

Hello Neighbors!

Summer is coming to a close along with much of the city business. This morning, YOUR City Council met for an in-depth budget workshop to review final recommendations from each department specific to the anticipated needs for the 2016-17 year. As the largest portion of any agency budget is personnel, attention was given to the staffing, compensation, and benefit package. Similarly, much discussion surrounded anticipated capital projects – particularly in utility needs of upgrades to aging major equipment. The City Manager, Stan Farmer, and department leaders presented a lean budget that would not call for any increase in the taxes for the coming year. While the city publicized the potential for a maximum tax rate of .26 (an increase of 1 cent) as a precaution until final appraisals and cost evaluations were concluded, every effort was put forward to leverage growth and careful planning.

This afternoon, the council had a light agenda. After opening invocation by Pastor Johnny White several procedural approvals were addressed – mostly around contracts for upcoming election services. A public hearing was held regarding the proposed tax rate to give citizens an opportunity to get information or share an opinion. One speaker asked for clarification around the proposed increase (noted above) and the Finance Director, Larry Anderson, explained the legal obligation to publish the maximum rate potential. He underscored this does not imply that this would be the final tax rate as the council can always present a lower tax rate than published in the final approval process in September.

A final agenda item focused on the renewal of a contract for the City Municipal Judge. The current Judge, Kevin Madison, shared his credentials, contributions, and record as our sitting judge for the past ten years. Several city staff members spoke to the high quality of court proceedings, cost savings procedures, and a highly regarded integrity in treating all in the court fairly and respectfully. Significant data was provided to underscore the specific actions that have led to cost savings, accountability for those violating the law, and service to the staff and citizens. A local judge, Richard Owen, also shared his credentials, history of significant work in legal matters – including two terms as our Justice of the Peace, and his recommendations for potential enrichments to current Municipal Court proceedings. Community members spoke on behalf of Mr. Owen with appreciation for his willingness to share his “talent and time” with his community. It was a positive opportunity for all to learn the fuller scope of the work and responsibilities of the Municipal Judge. A vote by the council was made to uphold the consensus recommendation of the City Staff, Court Clerk, and Prosecutor. All indicated that a solid team had evolved that has met with increasing success which they felt was crucial for the continued achievement of goals in criminal and code violation areas. Council members shared an appreciation for Mr. Owen’s willingness to offer his services as an option.

The City Council’s next regular meeting is September 20th at 3:00 p.m. At this meeting, the council will set the final tax rate for the coming year and approve the budget for the city. A final public hearing on the budget will be held September 6th at 9:00 a.m. The meeting adjourned with all thankful for the return of sunshine (though appreciative of the rains)..and a continued awareness that it is always a great day to live in Horseshoe Bay.

City Councilmember and Communications Officer- Cynthia Clinesmith