

City Council Minutes – March 30, 2020

Mayor Laurie Gere called to order the advertised special Anacortes City Council meeting of March 30, 2020 at 6:00 p.m. Councilmembers Jeremy Carter, Anthony Young, Ryan Walters, Christine Cleland-McGrath, Carolyn Moulton, Bruce McDougall and Matt Miller all participated in the meeting in absentia via video conference.

STUDY SESSION

COVID-19 Impacts and Community Resources

Mayor Gere responded to the following agenda outline that had been prepared by councilmembers Cleland-McGrath, Moulton and Walters and submitted to the mayor the prior Friday. The outline was added to the packet materials for the meeting. The mayor shared information provided by other staff and other agencies and solicited councilmember questions, feedback and requests for future action.

- A. Agenda Review
- B. Situational Awareness
 - (1) Number of cases in Skagit; Washington State trendline
 - (2) Governor’s orders re (a) stay-at-home and (b) OPMA
 - (3) Expectation for length of stay-at-home orders
 - (4) Discuss who is currently working in-office
- C. Planning Goal 1: Protect employee and public health.
 - (1) Is reliance on County Health appropriate?
 - (2) How are we enforcing the stay-home order?
 - (3) Are city staff still working on premises when they should be at home?

Human Resources Director Vanessa Bronsema reported on new federal leave law that would go into effect on April 1. Ms. Bronsema referenced the draft policy she had circulated to councilmembers prior to the meeting and said that an updated version of the draft would be presented to Council for action at its April 6, 2020 meeting. The draft policy was added to the packet materials for the meeting. Ms. Bronsema noted that federal guidance on this topic was continuing to evolve.

- (4) What work are staff from closed facilities (e.g., library) doing?
- (5) Do we need personnel policy amendments to justify leave pay?
- D. Planning Goal 2: Ensure continued city services (including and especially emergency response services).
 - (1) Can staff answer phone calls remotely?
 - (2) Do first responders have sufficient PPE?
 - (3) Are we effectively communicating with public?
 - (a) Website
 - (b) TV10
 - (c) Anacortes American
 - (d) Anacortes School District
 - (4) Improve communication with City Council.

Mayor Gere solicited councilmember feedback on this item. Ms. Moulton requested frequent reports from department heads via email, even if brief, to keep councilmembers up to date between meetings. Mr. Walters requested more study sessions like the present meeting to inform councilmember decisions. Councilmembers requested that City Council committee meetings continue to be held per the normal schedule for such meetings

and that they be conducted electronically as allowed under Resolution 2082. Mayor Gere indicated that staff would arrange electronic means of holding regularly scheduled committee meetings.

E. Planning Goal 3: Plan for funding sources to fluctuate during the pandemic, and prepare for recovery funding.

(1) What are expectations for city financial situation?

Finance Director Steve Hoglund shared a brief slide deck summarizing anticipated impacts of COVID-19 to city revenues and cash flow during 2020. Mr. Hoglund's slides were added to the packet materials for the meeting. Mr. Walters requested more frequent finance updates during the epidemic. Mr. Hoglund agreed that monthly rather than quarterly updates would be appropriate. Mr. Miller observed that Council would need to begin and continue discussions of the hiring freeze, emergency cash reserves, and other means of responding to the economic impacts of the epidemic.

(2) Are we tracking time for federal disaster reimbursement?

Mayor Gere reported on the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and referenced the related materials made available on the city website earlier in the day.

(3) Should we suspend all LTAC expenditures this year?

Mayor Gere explained that LTAC contracts are reimbursement based but that some expenses for upcoming (and cancelled) events had already been incurred by the event organizers and should be honored by the City. Mr. Miller agreed with that assessment and that LTAC contracts probably did not need to be cancelled by the City. Mr. Walters and Mr. Miller suggested exploring ways that additional LTAC funds could be made available to local businesses.

F. Planning Goal 4: Accelerate digital transition for remote work.

(1) What is the current city capacity for WFH?

(2) We need council access to systems for council communication and remote work. Council needs to be able to setup its own meetings.

Councilmembers discussed different platforms available for electronic meetings. Mayor Gere indicated she would address that topic with IT staff.

(3) Are we continuing fiber deployment? We need it now more than ever.

Mr. Walters and Mr. McDougall suggested ways that the Fiber installation teams might be able to connect and light up new customers while still complying with social distancing orders in order to generate revenue for the Fiber utility. Mr. Carter asked if fiber fees would continue to be charged to customers in economic duress. Mayor Gere advised that city utility fees were continuing to accrue but that customer service was not being interrupted for late payment at this time.

G. Planning Goal 5: Ensure cybersecurity and information security.

(1) Are city staff using home computers putting the city network at risk?

Mr. Walters and Mr. McDougall indicated that the City Council IT Committee would be addressing the city's policy in this regard to bring it into alignment with current, secure practice.

(2) What investments do we need to make?

H. Planning Goal 6: Prepare for multiple simultaneous emergencies or disasters.

- (1) Emergency Plan
 - (a) Distribution of plan
 - (b) How are we using plan?
 - (c) ICS training

Councilmembers asked for guidance on which online trainings would be appropriate for elected officials to pursue at this time. Mayor Gere said she would speak with Emergency Management Consultant Richard Curtis in that regard.

- (2) Need to work directly with Island Hospital to plan for individuals who maybe discharged, but not able to return home or to an assisted living facility. That may require hotel space, school gym space, or other options.

Mr. Walters asked whether, if an exposed citizen wanted to avoid infecting his or her family, sufficient alternative housing was available to enable people to make that choice. Mayor Gere reported on alternative housing resources being arranged by Skagit County and said staff would continue to explore those options.

- (3) City of Edmonds emergency code authorization for closures and penalties

Mr. Walters reported on City of Edmonds Ordinance 4177 authorizing its mayor to act swiftly to protect the public health, safety, and welfare in response to emergencies and civil emergencies. He encouraged adoption of similar legislation in Anacortes and said he would circulate the Edmonds ordinance to his colleagues. Mr. Carter noted that the Edmonds ordinance addressed gun confiscation and said he did not support including such a clause in an Anacortes ordinance.

I.Planning Goal 7: Prepare for critical personnel replacements and succession in case of illness.

- (1) Cross-training, re-org, and coordination
- (2) City of Edmonds emergency code on mayoral succession

Mayor Gere summarized the current succession code. Councilmembers discussed means of ensuring that both executive officers and a quorum of councilmembers would be available in emergencies.

J. Planning Goal 8: Prepare for Return to Work

- (1) Do we have shovel-projects ready for potential future Recovery Act funding? Do we need to spend money to get there? How will we prioritize/authorize such projects?
- (2) Have we extended permit time periods for projects on hold?

Mayor Gere invited councilmembers to raise any topics not addressed in the outline. Councilmembers expressed a need to query the community about other unmet needs. Local businesses, families and non-profit organizations were all mentioned as possibly needing additional resources. Councilmembers suggested contacting individual businesses by phone and also holding one or more electronic public meetings to solicit community input.

There being no further business, at approximately 7:23 p.m. the Anacortes City Council meeting of March 30, 2020 was adjourned.