

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Paul Helenberg called the April 13, 2015 regular meeting of the Castle Rock City Council to order at 7:30 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance. The following councilmembers were present: Ray Teter, Lee Kessler, Earl Queen and Ellen Rose. Councilmember Mike Davis was absent.

BUSINESS FROM THE FLOOR

Yvonne Knuth, representing Castle Rock Fair Board, requested council permission to use city streets for the annual Castle Rock Fair parade, scheduled for July 16th. Knuth stated the parade route will be unchanged from last year. The theme for this year is Celebrating Small Treasures and Big Memories in honor of the 50th anniversary of their mini carnival display. Clerk-Treasurer Covington advised that the committee will need to submit to the city proof of insurance and completion of an indemnification agreement prior to the event.

Councilmember Queen made a motion, seconded by Kessler to approve the Castle Rock Fair Board request to hold the parade on city right-of-way, on July 16th. By roll call vote; unanimous 'Aye'.

DEPARTMENT/COMMITTEE REPORTSDepartment Reports

1. Police Chief Bob Heuer reported Longview Police Department received a STOP grant for equipment and this grant opportunity was shared with Castle Rock Police Department. Through that grant he purchased a FLIR Night Vision camera. Officer James Queen demonstrated the camera, noting that it senses heat sources, has an infrared light and digital zoom. Queen stated he was able to use it to identify sources across the boat launch property. Chief Heuer stated the camera is sensitive enough to pick up heat left by a hand after touching a wall. Chief Heuer stated fire departments have used FLIR cameras primarily for locating people in fires. He estimated the value of the camera to be almost \$5,000.
2. Public Works Director Dave Vorse confirmed that a joint meeting between Castle Rock City Council and Castle Rock Planning Commissioners has now been scheduled for May 18th at 7:00 p.m. to review and discuss the draft Castle Rock City Shoreline Master Program document. Vorse noted this draft document was provided to councilmembers on March 23rd. The city will need to adopt the program by the end of June. Department of Ecology has already reviewed the draft several times and has included sections of language that they require. Covington stated this will require a Special Meeting notice because Vorse also would like a Public Hearing on this draft document be held on that same date. By consensus, councilmembers agreed to the date and time for this Special Meeting.

3. Covington noted that she is currently working with Invoice Cloud to set up the process to allow utility customers to make on-line payments by credit card, debit card or electronic check. Covington stated this is the same company providing this service to the cities of Kalama and Woodland. Covington asked councilmembers if they wanted service fees to be absorbed by the city as an operating expense; or passed on to the customer. Credit cards that would be accepted are Visa, Mastercard and Discover; the convenience fee charged would be \$3.95 for either credit or debit transactions. Credit/debit transaction amounts would be capped at \$250. Customers paying through **Vision e-check services would cost 95¢ per transaction. Covington stated the city will also incur a cost of approximately \$75/month for an access fee.**

Councilmember Teter stated he does not feel the city should be making money on these transactions; however those using the service should be paying the fee for the transactions. Teter stated many businesses are large enough to absorb those costs; but this is for a public utility. Councilmember Rose noted Cowlitz County currently charges customers a separate fee to those paying by credit or debit cards. By consensus, City Councilmembers stated they support passing on convenience service charges to customers using those payment options.

Covington stated Invoice Cloud also has an option to divert bank drafted payments to be processed directly through their system; which would eliminate the city's clerk from processing those payments. Covington stated the city would be charged \$50/month, plus 25¢/check. Covington said she did not feel the cost of this service warrants the city agreeing to this option. She hoped those customers currently using back drafted checks to pay for utility bills would change to using credit/debit or e-checks when those payment options become available.

Covington stated Invoice Cloud, through the Vision software program update also will allow the city to send customers their monthly statement electronically. The city currently pays approximately 70¢/bill for outsourcing; which would be a savings of 30¢/bill for those customers signed up to receive the electronic billing notices.

4. Councilmember Teter announced that the annual Little Squatches event will be held September 26th at Toutle River RV Resort. This event benefits local schools and last year over \$20,000 was raised. Registration fee is \$25 for kindergarten through sixth grade.
5. Councilmembers reviewed the first quarter 2015 report submitted by Humane Society of Cowlitz County.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Councilmember Kessler made a motion, seconded by Rose to approve the minutes to the March 23, 2015 regular council meeting. By roll call vote, unanimous 'Aye'.
2. Mayor Helenberg noted that March invoices were reviewed by Councilmember Kessler. Councilmember Queen made a motion, seconded by Kessler to approve the March expenses in the amount of \$423,904.16 and further described as check numbers 45806 through 45906 for general expenditures and check numbers 24403 through 24428 for payroll expenses, adjustment number 395-3/15, 396-3/15 and 398-3/15. EFT Payroll Draw 3/16/15 and EFT Payroll 3/31/15 and NACHA Draw Batch#1705719 and Month End NACHA Batch#1707925. By roll call vote, unanimous 'Aye'.

OLD BUSINESS –

1. Councilmember Queen made a motion, seconded by Rose to adopt Resolution No. 2015-01, a resolution providing for the disposal of certain inventory items deemed to be surplus, on second reading. By roll call vote, unanimous 'Aye'.
2. Councilmember Teter made a motion, seconded by Kessler to adopt Resolution No. 2015-02, a resolution asking qualified voters of the city to fund by Special Excess levy the furnishing of library services to the citizens of Castle Rock, on second reading. By roll call vote, unanimous 'Aye'.
3. Councilmembers reviewed a request submitted by Kessler to amend the salary for Chief of Police. A copy of the current Teamster Collective Bargaining Contract, Article 15 was also provided for review, along with a comparison of base hourly pay for the positions of sergeant, police officer and chief of police.

Chief Heuer stated he has researched the 2014 AWC Salary and Benefit Survey. Using the cities of Kalama, LaCenter, Woodland, Ridgefield as comparables; Castle Rock pays the lowest for his position. Heuer noted that he is currently the longest tenured police chief within Lewis, Clark and Cowlitz counties. Chief Heuer stated during his tenure, the crime rate has dropped by 80%. Heuer said the current police bargaining contract provides for additional pay for officers temporarily assigned to work in a higher classification. When the Sergeant is temporarily assigned to work in the chief's position; the hourly pay received by the sergeant exceeds the amount normally earned by the chief. Heuer stated if he is gone for a week, the sergeant would earn \$200 more than what the chief would have earned for that same period of time.

Heuer noted at the end of 2014, his department turned back over \$38,000 in unspent appropriation; in spite of the fact that his department needed to fill one police position when an officer resigned in mid-year. Chief Heuer credited his reserve program with providing a high level of training to prepare those officers to be hired part-time to fill in shifts. Because of this on-going training; the department has been able to retain those

volunteers.

Chief Heuer requested councilmembers consider a 12% increase; amounting to \$800 per month. This would increase his base salary to \$6512; which is still lower than the cities of Woodland, Ridgefield and LaCenter (based on the 2014 salary survey).

Heuer stated he and his officers created a list of his department's accomplishments. Chief Heuer noted he is the most decorated law enforcement officer in the county for domestic violence. He started the Domestic Violence Task Force, has never had a grievance filed in his department, and has always kept within budgeted appropriations. He felt the performance of his department is comparable to any other department in the State; and they have demonstrated significant success. Chief Heuer offered to provide further details of his department's accomplishments for any councilmembers, upon request.

Councilmember Kessler stated the issue that stood out for him when Chief Heuer contacted him about this issue, was the pay discrepancy created when the Sergeant filled in for the chief. Kessler noted that \$38,000 was not expended by the police department at the end of 2014; so clearly funds are available to increase the chief's salary. Mayor Helenberg questioned the use of Woodland, Ridgefield and La Center as comparable cities and also asked if council will be conducting a salary assessment for other supervisory staff. The mayor stated La Center has funding to support large departments and Ridgefield population is much larger than Castle Rock. Woodland also has a much larger population. He suggested using cities of similar size for comparison purposes. Councilmember Teter stated this should be taken care of through the annual budget process; not halfway through the year.

Councilmember Kessler stated at the time the 2015 budget was being discussed, councilmembers had the impression that funds were tight. One of the highest liabilities a city is concerned with involves police activities. Kessler stated for the size of the Castle Rock police department; there are more qualified people in more areas. Employees in the police department even seek training on their own time. As department supervisors transition out of their position; the city needs to make sure that pay is competitive to be able to full those positions. Councilmember Kessler stated as employees are planning for retirement; asking them to wait an additional six months or a year creates a significant financial impact for that employee. Mayor Helenberg stated the city is fortunate to have department supervisors that are loyal to the city and provide a great service.

Councilmember Teter stated he is not opposed to any increase; however the budget appropriations are established for this year. He recommended the budget needs to be evaluated to see what expenses can be reduced to offset the additional wage impact.

Councilmember Kessler stated there was \$38,000 not expended from the 2014 budget. He felt the amount not expended by the police department in 2014 would be adequate to offset the wage increase. Mayor Helenberg noted in 2014, the police department's budget was amended several times; which created that amount. Councilmember Kessler agreed that the police department received budgetary amendments in 2014; however he felt if adequate funds exist to pay for this wage adjustment; it is something councilmembers should take care of.

In response to Councilmember Kessler's question, Covington distributed a summary outlining wage and cost of living increases for supervisory staff for the years 1999 through the current year.

Public Works Director Dave Vorse explained the salary adjustments made in 2007 were based on city council's evaluation of supervisory wage comparisons for the public works director, police chief and clerk-treasurer positions. Prior to 2007, those positions all were paid at the same base wage. A committee of two councilmembers and the city attorney conducted an evaluation of comparable wages and found the city was not paying competitive salaries for those positions. Vorse felt the city is now getting themselves into the same situation relating to comparable salaries for supervisory staff. In answer to Councilmember Rose's question; Covington stated 2007 was the only time salary amendments were considered outside of the annual budgetary process.

Vorse also noted that all of the collective bargaining contracts provide for additional longevity increases for employees with over 20 years of service; however this benefit has not been included for non-bargaining staff. Covington noted that all supervisory staff have reached their maximum longevity, as allowed by the personnel policy.

In response to Councilmember Teter's concern; Kessler stated discussion for increasing the wage for chief of police is being done at an open public meeting and the public has the opportunity to lodge any concerns at that time.

Covington suggested city council also could hold a public hearing to discuss this issue. Any wage increase approved by city council would require a budgetary amendment and an amendment to the adopted salary schedule.

Chief Heuer stated his frustration is that his officers are represented by a bargaining unit contract and salaries are evaluated and adjusted as contracts are renewed. Those employees not included under a collective bargaining contract lack representation.

Covington stated after salaries were adjusted in 2007, the economy experienced a downturn, requiring the city to continually use their accumulated fund balance to meet

expenditure and personnel obligations. The city continues to prioritize the budget needs to build back a fund balance to acceptable levels. City Attorney Randolph noted that the last annexation allowed the city's revenues to remain stable; otherwise the city would have been facing a revenue shortage issue.

Councilmember Kessler made a motion, seconded by Queen to draft an amendment for the budget to include a 12% increase in salary for the chief of police position and to do a salary study for the clerk-treasurer and public works director positions. Vote on the motion; Councilmembers Kessler and Queen voted 'Aye', Councilmembers Teter and Rose voted 'Nay'. Motion failed.

Mayor Helenberg tabled this issue until the next council meeting; to allow for all councilmembers to be present for the full discussion and possible council action.

4. Councilmembers reviewed the scope of two separate grants submitted to Cowlitz County for Rural Development funding. Vorse requested City Council prioritize the two projects in case County Commissioners request that information during the grant presentation meeting. Vorse described the scope for both grant applications. He noted, if funded, the Downtown/Uptown Upgrade project which provides for Wi/Fi capabilities in the commercial districts; would generate additional monthly costs of \$100 to \$150 paid to the provider of this service.

By consensus, City Councilmembers supported the Downtown/Uptown Upgrade project as their first priority.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Councilmember Queen noted a continual issue with garbage and other items being dumped in the vicinity of the Skate Park. The latest incident was reported to the police department and resolved by the duty officer. Queen suggested signage be placed near the Skate Park and the Bicycle Skills Park to warn people not to dump debris. Vorse stated signage would cost approximately \$80/sign. By consensus, City Councilmembers directed Vorse to place signage advising that littering is not permitted.
2. Castle Rock Clean Up Committee requested the city help sponsor this annual event by paying for the event fliers (\$225.36), provide liability insurance and the dump fees incurred on May 2nd as part of the city-wide spring cleanup day. Vorse stated that Waste Control also sponsors by providing dumpsters and hauling the dumpsters to the landfill. Councilmember Queen made a motion, seconded by Rose to approve the city's sponsorship of the event as requested, which includes payment of fliers and the dump fees. By roll call vote, unanimous 'Aye'.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor Paul Helenberg adjourned the regular meeting at 8:37 p.m.

Mayor Paul Helenberg

Clerk-Treasurer Ryana Covington