

SPECIAL MEETING
June 30, 2008 1:00 P.M.

CITY COUNCIL RETREAT
Location: Hattie's Restaurant

Note: Retreat meeting not tape recorded

Mayor Larsen called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m. with the following councilmembers present: Khembar Yund, Greg Marcil, Earl Queen, Jack Reilly and Mike Mask. Others present included Chief of Police Bob Heuer, Clerk-Treasurer Ryana Covington, Planning Advisor T.J. Keiran and Public Works Director David Vorse.

Prior to the meeting, Mayor Larsen had distributed an outline of questions to be used for discussion. Items included discussion on the city's strength and weaknesses, services, goals and priorities. Also distributed were copies of the city's vision statement and the Community Action Plan strategy outline.

- Assets that Castle Rock has to offer to residents:

Mask – small town atmosphere

Queen – fishing spots; would like to see more accessibility to the river

Reilly – good fire and police protection services

Mask – fishing, development of the recreational vehicle park and the sports complex.

Feels the city needs to focus on developing the recreational park as recommended in the Park Plan.

Yund – trail system and department personnel

Heuer – proximity to Interstate 5 and natural recreation opportunities. Lower property costs for new lots. Closest city to Mount Saint Helens monument. More hotels per capita. Exceptional accessibility to councilmembers and departments. Trail system.

Schools where the administration and teachers are close knit. Good services from staff.

Vorse – Community volunteerism. Staff does good job of responding to the public.

Larsen – Agrees with strength of department supervisors. Active chamber and CARE coalition. Good school system. Would like to see walking bridge across the river.

Covington – Agrees with volunteerism. Active service groups. Committed councilmembers and staff.

Keiran – City's natural beauty. Senior center involvement in the community. City is ahead of the curve for amenities to bring high quality of life.

Councilmembers discussed the city's recreational infrastructure improvements, including the riverfront trail, sports complex and the proposed boat launch project. Mask feels the city should be more progressive in completing projects outlined in the Park Master Plan. Yund suggested that councilmembers first need to become more familiar with the Park Plan.

Queen stated trees have grown tall enough to obstruct river views from the city's north entrance. Vorse stated that Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife will not allow the city to remove all of the trees. He is trying to apply for grant funds to pay for removal of some of those trees.

Mask stated he has information that in 2010 a large recreational vehicle rally will be coming to the Castle Rock area. Vorse noted that the city is still pursuing the possibility of trading city owned property for property owned by Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The city currently owns 35 acres on the west side of the river and if they could combine this with DNR's 65 acres, the area could be developed into a recreational vehicle resort.

- Assets that Castle Rock has to offer to businesses:

Larsen – active Chamber and good school system.

Mask – feels that a big box store would be favorable to the community. He does not feel that quality businesses have been attracted to the downtown core. He feels the city needs a draw into the community. If a box store sites in the community, he felt that this would draw in the people to explore other businesses.

Marcil – cautioned that a box store would be detrimental to the downtown area.

Yund – did not feel that a box store is the answer. City needs more people either building, living or visiting our community.

Mask – feels that recreational opportunities available will draw people to the city.

Queen – feels that additional housing is needed.

Yund – demographics are changing. As gas prices rise, people will be relying more on doing business within close communities.

Vorse and Keiran – provided a progress update on the Verhasselt subdivision, located on Pioneer Avenue and on the CAP subdivision, located in the 100 block of Michner Street.

Mask – spoke in favor of pursuing annexation opportunities.

Yund – Should pursue and work toward promoting new development. He stated that an Association of Washington Cities document notes that residential development costs the city \$1.25 for every \$1 of tax revenue. He feels that this is initially true, unless you also track the full dollars spent within the community from new residents.

Councilmembers discussed ways to promote development. Yund suggested training a liaison to lead developers through development processes.

Keiran – updated councilmembers on recent meetings with developers interested in properties at the south end of the city. He has received permission from both developers to share information pertaining to infrastructure needs. Yund noted that coordinating infrastructure improvements could allow both developments to share costs and result in an improved system.

Councilmembers agreed that the city needs to be progressive toward annexation.

Keiran stated that currently development within the county is more favorable to developers because most areas do not have any zoning. Yund stated he is not opposed to them developing in the county and then annexing later because of the staff costs for planning and building assistance. Keiran stated at this time the city does not respond to

inquires without a formal application being submitted.

Vorse noted that utility rates for county and city customers are comparable, with the exception that the city charges 1 ½ times the rate for city customers not within the city limits.

Vorse reported that last Friday, Ken Stone, County Public Works Director provided county utility system data to him. If the county would transfer their utility ownership to the city, this would be an incentive for developers to annex.

Councilmembers discussed the recent property purchases that have occurred on the west side of the river, along PH-10. That developer has also contacted and met with city staff regarding the possibility of annexing into the city. Keiran stated that he will keep councilmembers informed once the developer has submitted a formal application to the county.

Councilmembers also discussed the 2008 budget for planning assistance costs through Council of Governments (COG). They acknowledged that these costs may need to be adjusted if requests for annexation are received.

Keiran stated in August, he would be presenting a proposal for expansion of the city's urban growth area. Councilmembers discussed the current boundaries and compared it to the city's utility service area. Vorse stated the county has the ultimate decision for allowing expansion of the Urban Growth Area.

Councilmembers cited three efforts that they want staff to pursue: 1. expansion of the Urban Growth Area; 2. continued dialog with county public works for utility ownership transfer and 3. actively support annexation opportunities.

Vorse – in answer to Councilmember Yund's question – existing homes that are annexed into the city will be required to hook to the utility system once their existing services go bad. Any new construction will be required to connect in accordance with city ordinances.

Yund – opposed to providing incentives (such as tax reductions) because developments tend to leave the area once the incentives expire. He would support development incentives, such as early hookups, which promote a more long-term investment.

Councilmembers stated they would like to see a 'Development Advocate' volunteer position. They suggested that the volunteer should have a planning or sales background. Keiran suggested contacting State of Washington Community Trade And Economic Development (CTED) for training assistance. Yund also suggested getting another grant for an AmeriCorp worker. Keiran will work with CTED and staff to develop a task list, for council approval. Once this is done, the city can begin seeking names.

- What are council's goals/priorities within the next five years?:

Mask – find funding to address the condition of city streets, especially Pioneer Avenue.

Marcil – should try to fund a street overlay on Dougherty Drive in 2009

Mask – High banks area needs to be graded. Marcil had offered time and equipment to do this project. Vorse stated there needs to be proof of insurance on the equipment.

Yund – all of these projects come down to the need to increase the city's tax base. These are housekeeping issues. Focus should be on annexation and bringing more people into the community.

Councilmembers discussed completion of the entry feature and maintenance of this area. Vorse suggested additional use of the jail crew to help with maintaining the area.

Mask – he knows of three churches needing volunteer projects.

Yund – if people want to volunteer, he suggested the city develop an 'Adopt A Project' program. Vorse – could be similar to 'Adopt a Highway' program.

Councilmembers discussed the need for requiring bioswales for stormwater retention for new development. Vorse stated the city still needs to plan for 100-year flood events.

Heuer – he is trying to get a reserve officer program enacted.

Mask – hopes the recent request for a neighborhood block party proves to be a great pilot program for other neighborhoods. He felt these promote awareness and helps reduce crime. Heuer stated he felt it is viable to give it a try.

Mask – felt that the City Hall building needs attention. Queen stated if the city purchases the paint, councilmembers will volunteer to paint it.

Larsen – noted that the police department still needs to get a rear escape exit for the office. Heuer stated he has been unable to obtain a bid from contractors. He felt that a higher priority is getting another police vehicle in 2009. He proposes to fund this with Local Criminal Justice funds.

Yund suggests outlining project opportunities and then submitting a newspaper advertisement soliciting for volunteer services. Queen and Mask stated they would be happy to help coordinate the volunteer efforts.

Castle Rock School District just completed a facility assessment. Recent newspaper articles suggest that the Middle School may be available for purchase. Councilmembers discussed the possibility of obtaining the building and relocating city services to that site. Councilmembers commented this property could also provide space for a community center. Queen felt this would be a good option, but council needs to wait until the school decides what choices they will be pursuing.

Heuer – stated he is currently in the process of getting bids to complete the upstairs training room.

Mask – asked Covington about computer software systems by the finance office. Covington stated the systems still are DOS based, which limits the ability for upgrades. The payroll and budget systems will need to be upgraded this year. In 2007, the IRS made changes to the W-2 format. If the city would have had a Windows based system, an upgrade could have been completed via an Internet download. Since this was not possible, the computer software company loaned the city the software to complete the 2007 payroll. This option will not be available from the software company in 2008.

Vorse – he currently is working with a company to test a pilot system which will allow radio reading of the utility meters. He will provide financial information at a subsequent meeting.

Councilmembers also discussed the need to reduce the city's unaccountable water loss. Vorse stated that his department has fixed seven leaks this year, however more have been located. He has also noted that when the city wells are used, the unaccountable percentage seems to increase. This may be an issue created from the meter configuration.

- What service improvements are needed? :

Reilly – need alternative transportation such as bus service or a taxi service. Keiran stated COG can provide information as to the existing transportation services for the area. Covington stated she has contacted both CAP bus transport and CUBS Bus system to find out how they are funded and if expansion of their services is possible. CAP already has a bus coming to Castle Rock however the route does not make it possible for riders to use as a commuter service. Covington also stated that she has been in contact with JT Wingett from Paratransit. This company runs the CUBS bus system and they expressed an interest in discussing grant funding availability. Vorse also suggested that Rosemary Siipola, from COG, be contacted for funding options.

- Other Points:

Mask – he has heard a lot of positive comments about the police department. He also felt that the public sees the work being done by the Public Works Department.

Councilmembers discussed the proposed traffic direction change on First Avenue SW. Reilly thought this was a temporary change to accommodate traffic during reconstruction of Cowlitz Street West. Vorse summarized the discussions and comments received at the recent Town Hall meeting and at the Chamber of Commerce meeting. Most supported the change in traffic flow, citing that it will bring customers into the business core.

Vorse – advised that he has been working to update the city's Capital Facility Plan. He anticipates this issue will be submitted for council adoption in August.

Mayor Larsen adjourned the Council Retreat meeting at 4:40 p.m.

Mayor Barbara Larsen

Clerk-Treasurer