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CITY OF SEDRO-WOOLLEY  
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Special Meeting -- Council Retreat  
May 21, 2018– 9:00 AM – 3:30 P.M. – Swinomish Casino & Lodge

### **Call to Order**

The special meeting was called to order by Mayor Johnson at 9:02 A.M. with the following present: Mayor Julia Johnson, Councilmembers Judith Dunn Lee, Germaine Kornegay, Brenda Kinzer, Pola Kelley, Chuck Owen, Karl de Jong and Jared Couch. Staff Members Present: City Supervisor/Attorney Berg, Finance Director Nelson, Finance Director Merriman, Planning Director Coleman, Police Chief Tucker, Fire Chief Klinger and IT Director Chambers.

### **Welcome, Review Retreat Goals**

City Supervisor/Attorney Berg provided an overview of the day's agenda and goals for the meeting.

### **Departmental Snapshots**

#### IT Department

IT Director Chambers began the first departmental snapshot for the IT department. Councilmember Kinzer asked about the timeframe for the deployment of city owned fiber. Councilmember Kelley asked about the security issues at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and about details for various software programs used by the city such as iWorq, Exchange, Smarsh, GovQA and Taser. Mayor Johnson asked about staff time requirements for city owned fiber.

#### Finance Department

Finance Director's Merriman and Nelson presented details on the Finance Department. Councilmember Kornegay asked about the number of retirements upcoming. Police Chief Tucker added detail about what Teresa Nesheim does to support the Police Department's hiring of new officers, specifically the amount of work she does to support the Police Department by overseeing the civil services process. Councilmember Kornegay asked about the impact of Xpress bill pay with Finance Director Nelson responding with details about how Xpress works.

#### Building and Planning Department

Planning Director Coleman discussed the planning and building departments. Mayor Johnson asked about the purpose of the deferred payment of impact fees. Councilmember Kelley asked if the city needs to annex new land to accommodate the demand. Coleman asked about recent examples of multi-family construction with discussion following. Councilmember Kelley asked about the old video store location. Councilmember's Kinzer and Kornegay asked about more detail on an urban village. Councilmember Couch asked about the shoreline master program.

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Councilmember Dunn Lee asked about any code enforcement plans for the old grocery store in downtown, noting that it is quite blight in the downtown. Mayor Johnson asked about the inspections specifically relating to code enforcement issues.

### Fire Department

Fire Chief Klinger presented the city's fire and EMS functions. Councilmember Dunn Lee asked about L & I hours on volunteers. Fire Chief Klinger responded that the Board of Volunteer Firefighters covers volunteer injuries and retirement. Discussion followed about the future structure and staffing.

### Police Department

Police Chief Tucker presented the police department's snapshot.

### Public Works

Public Works Director Freiburger, Operations Division Manager Salseina, Wastewater Treatment Supervisor Allen and Solid Waste Division Supervisor Jacobs presented the public works department and divisions. Councilmember Couch asked about mechanisms to fund recreations. He also asked how city management looks at maintaining professional positions in relation to the recent engineering position.

### Lunch

The meeting recessed for lunch at 12:30 P.M.

The meeting was called back to order at 1:20 P.M.

### **Review and Discussion of City Finances and Trends**

A detailed presentation and discussion on the city's finances was led by Finance Director's Merriman and Nelson. Finance Director Merriman asked what the Council would like to see from the finance department. Councilmember Couch asked for ideas and advice on means and methods of addressing the imbalance between revenues and expenditures. Councilmember Kelley agreed and expressed interest in identifying the best way without overburdening the citizens. Councilmember de Jong asked the Mayor about any feedback she received regarding the 1% property tax increase. Mayor Johnson responded that she received significant pushback from members of the community. Councilmember Couch asked about sales tax. City Supervisor/Attorney Berg discussed taxing options available to the city council and/or the voters. Councilmember de Jong expressed concern about utility taxes as regressive. Councilmember Owen stated that the utility tax is more equitable than a property tax since more people pay. Councilmember de Jong asked for a comparison of property tax and utility tax values. Councilmember Couch asked for a broad range of options to close the gap. Councilmember Kelley asked for more detail on departmental shortfalls. Councilmember de Jong is interested in understanding what possible cuts would be needed to close the gap. Councilmember Kinzer

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stated that communication is critical to the community. City Supervisor/Attorney Berg suggested that the city council should define levels of service and prioritize those levels of service as part of this conversation. Finance Director Merriman talked about a structure that identified programs by level of importance (i.e., tiers 1-3). Mayor Johnson stated that the city's departments interact and rely upon each other. Councilmember Dunn Lee pointed out that the city council addressed salaries based upon a study in 2017 and that commitment includes three years of adjustments to achieve the salary target of 95% of market for the positions surveyed.

### **Council Discussion/Prioritization**

Mayor Johnson asked the council about priorities and ideas for the future. Councilmember Kinzer asked about the status of the Northern State cemetery. Mayor Johnson expressed excitement for the downtown revitalization plans and asked the city council to stay proactive on that project. Councilmember Couch would like to see more detail on the Police Department overtime budget and whether an additional officer would help with the overtime budget and departmental morale. Councilmember Kelley asked for a summary of staffing requests with costs. Councilmember Couch likes the idea of periodization to assist the council in making decisions and public safety is clearly a top priority. Mayor Johnson agreed with regard to public safety but believes that public works operations is also critical. City Supervisor/Attorney Berg addressed future concerns and costs related to the municipal court. Councilmember Kelley asked about plans for the old library and specifically wondered if the community center could occupy the old library while it is being renovated. City Supervisor/Attorney Berg stated that the old library would be available for possible reuse in the summer of 2020 (following construction of the new library). Additional discussion was had regarding the mechanic position.

### **Wrap Up/Next Steps**

City Supervisor/Attorney Berg asked about the format of the meeting. A request was made for materials to be provided in advance.

The meeting adjourned at 3:36 P.M.

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