

WHITEFISH CITY COUNCIL

June 1, 2020

6:00 P.M.

1) CALL TO ORDER

The City Council meeting was held remotely through WebEx to follow Governor Steve Bullocks social distancing Directive to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Mayor Muhlfeld called the meeting to order. Councilors present were Qunell, Sweeney, Davis, Hennen, Feury and Norton. City Staff present were City Clerk Howke, City Manager Smith, City Attorney Jacobs, Finance Director Dahlman, Planning and Building Director Taylor, Public Works Director Workman, Parks and Recreation Director Butts and Fire Chief Page. Approximately 9 people were in attendance.

2) PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Muhlfeld asked Councilor Feury to lead the audience in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3) COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE PUBLIC – (This time is set aside for the public to comment on items that are either on the agenda, but not a public hearing or on items not on the agenda. City officials do not respond during these comments but may respond or follow-up later on the agenda or at another time. The Mayor has the option of limiting such communications to three minutes depending on the number of citizens who want to comment and the length of the meeting agenda)

Sharon Kyle, 4960 Bluebonnet Boulevard, Baton Rouge, LA, spoke towards agenda item 9a and the letter included in the packet. Sharon and her husband Ronnie are asking for the Council to reconsider Condition #11 of the Conditional Use Permit WCUP 20-07, regarding the timing of the cash in lieu payment for the Legacy Homes Program. Her preference is to pay the cash in lieu of \$23,386/unit at the time of certificate of occupancy for each unit or at the time of the building permit for each unit. The letter provided in the packet on the website explains their request.

Rhonda Fitzgerald, 412 Lupfer Avenue, commented on the Conditional Use Permit project that was approved at the last meeting for 1515 Highway 93 West. She reminded Council the Legacy Homes Program has significant benefits for developers in return for providing affordable housing. The cash in lieu is an exception that it is granted to some projects instead of building units. The project is taking advantage of benefits from the beginning including a significant density bonus and height bonus. It seems appropriate they also provide cash in lieu at the time the project begins.

4) COMMUNICATIONS FROM VOLUNTEER BOARDS

a) Update from the Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau on messaging and marketing entering into Phase 2 of Governor Bullocks Reopening Plan

Whitefish Convention and Visitors Bureau (WCVB) Executive Director, Dylan Boyle gave an update on the messaging and their strategy moving into the summer months and through Phase 2 of Reopening the Big Sky. Since the last presentation WCVB has had to get creative with their new media plan, which they are now calling the Whitefish Recovery Digital Media Plan. For the last few months, their digital campaign, has been actively telling visitors that now is not the time to visit but it will be in the future and when that day comes we will be here to welcome you. The reopening of phase 2 lifts the 14-day quarantine. They have a four-step process for their digital media plan: Step 1 is targeting in state including Missoula, Great Falls, Helena; Step 2 involves Step 1 plus Spokane, Coeur d'Alene and Bozeman; Step 3 is Step 1 and 2 plus Calgary/Eastern BC; and Step 4 is all the above plus Seattle, Washington. Research has shown that travel is going to come mostly from drive markets. It is important to balance the economic vitality of our local businesses with the safety of our community. It was

launched today for paid digital advertising, as well as search on Google. They have some great images of the town, non-motorized recreation on the water as well as some hiking with the call to action to book now as well as to learn more about Wandering Again in Whitefish. This is playing off the Wander campaign. They have partnered with Pete Thomas to create new inspirational content for the website. Not necessarily a call to action to visit but getting folks excited for planning a trip or coming to Whitefish.

The website has a 'Book to Stay' button active as of today, and 'A Message from Us' button leads to the Whitefish COVID Cares page which is a part of the crisis communication partnership. The rotator bar provides more inspirational content specific to information on traveling responsibly; frequently asked questions for visitors; current status of the restaurant services as well as links to our full community video series.

A new website WhitefishCovidCares.com redirects to ExploreWhitefish.com. This new website is part of the crisis communication partnership with the City and is intended as a one-stop resource for visitors. The site provides a COVID Care Kit as a business resource with the new messaging: Clean, Careful Connected signage. This is messaging in partnership with Jackson Hole and other gateway towns around national parks and the northern Rockies and has been reinforced through the community video series.

Dylan polled the lodging members in April and May for their advanced summer lodging reservations compared to the previous year. For June and July, advanced lodging is down. August starts to see a wider distribution across the spectrum of advanced reservations.

The WCVB is concepting a Wander Lightly sustainability pledge. A pledge for our visitors to travel like a local, be respectful of our community while enjoying the great experiences and contributing to our economic vitality of our town.

Councilor Sweeney stated we reference wearing cloth masks, but there are several businesses that are not requiring masks. He asked and Dylan stated part of the Whitefish COVID Care messaging with; clean, careful, and connected, does talk about masks and is highlighted in his video. They will continue to send out messaging for our businesses to adopt and continue to message that to visitors.

5) CONSENT AGENDA

- a) [Minutes](#) from May 18, 2020 Special Session (p.11)
- b) [Minutes](#) from May 18, 2020 Regular Session (p.12)
- c) [Ordinance No. 20-09](#); An Ordinance amending Title 6 – Motor Vehicles and Traffic, Chapter 1-General Traffic Provisions and Chapter 2- Stopping, Standing and Parking (Second Reading) (p.19)

Councilor Sweeney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Hennen to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously by roll call.

6) PUBLIC HEARINGS (Items will be considered for action after public hearings) (Resolution No. 07-33 establishes a 30-minute time limit for applicant's land use presentations. Ordinances require 4 votes for passage – Section 1-6-2 (E)(3) WCC)

- a) [Resolution No. 20-16](#); A Resolution donating the Snow Lot to the Whitefish Housing Authority and authorizing the City Manager to execute the Development Agreement with the Whitefish Housing Authority (p.46)

City Attorney Jacobs gave her staff report that is provided in the packet on the website. No written public comment was received.

Mayor Muhlfeld opened the Public Hearing. There being no public comment, Mayor Muhlfeld closed the Public Hearing and turned the matters over to the Council for their consideration.

Councilor Feury made a motion, seconded by Councilor Sweeney to approve [Resolution No. 20-16](#); A Resolution donating the Snow Lot to the Whitefish Housing Authority and authorizing the City Manager to execute the Development Agreement with the Whitefish Housing Authority. The motion passed unanimously by roll call.

7) COMMUNICATIONS FROM PLANNING AND BUILDING DIRECTOR

- a) **[Report](#) request from Council discussing WB-2 (Secondary Business) zoning permitted and conditional uses (p.64)**

Director Taylor gave his staff report that is provided in the packet on the website. Discussion followed between Council and staff to ensure buffering rather than being overly concerned with the use; the Hwy 93 South Corridor Plan is working on those issues and increasing the performance standards. Entertainment (indoor) use, such as movie theaters, indoor golf range, etc. are tied in with hotels and motels. Light industrial or manufacturing uses to be considered as an Administrative CUP. The performance development standards are key. Buildings over 10,000 square feet would become a Conditional Use Permit. There was concern of warehouses or manufacturing next to residential.

Councilor Sweeney made a motion, seconded by Councilor Feury to direct staff to draft a zoning text amendment with the proposed changes to submit to the Planning Board. The motion passed unanimously by roll call.

8) COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY MANAGER

- a) **[Written report](#) enclosed with the packet. Questions from Mayor or Council? (p.69)**

Councilor Sweeney commented on Manager Smith's report. He really hopes that we would be able to enforce with the local business community to model the City's position on wearing cloth masks and social distancing. He asked and Manager Smith stated June 1st is the date the Whitefish Fire Service Area (WFSA) provided in their letter to the Fire Service Area members requesting public comment to either move forward with a volunteer program or negotiate with the City. The WFSA Board has to give one-year notice (June 30, 2020) to not renew the contract. The WFSA Board has scheduled negotiations for Wednesday evening at City Hall. She asked and Councilor Sweeney will be available to attend the meeting. The response from their members has been overwhelmingly to stay with the City of Whitefish.

- b) Other items arising between May 27th through June 1st**

Manager Smith reported an election drop box will be available at City Hall, June 2, 2020 from 7:00 am to 8:00 pm. City Council goals will be emailed to the Council this evening or tomorrow. A work session to review and discuss the goals is scheduled for July 6, 2020. She reported as we all are aware, our country has been facing unprecedented times with the COVID pandemic, but now there is a crisis of humanity that is being brought to our attention. Protests and demonstrations are happening all over the country and the world as a result of the death of George Floyd as he was restrained by police officers. These protests and demonstrations are about more than the death of George Floyd and the police brutality that occurred that day. People are asking for equality and humanity especially for our African American population and those of color who have faced systematic racism for years. Unfortunately, some larger

communities have faced riots and violence following these protests that have caused significant losses for businesses already struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important that city staff and the City supports our peaceful protesters and condemns hate and racism. Our Whitefish Police Department prides itself on providing a safe community for all individuals free of discrimination and without excessive use of force. The department strives for excellence in all of its activities and our officers are provided regular training on ethics and proper use of force. Our community will continue to work together to fight racism and discrimination. The Whitefish Police Department has been in coordination with local law enforcement agencies to protect our community if any violence should occur.

Councilor Norton asked and Manager Smith stated the WFSA meeting is not open to the public, there will not be a quorum of the WFSA Board, or the City Council and negotiations are closed to the public. Councilor Norton would like as much information provided to the community. We have an amazing staff that keeps us safe and we need to emphasize long-term planning.

Manager Smith stated one of the Fire Department's goals for FY21 and included in the budget is \$40,000 for a long-range master plan for the Fire Department. She also was surprised the negotiations were not going well, we will continue to move forward with the best interest of our citizens in mind. We do want to continue serving those area members as well.

9) COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND CITY COUNCILORS

- a) [Letter](#) from Ronnie and Sharon Kyle asking Council to reconsider Condition #11 for WCUP 20-07 located at 1515 Highway 93 West (p.75)

Councilor Sweeney understands their request but unfortunately their proposal does not work for this community. Once they pull the building permits for those buildings the impact of the city becomes apparent immediately. He does not have intention to reconsider.

Councilor Feury is comfortable with Condition #11 as it stands. It is not our position to see that someone is profitable in their development; it is our job to make sure that development and the standards we set work for our community. He has no intention to reconsider.

Councilor Norton feels they worked with our Housing Authority and the Planning staff and came up with a proposal. We should be consistent when dealing with people who have such a large project.

Councilor Qunell stated this is another test of the Inclusionary Zoning. If these people want to build this project, then they have to find a way to do it. Cash in lieu is not the only option. They could possibly build the equivalent affordable units someplace else. The goal is to build units for people to live in. He is not interested in reconsidering a motion to change the condition. Councilor Hennen and Davis had no further comments regarding the request.

Council Comments

Councilor Qunell stated when our country starts to melt down, as elected officials, we need to pay attention to how we treat each other and how the government treats us. We do not have the kind of race issues that most communities have across this country, so we are not faced with this every day. He was surprised and felt a good sensation seeing people outside our City Hall showing signs of support for the people in Minnesota and across the county who are affected by this. The goal of our Police Department force is to serve and protect and both of those are important.

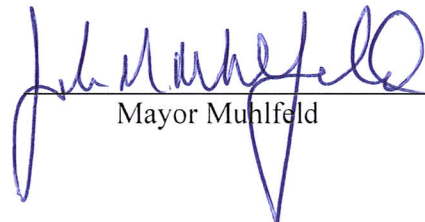
Councilor Norton reminded people if they have not turned in their ballot, they can turn it into the City Hall tomorrow until eight. People take care of themselves and each other at this time. There are a lot of moving parts, high emotions, and fear. It is wonderful seeing people stand together for the right things but remember we are in a pandemic of a highly infectious disease with no cure.

Councilor Feury stated there was a headline in one of the newsfeeds yesterday and it was 'How to be safer while protesting during a pandemic'. It made him think, things are a little off the rails here. He gave a shout out to Flathead Electric Cooperative, the Fire Department and the Police Department for their service during the storm this past weekend. As we do start to open up, he hopes we all maintain and continue to be vigilant about spreading germs. We are going to start to see pressure with the traveling public and he hopes people discontinue looking at masks as some sort of political identity statement.

Councilor Sweeney asked for updates for the State Park Road and Depot Park construction. Director Workman reported Depot Park most of the curb and gutter has been installed, the corner treatments for the northwest and southwest corners of are complete; and paving will begin in two weeks. The road is planned to be opened by the end of June. State Park Road sanitary sewer is just about done; the intersection of Haugen Heights and State Park Road was closed last week, and the contractor has 30 days to complete, pave and reopen the intersection. Private utilities will be installed in July and August, and then in September our contractor will complete the project.


10) ADJOURNMENT (Resolution 08-10 establishes 11:00 p.m. as end of meeting unless extended to 11:30 by majority)

Mayor Muhlfeld adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.



Mayor Muhlfeld

Attest:



Michelle Howke, Whitefish City Clerk