay reiterated the fact that our rates cover the operation and maintenance of the utility at a fair price. The surcharge for customers outside city limits is standard.

COULEE CORRIDOR UPDATE

Councilmember Caylor reported that he recently was in Baltimore at the National Scenic Byway Conference. He represented the Coulee Corridor, which was a selected winner in the interpretation category. He advised that they are producing another 20,000 copies of the birding map. There are currently 126 national scenic byways, located in 44 states. Councilmember Caylor explained that at the conference they met with other attendees, a House Representative and a teleconference with the Secretary of Transportation. They were able to address the issue of shortage of Federal funding for projects such as the Coulee Corridor. He gave a brief overview of the development and uniqueness of our area and the opportunity to create tourism.

RESOLUTION REGARDING OFFICIAL NEWSPAPER SELECTION

Councilmember Caylor explained that the Council wrestled with the award of the official newspaper for the City. There is difference between selecting the official newspaper for counties and for code cities. He recommended that the City adopt a Resolution requesting the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) to make it a legislative priority for the 2008 legislative session to propose an amendment to the RCW regarding selection of a code city's official newspaper. He explained that he feels the official newspaper should be a local paper and the City should support local businesses. Mr. Sheldon advised that AWC is an organized lobbyist group. Councilmember Brodahl noted she supports freedom of enterprise and the bid process. Councilmember Wyman advised there should be criteria set for award of the service and voiced his concern of limiting the competitive process. Mike Beardsley from the Othello Port District stated that he had concerns of legal notices not published in the local newspaper and that potential businesses may not know that the legal publications are not in the Othello Outlook. It was Council's consensus to send a letter to the Association of Washington Cities asking for their recommendation and whether other communities are faced with the same issue.

CONSIDERATION OF INET PARTICIPATION BY OPD

Police Chief Dunnagan advised that the City had participated in the Interagency Narcotics Enforcement Team (INET) in the past and had withdrawn from INET in 2006 due to man power shortages within the Police Department. The task force is made up of members from law enforcement agencies in Grant and Adams County to combat narcotics. There is new State funding that would allow Grant County to reimburse Othello for full reimbursement of salary and benefits for one officer (\$60,000). Chief Dunnagan advised that they are up to staff level, excluding the recent resignation from Sergeant Pierre, and it is an opportune time to participate in the INET program again. Sheriff Barger has advised that Adams County cannot participate in INET due to their staffing level. Chief Dunnagan provided statistics of drug cases worked in the Othello area since 2001 and statistics of the number of marijuana plants seized in the Othello area. These statistics indicated that when Othello participated in INET, the cases worked in our community increased. Chief Dunnagan explained that we have a current Interlocal agreement and asked the City Council to authorize an officer of the Othello Police Department to be on the INET team. He would then fill the open police officer position, noting this would give us an extra officer to cover vacancies due to the normal attrition rate of the department. The benefits include: the City would be reimbursed for the officer salary and benefits; it offers additional career experience to an officer in drug enforcement; we would see an increase of drug cases worked in the Othello area, and we could receive a percentage of forfeited assets from the cases. He advised that there are two current officers that are actively pursuing careers at the federal level. It was suggested that the past INET officer meet with the Council to discuss the issue further.

GOALS OF THE CITY

City Administrator Ehman Sheldon advised that the goals that the Council adopted in the budget match the goals of the personnel in the City. He provided a list of approximately 50 goals,

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budgets, and time frames for completion in 2007. Councilmember Brodahl reported that the contract with the City Administrator provides that the Mayor, Council and employee shall annually define such goals and performance objectives determined necessary for operation of the City of Othello and shall establish a priority of the goals and objectives. She stated that the Council has never participated in the performance review of the City Administrator. Mayor McKay advised that he performs annual performance evaluations of the City Administrator, as did the previous Mayor and he feels that the Council does not need to participate in the actual evaluation. He offered that the City Councilmembers could receive copies of the annual evaluations and if they have any issues, they need to discuss those with the Mayor and he will address those. Mayor McKay stated that the City departments are on target with the street projects and other programs that were set for this year. He stated that the Council can have retreats to set goals.

NEW BUSINESS

Councilmember Carlton thanked all of the response teams that responded to the tragedy the week before at Hiawatha School. She noted there has been an outpouring of community support.

Councilmember Wyman extended a thank you to City Hall staff Chelsea Davis for taking new photos of the Councilmembers.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further items to discuss, Mayor McKay adjourned the workshop at 8:25 p.m.

By: _____
SHANNON MCKAY, Mayor

ATTEST:

By: _____
DEBBIE L. KUDRNA, City Clerk