

**City of Hood River
City Council Work Session
Hood River Fire Station
January 11, 2020**

Council: Mayor Kate McBride, Mark Zanmiller, Megan Saunders, Tim Counihan, Jessica Metta, Erick Haynie, Gladys Rivera

Staff: City Manager Rachael Fuller, Finance Director/ACM Will Norris, Planning Director Dustin Nilsen, Fire Chief Leonard Damian, Police Chief Neal Holste, City Recorder Jennifer Gray

Absent:

CALL TO ORDER – Cell Phone Reminder – 8:09 a.m.

I. Welcome and introductions

II. City of Hood River proposed 2020 work plan

Fuller gave her managers report and stated the purpose of today's work session is to leverage the City's most important asset, the City Council and Council's leadership to prioritize the work of the organization for 2020. Fuller stated this is the most important and hardest job of the Council. The best Councils are those that maintain focus, exercise discipline and take a long-term view. The workplan helps do that.

Mayor McBride asked Council if they had additions, subtractions or changes to the language in the Work Plan. There were several Councilors that stated they had suggested changes to be discussed but no one had a new goal(s); all changes could fall under a current category.

Mayor McBride suggested going through all the goals listed.

Fuller stated many of the items on the goal list come from work that Council did in the past year. That is where Staff starts: listening to the work that has been done this year by Council and listening to conversations and direction by Council. Staff also proposes projects they think move towards meeting Council goals. There are items on the list that are regulatory requirement or mandates. The list provided from the committees is very useful, as well as the community input. Fuller noted the projects from last years work plan that were not completed, have been moved to this year's list. At the end of the day, Council chooses what the organization works on. Staff is relying on Council input and direction.

III. Break 9:25 a.m. – 9:40 a.m.

City Council discussion

Create opportunities for an inclusive and diverse housing inventory.

Strategy: Improve the missing middle housing supply through code and zone changes.

Strategy: Research potential incentives to allow more construction of smaller homes and other affordable housing products.

1. Housing code improvement
2. Permitting enhancement
3. Rand Road development

Councilor Zanmiller stated he feels a real sense of urgency to identify and increase the amount of land available for affordable housing. He would like to see an acquisition strategy plan to add properties to build housing on. He believes Council needs to look at a real “set of sticks and carrots” for incentivizing development they want to see. He also feels they do not have a common understanding on what the City’s roll is in development of attainable housing. They need to know their roll, versus what someone else’s role is.

Mayor McBride agreed with Councilor Zanmiller and suggested that the strategies should be to identify the amount of land needed and funding mechanisms for land acquisition and create that plan. Use the housing needs analysis for what type of housing is needed; number of housing, acres needed, costs and a plan on how to provide the land but not the housing. Secure the land and make sure there are parks, greenways, and trails between these possible places.

Councilor Saunders also wants to figure out funding options for land acquisition. She wants to make sure they are going to do the outreach on the updated housing metrics, they said they would do in 2019. That needs to be on the work plan. Mayor McBride stated that was on her list as well. Fuller confirmed it is still in the works. Staff received an updated draft last week and they are planning on communicating it to Council.

Councilor Saunders reviewed her items she had under housing code improvements. She wants to see if there are ways to incentivize the type of housing Council wants.

Councilor Metta stated she liked Mayor McBride’s suggestions on setting a goal, so they are not just buying land for buying sake. That it is tied to some type of data point of what they are going to get.

Council Coughlin stated he agrees with what has been said. He questioned to what extent is this a Council task, with response to the housing code improvement, and to which extent is it a Planning Commission task. He asked what the sequence will look like and how it will be captured. Would they be making a road map for the Planning Commission?

Fuller responded by stating that is correct. Fuller stated they will need to come back to Council with some additional timelines on these projects.

Nilsen added it will take him time but within the first quarter, he would expect this to be underway. They all need to make sure the deliverable meets the expectation of Council. He will need some of Councils time to make sure how this translates into something Council wants to go before the Planning Commission and the community process; ensure there is a common expectation.

Fuller stated one thing they are trying to do is to make incremental progress on this. They are focusing on what can be done this year. Each of these project needs to follow a project plan, that includes community engagement. The broader it gets, the more complicated it can get. Staff is trying to refine the scope.

There was discussion regarding moving more aggressively towards the process and projects. The community has expressed their concerns on the housing issues. If more resources are needed to help get tasks accomplished, that is something Council needs to consider.

Councilor Rivera stated they hear from community members that a majority of them feel that not a lot has been done. The City should be looking at what land is available. Once that is established, they can begin facilitating stakeholders and inviting developers to get involved. They need to show constituents the City is really moving forward.

Councilor Haynie stated he really likes the template format used this year. They are focusing more on projects. He agrees with looking at other property acquisitions and strategies to capture other things. He stated under No. 4 he would encourage other property acquisitions and strategies. He believes there are other opportunities for them to consider. He is also mindful of the Westside Plan and that it is a specific creature. He does not really see it in the Work Plan. He believes if they increase housing, they will increase affordable housing.

Inform and engage all segments of our community through transparency and proactive, inclusive and comprehensive outreach.

Strategy: Improve inter-agency communication.

Strategy: Increase outreach to underserved communities.

4. Communication and community engagement audit

Councilor Haynie stated he has mentioned this before, but he would like to see public meeting broadcasted. There have been positive steps made towards getting the audio recording on the new website. He believes having the meeting broadcasted in real time would be a good next

step.

There was discussion regarding broadcasting and the options for accessibility and translation. Fuller added the broadcasting of public meetings is a part of the Council's adopted IT Plan. It is something staff will be working towards. The plan is to work on infrastructure improvements first and then bring the different options to Council in regard to capabilities.

Councilor Rivera suggested since broadcasting is not currently available, she suggested creating a one pager using simple language after each meeting, to give the public a summary of what was discussed. Fuller stated she would envision contracting with an outside agency to do this, such as The Next Door.

Councilor Saunders noted this year is the 125th Anniversary of when the City was established. Fuller will let Paige Rouse know to incorporate it in this year's community outreach.

Councilor Saunders stated it would be nice to have better communication on talking points with Council's elected partners, to ensure they are communicating. She would also like Council and staff to be really focused on making sure everyone feels welcomed in the community. She asked if there is a training available that everyone can attend.

Councilor Rivera explained there are Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training series available.

There was discussion regarding Council members attending community meetings. Council will discuss and sign up to attend community meetings at the next meeting. A list of potential meetings Council can attend will be created.

There was a suggestion and discussion about timestamping the meeting audio recordings to discussion items on agenda items.

There was discussion regarding holding meeting together with other elected officials. Creating an agenda with common topics that affect both the City and the County.

Mayor McBride stated she would like to put the diversity equity and inclusion trainings separate from the communications community engagement audit. Fuller noted it would probably be an additional strategy; increase outreach to underserved communities. They can make it more comprehensive. Council agreed.

Promote an efficient, safe multi-modal transportation system that alleviates traffic and parking congestion and encourages bike/ped transportation.

Strategy: Emphasize updates to the bicycle/pedestrian, greenways and trails policies and projects during the Transportation System Plan update.

5. Parking study operations and management implementation
6. Transportation system plan major update
7. Historic Columbia Highway urban connection
8. Safe routes to school map and route improvements

Councilor Rivera stated she would like to add public transportation to bike and pedestrian transportation, that way the public recognizes that the City acknowledges public transportation in their goal. She spoke about the passes that CAT has provided for the community to benefit from.

There was discussion regarding the placement of bus stops in the City for CAT to pick up riders. There are concerns about where to place them; parking spots are eliminated when bus stops are placed in the City.

Councilor Rivera stated she thinks focusing on CAT but stop shelters is something they can address sooner than later. The discussion can be had on addressing the existing stops and what can be done to make public transportation seem more accessible.

Fuller stated CAT would be happy to come present to Council on next step actions and what some of the tradeoffs could be.

Mayor McBride added she has volunteered to work with CAT to gather data if parking spaces were removed for stops, how that would affect parking availability if more people are using public transportation. She does not think it needs to be added to the list of projects. The parking study will have information and work has been underway.

There was discussion for safe routes to school and possible funding that could be available.

Mayor McBride stated there has been discussion about bike and ped with public transportation. She wants to make sure to reach out to the advocacy groups, so when they get to the transportation system plan, they will have their permission very early in the process. She does not like to get information from group at the last minute. There needs to be outreach to those groups, letting them know they will be working on this.

Create a more environmentally sustainable community.

Strategy: Implement the energy plan.

9. Stormwater low impact development program development and implementation.
10. Energy and emissions assessment of City facilities
11. Wastewater treatment plant energy and emissions assessment
12. Trees on private property best practices review

Mayor McBride stated Council stepped up in this area with the energy resolution that was approved.

Councilor Counihan asked if they should note the resolution in the strategy. Council agreed. He would also like the City facility emissions assessment added. He asked if No. 12 Trees on private property best practices review, is ambitious enough. There was Council discussion. Fuller stated they can do a similar process as they did for the LID process. Get someone to review this and have them bring it to the tree committee for review and input. Staff can certainly put a plan together and bring it back to Council with options.

Maintain existing infrastructure and prepare for growth.

13. Comprehensive utility rate study
14. System development charge (SDC) rate study
15. Police facility options
16. Infiltration and inflow project

Councilor Saunders stated going back to the 2019 Capitol Improvement Plans for utility rates, she feels they did not do an in-depth review. She would like to do a review.

Councilor Saunders stated the wastewater treatment operator contract should be looked at. She wants to make sure they are staying on top of things and not continue to push out the contract.

Fuller confirmed the contract does end this year. Last year staff did evaluate options. Staff will be recommending the City continue for one more year, given the turnover in Public Works. Norris added City staff are in constant contact with the operator regarding daily operations of the plant. The costs that have been charged are consistent as the cost per capita has been flat through the entire contract, as far as their operations and the size of the City. He wanted to note they are watching that, and the prices have been stable.

Councilor Metta believes infrastructure is one of the more important things they do as a City. She is hoping they can come up with short-term solutions for the Police Department to address their needs for a facility, even if it is short-.

Councilor Counihan stated with respect to the utility rate study, that includes water. This happened before he was on Council. He asked if there were any thoughts on structure of utility rates in respect to the previous goal, creating a more environmentally assisting community. Is the utility rate structure going to encourage water conservation?

Councilor Saunders stated in the RFP, it did not make it in that consumers would be incentivized for conservation.

Mayor McBride noted the rates were changed once in the past to encourage conservation; it was lowered from 10,000 gallons to 5,0000 gallons.

Norris stated if they want it to be reviewed, a contact amendment would be needed. He is not sure if this is the meeting for this to be discussed; it is large discussion that will need its own meeting in the future. He is happy to speak with Councilors more in-depth offline.

Councilor Counihan stated the inflow project is a huge component of the goal. He believes they really need to consider water conservation moving forward, because all of the climate models suggest the timing and nature of the water supply is going to drastically change in the coming years.

Address community needs for parks and open space

Strategy: Develop a funding strategy for replacing capital needs in existing parks.

Strategy: Consider creating a plan for acquiring open space.

17. Community parks and recreation master plan
18. Capital improvement plan for parks

Councilor Rivera suggested they look at a possibility of building an enclosed play area for the community to use during the cold winter months.

Councilor Haynie noted they have to be mindful about how they (City and County) strategize bond approaches. He sees bond coming and whoever is last might get a no and whomever is first, will get the yes. He thinks parks is going to be a part of that and they should be mindful.

Councilor Metta stated the one thing she would like to add but it might be included in the description for the capital improvement plan for parks, added language about trails. She feels there is a lot demand and interest in having a well-connected green space trail system. One of the Planning Commission requests was trails. She would like language added for trails.

Fuller stated staff can absolutely clarify the language. That is part of the Master Plan and Transportation System Plan.

Council Zanmiller stated tied with his urgency of land acquisition for housing, he has one for land acquisition for open space that ties all these things together. It can be developed later as they find funding sources to do development. The Master Plan and the TSP both help but the acquisition has to be resolved. The State Park grants window is in April. They need to make sure they have almost shovel ready projects and submit every single one available.

Mayor McBride stated she wanted to clarify there will be trails and green space trails that connect, if it is not specifically spelled out. It only states parks, she would like trails added in there somewhere. Also, make sure they have funding for excising parks and know how many acres they need for open space for the new areas, Westside specifically. If they are going to have an ask, they need to evaluate what that would be, how it would work and the timing is for the potential ask due to the other asks that are coming.

Fuller noted staff can bring the financial information to Council and what comes out of the Master Plan in terms of acres and housing needed. In terms of working with groups on funding strategy, that is not a role that staff would play in terms of bonds. Staff's job is to bring objective information.

Recommended Urban Renewal Projects

Heights

1. Urban design and engineering plan

Columbia Cascade

2. Downtown parking supply and funding options
3. Wayfinding

Waterfront - on hold due to failed stormwater line

IV. Next steps & adjourn

Fuller thanked Council for their input. Staff will work to revise the Work Plan and put together descriptions. A final draft will come before Council review and adoption at a regular Council meeting.

Councilor Counihan stated one of the things in respect to communication, he really appreciates staff is moving towards a project-oriented Work Plan, where there are discrete things that have a specific process from beginning to completion. Given they are having a process that starts at the beginning to completion, he wonders if they can have some type of way to communicate where they are in a process, an indicator of stages of the various projects.

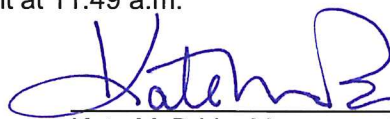
Fuller stated that is an important point in terms of communicating on how staff does their work. She would imagine that would be something that will come up in their assessment. At this time staff does not know what that will look like or the resources to make it happen. Communicating these projects will follow a pattern and where the opportunities are for engagement is an important piece of communication.

Councilor Metta stated there was an ask from the public to review the comments that were received from the public. She asked if the comments could be given out in a packet, minus the names of who made the comments and place it on the website.

Mayor McBride stated once someone makes a comment, it becomes a public record. Fuller agreed.

Mayor McBride would also like to respond to some of the comments to inform the public about the work that has been done.

ADJOURN – Adjourned by unanimous consent at 11:49 a.m.



Kate McBride, Mayor



Jennifer Gray, City Recorder

Approved by City Council on Aug 10, 2020