

MINUTES OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING – CITY COUNCIL  
JUNE 4, 2007

The special meeting of the City Council of the City of Benicia was called to order by Mayor Steve Messina at 6:02 p.m. on Monday, June 4, 2007, in the Doña Benicia Room, Benicia Public Library, 150 East L Street, complete proceedings of which are recorded on tape.

ROLL CALL:

Present: Council Members Hughes, Patterson, Schwartzman, Whitney, and Mayor Messina

Absent: None

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Messina led the pledge to the flag.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS:

A plaque stating the Fundamental Rights of each member of the public is posted at the entrance to the Dona Benicia Room, per Section 4.04.030 of City of Benicia Ordinance No. 05-6 (Open Government Ordinance).

2007-09 Budget Workshop #2:

Jim Erickson, City Manager, described the meeting format.

City Attorney:

Heather McLaughlin, City Attorney, reviewed the PowerPoint presentation for the City Attorney budget (hard copy on file). The only outstanding issue is that she put in a request for agenda management software and scanning software. The preliminary estimate is \$62,000 for the software/equipment.

Council Member Patterson inquired about the amount of hours spent at the counter for Staff time. She suggested Staff look into software that would decrease that time. She suggested contacting the City of Berkeley to see how it was handling the issue. It might produce a cost savings for Staff time. She asked about the issue of a full time code enforcement officer. Could Staff look into having a proper ordinance so that the City could collect fees for code enforcement? Ms. McLaughlin stated that the City might be able to develop such a program. Doing so might increase Staff time.

Police Department:

Chief Spagnoli reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the Police Department budget (hard copy on file).

Mayor Messina inquired about the possibility of adding another police beat. When would that discussion be appropriate? How long would it take to get that position up to speed? Chief Spagnoli stated Staff would have to look at the calls for service to see what

additional staffing was needed. Mayor Messina inquired about working with other jurisdictions in the County. Does that put increasing pressure on the City Staff? Chief Spagnoli stated that there had to be an emphasis on the City with regards to responsibility. The City's needs are a priority. Mayor Messina stated that he was supportive with regards to doing what needed to be done for the additional beat when the time comes.

Council Member Whitney inquired about the 911 Center equipment. Chief Spagnoli stated that overall, the equipment was outstanding and working very well. Council Member Whitney asked if Chief Spagnoli saw any issues with 'grandfathering' with the police facility. Chief Spagnoli stated that the current police facility has been outgrown. They are making due with what they have; however, they will need more space in the future. The sally port is working okay; there are problems with it sometimes. It is accomplishing the safety issues that had been raised in the past.

Council Member Patterson clarified that the salary increases were done because of the current market. She inquired about the facility improvements. Chief Spagnoli discussed the areas that needed to be addressed because of safety and aesthetics. Council Member Patterson suggested having another video made so the citizens could see the improvements that had been made. She discussed the issue of traffic. Chief Spagnoli stated that the department does not have a formalized traffic program. They are dedicated to making the community safe. They participate in countywide programs. That makes them eligible for Office of Traffic Safety Funds. Coordinating traffic enforcements is a goal she would like to address in the upcoming year. Council Member Patterson suggested looking at the volunteer program to see what portions it could supplement.

Council Member Hughes stated that one of the things that came up at a traffic safety meeting was the issue of a motorcycle traffic control program, as well as the need for a comprehensive traffic control program. Is that something Chief Spagnoli would like to see explored? Chief Spagnoli stated that it was a fact that the most effective means for traffic enforcement was through a motorcycle program. That was definitely something she was interested in.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that he would like the issue of a motorcycle traffic control program to be looked into sooner than later.

Council Member Hughes stated that if the motorcycle traffic program was in place, it might generate a lot more revenues. Chief Spagnoli stated that the equipment is minimal – it is the staffing, training, etc. that is the bulk of the cost of the program. A secondary portion of the program is education for the schools, community, etc.

#### Public Works:

Dan Schiada, Public Works Director, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the Public Works Department budget (hard copy on file).

Public Comment:

Citizen – The citizen, a Benicia High School (BHS) student, stated that there are 1700 students at BHS. They need a traffic signal at the high school. A car recently hit a student. There are many traffic accidents. In the past, they have endorsed Measure H – they are doing so again this year.

Citizen – The citizen, a student, described the Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship (SAGE) competition that the students recently took third place in the nation. The stoplight project was only one of the projects they worked on. The traffic is a mess at BHS. They would like a traffic signal installed.

Citizen – The citizen, who is the BHS teacher of the SAGE program. The SAGE students worked on the traffic safety project. It is something they are very passionate about. The students collected hundreds of signatures supporting a traffic signal. The student that was recently hit by a car was in the flashing crosswalk. The students, staff, and parents are all concerned about the traffic safety. They understand that money is very important; however, this is a life and death project. It should be at that top of the list.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman thanked the students for sharing their comments. He agreed the project was very important. Council will do whatever they can to get that going. He understands the need for the signal, as well as a motorcycle traffic officer for enforcement.

Council Member Patterson stated that the presentation was excellent. The issue is real. The Traffic, Pedestrian, and Bicycle Safety Committee has discussed the issue.

Council Member Hughes stated that this issue falls into the category of public safety. If there were a way to fast track this, it would do so.

Council Member Whitney stated that the signal would cost \$400,000 for design and construction. The City has put all its STA eggs in the State Park Road Bridge Project. There would be some Safe Routes to Schools funds coming up. The City has some local traffic calming funds that could be used for the signal. There might be other alternatives to slow traffic down in the area. Council Member Whitney asked if there were any funds where the money could be borrowed from that could be used for this project. Mr. Schiada stated that one thought Staff had was to set the money aside to get the design going. Design takes time – approximately 6 months. That way, once the State Park Road Bridge Project done, funds might be available to address the traffic signal. Council Member Whitney encouraged Staff to find a way to make this project happen now. It is a safety issue. The problem will not get better until the signal is installed.

Mr. Erickson stated that borrowing the money from another fund was possible.

Mayor Messina suggested looking at a way to fund half of the project budget, and then maybe additional funds would become available through STA.

Council Member Patterson inquired how much the draft EIR cost for the Intermodal Transportation Station (ITS); she thought it was approximately \$700,000. She asked if the City could get credit from STA for the money it spent on the draft EIR. Benicia won't have an ITS for the next 30 years. She suggested Staff look into that. A transfer could be made from the ITS Fund – borrowing the money.

Mayor Messina asked Staff to look into these issues and report back to Council at the 6/19 meeting.

Council Member Patterson discussed water conservation. She discussed working on conservation on a regional basis. She inquired about the 1,300 failing water lines in Southampton area. Mr. Schiada stated that in the late 1980's, they came out with plastic water service laterals. A lot of them are breaking because they are brittle. The City is looking at replacing those items proactively. The lines go from the main line to the water meter, but not the house. She asked if the City was looking at the possibility of solar power as a source for the lift stations. Mr. Schiada stated that Staff had not yet looked at that, but it could. Council Member Patterson stated that on the streetlight maintenance program, there is a need for funding. Mr. Schiada stated that the Lighting and Landscaping District is paying for the lighting energy costs. She would like a map showing all of the streetlights that were covered by the L&L Districts. She discussed the issue of reducing Military West down to one lane to reduce speed. Mr. Schiada stated that was something Staff wanted to look at as part of the Safe Routes to Schools Program. She asked about the storm water fee on page 84 – Council had a serious discussion on this when it discussed the storm water management ordinance. Why is the City spending so much money on this? Mr. Schiada stated that the City was spending a lot of money out of the General Fund for this. Mr. Erickson discussed Proposition 218 – there needs to be a lot of thought any time one goes to the voters to ask for more money. The City was not ready to bring this to the public just yet.

Mr. Schiada stated that the biggest concern for the City was the water and wastewater fees. He did not want to do this at the same time the City was addressing the water and wastewater.

Council Member Patterson stated that Council could go back and amend the ordinance to address this issue.

Council Member Whitney asked Mr. Schiada about the thoroughfares. It seems like there is an ongoing issue with the streetlights on East Second Street. Mr. Schiada discussed previous problems with PG&E. There are some issues with lighting components. They are working with the police volunteers to do some proactive inspections on the lighting components. Council Member Whitney asked about the new requirements with regards to water/wastewater. Mr. Schiada stated that the City was in a good position with this. The City is going through negotiations with Valero, which is another revenue stream. As of right now, he did not anticipate any major increases in rates in the near future. Council Member Whitney asked about the State Park Road Bridge. CalTrans owns the bridge – at what point does Cal Trans state that the bridge is inadequate? Mr. Schiada stated that he

was looking into some SHOP funding that CalTrans receives to put towards the design for the project.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman discussed the issue of hiring consultants. The new position (engineer) – will that minimize the amount of consultants the City will need to hire? Mr. Schiada stated that the traffic signal, water pipelines, etc. would still require consultants (surveying, Auto-Cad, etc.) The new position would be handling the meetings with the neighborhoods, traffic projects, etc. Vice Mayor Schwartzman asked about the issue of painting the red zone curbs. He stated that he had citizens complain about issues with people parking in the red zones. The Boy Scouts called and asked for a project they could work on. Is this something they could do?

Council Member Hughes wanted to make sure the City addresses the Rose Drive/Columbus Parkway traffic issue. Mr. Schiada stated that the City was currently doing an update to the Traffic Impact Fee Program. It is putting in additional funds for the costs of that area. There is a condition of the Bordonni Ranch Project that if they go over 175 building permits, Columbus Parkway had to be widened to four lanes. There will be no monetary contributions from Vallejo for the State Park Road Bridge Project.

Mayor Messina inquired about street resurfacing. Is the City working with a standard? Should Council establish some guidelines or policies for a standard? Mr. Schiada stated that Staff uses the Pavement Condition Index (PCI), of which the minimum standard is 70. The City does annual inspections. That helps Staff decide what streets need to be resurfaced. Staff is looking at getting Proposition 42 monies. He discussed how gas tax funds work. Mayor Messina would like Staff to report back to Council on how to increase the PCI level to 80 or 85. He was not sure if hiring the additional engineer was the right thing to do. Maybe hiring someone with specific expertise would be the way to go.

Council Member Patterson discussed the staffing issue. She supports the additional staff, but the City should hire ‘smart.’

#### Capital Projects:

Rob Sousa, Finance Director, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation on the Capital Projects (hard copy on file).

Council Member Hughes inquired about the Comprehensive Tourism Plan. Why is it in capital projects? Mr. Sousa stated that the tourism plan seemed to be more of a study, which gets charged to capital improvement. Mayor Messina stated that he thought it was in the wrong place as well.

Mayor Messina asked what the general ledger software upgrade was. Mr. Sousa described what it was. This will give the City the ability to hook up to the financial data. They will hire a specialist to come into each department and show them how to better manage their data.

Council Member Whitney inquired about the two vehicles – Mr. Alvarez stated that the additional vehicles were for when the Mills site goes online; the two employees will need vehicles. There are currently not enough vehicles in the pool for them to use.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman asked about the upgrades to Fire Station 12. Staff indicated the upgrade would include the bathrooms, dorm rooms, kitchen, and roof. Vice Mayor asked about the City Hall non-structural improvements. That deals with the ongoing ADA improvements to counters in Finance and Public Works/Planning.

Council Member Whitney asked about the Corporation Yard Improvements. Staff indicated these items had been on the books for a long time. This site is at full capacity. This is for repaving the lower yard, painting the main building, and bathroom improvements.

Council Member Hughes asked about the Mills Community Center. The City would not have all the cost information by the time Council adopts its budget. The number might be much higher than currently listed. Mr. Sousa indicated that once Staff had the final number, it would approach Council with some creative financing options. Mr. Erickson stated that the City could try and come up with capital funds for the costs, or it could finance the costs. Staff thinks it could find the numbers in the City's uncommitted reserves. However, it is tight. There could be a contingent number. Mr. Sousa stated that Staff has been trying to keep options open for when the final number is detailed.

Council Member Patterson discussed a 'certificate of participation' option. Has Staff had a chance to pursue that? Mr. Sousa stated that Staff looked at a standard certificate of participation. It has not looked at any other means of significant financing.

Council Member Whitney asked about the Senior Center. Are there any plans for the interior? Staff indicated that there were no plans with the current numbers. There might be some improvements to the flooring and bathrooms, but those costs are not currently reflected in the numbers. Staff has not been contacted by the seniors about this issue.

Council Member Whitney asked about the playgrounds. Are there plans to replace the playground equipment at the Civic Center Park? Mr. Alvarez indicated there were not. The City is looking into installing an adult recreation area (chess, putting green, etc.). Council Member Whitney asked what activities would be left at the Youth Activity Center. There would be small classes, rentals, Family Resource offices, etc. The majority of the activities would be inside the building. There have been some noise complaints from neighbors. The noise issues will mostly move to the new Community Center.

#### Wrap Up:

Mr. Erickson stated that Council identified the following needs at the last budget workshop: Human Services and Art Grants needed more money (\$20K), more code enforcement, Marina Fund needed to be addressed, Community Center needed attention, etc. The City is about \$58,000 away from not meeting the 20% reserve. That is very tight. An alternative would be to come up with \$10,000 from Arts side, and \$10,000 from the

Human Services side. If the City went to a full time code enforcement officer, it would be approximately \$56,000. An alternative would be to go with another half time person, which would be \$25,000. Council should think about what it wants the targets to be. Is it the fire side or zoning side of code enforcement? It will be difficult to do all of the things Council has identified without shuffling the deck.

Mayor Messina stated that there were some adjustments that could be made; maybe put off the hiring of an engineer for a year, give the entire budget a hair cut, etc. Staff should come back with their recommendations.

Council Member Hughes does not want to breach the 20% reserves. Some shuffling needs to be done. His top priority would be the code enforcement officer; the second would be the traffic signal at BHS, as it is a public safety concern. The Arts and Human Services had a compelling argument – the City should be able to fund that. He would prefer not to do an across the board ‘haircut’. He was still concerned about the costs for getting the Mills site ready. Why isn’t the City using the ITS funds for something it needs right now. It would not have an ITS for the next 30 years. Mayor Messina discussed the ITS funds. Council Member Hughes would like to revisit the ITS funds. There are current needs that need to be addressed.

Council Member Patterson stated that on page 119 – expenditures – utilities – she did not think the increase was enough, which worried her. She would like to see if there was a possibility of having a partnership with Valero. She would like to brainstorm with Valero to address some of the City’s unmet needs. The City has \$900,000 in the ITS account. That fund should be tapped for public safety – traffic light at BHS, code enforcement, etc. as suggested by Council Member Hughes.

Council Member Whitney stated that a balanced budget was not negotiable. It is time the City had a more realistic and honest accounting of its reserves. It should look at allocated and unallocated reserves. The water and wastewater funds need to be managed properly, with regards to the Marina Fund. He had concerns with regards to the cost to get Mills up to speed. He would like to have a discussion down the road about going to a one-year budget. He supports code enforcement and the funding level for human services. He supported the traffic signal project by BHS.

Vice Mayor Schwartzman stated that his concerns were with code enforcement and the traffic signal at BHS. He was still very concerned about the costs to get Mills up to speed. The City needs to be careful about going to Valero for funds. The City could partner with Valero on some issues such as water. Nationwide owes the City money and they are not paying up. They need to start paying – they are on the hook for \$85K per year – which would pay for a lot of the things the City could not fund. That needs to be addressed.

Mayor Messina stated that Mr. Sousa and Mr. Erickson should address the issues raised by Council and report back to Council on 6/19.

OPPORTUNITY FOR PUBLIC COMMENT:  
WRITTEN:

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Bonnie Silveria – Ms. Silveria stated that Staff was doing a fine job with the budget. Regarding the two-year budget – it should stay that way. When the City first started talking about the traffic signal at BHS, the cost was \$80,000. That needs to be done. Costs continue to rise. Code enforcement is important.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Messina adjourned the meeting at 8:59 p.m.

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Lisa Wolfe, City Clerk