

CITY OF GEARHART  
City Council Worksession  
Tuesday, November 29, 2022  
On-site and Virtual via Zoom

A worksession of the Gearhart City Council was called to order by Mayor Smith on Tuesday, November 29, 2022 at 6:30 p.m. Present were Councilor Gould, Councilor Tomlinson, Councilor Fackerell, City Administrator Chad Sweet, City Treasurer Justine Hill, City Public Works Director Mark McFadden, and Executive Assistant Krysti Ficker. Councilor Warren was absent. Also present were Councilor-Elect Devereaux, Tim Henkle of GSI Water Solutions, and Chris Janigo of Civil West Engineering.

The purpose of the session was to discuss the required draft update to the City's Water Management and Conservation Plan (WMCP), and to revisit the draft update of the City's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), first reviewed at a previous worksession last August.

At the start of the meeting, Mayor Smith stated the EOP would be tabled to a future worksession.

City Administrator Sweet introduced Tim Henkle for a brief synopsis of the Water Management and Conservation Plan contents. Mr. Henkle explained what a WMCP is and why it's required. A WMCP describes the City's use, management, and conservation of its water resources. It's a tool the State uses to ensure water suppliers are using the State's resources efficiently to meet water demands, and that providers have adequate water while meeting conservation measures. Our water resource is both our water right and purchased water. In 2012, the City's water right permit was issued with a condition that we develop a WMCP. A 20 year time frame is used to estimate future demand. Updates are required every 10 years. The WMCP doesn't focus on infrastructure like the Water Master Plan, it focuses on the management of water. Six conservation measures are identified within the plan. The curtailment section focuses on what the City can do during a water supply shortage. The supply section foresees an approximate 60% increase in demand. This draft update was submitted to the State (OWRD - Oregon Water Resources Department) in mid-October. Comments are expected in mid-January with an order for a final, red-line draft approximately a month after that. A clean final draft is the last submission after the red-line is approved.

Councilor Tomlinson asked what kind of comments OWRD typically makes. Mr. Henkle said it depends on the reviewer, and typically isn't content related. He also said our permit is entirely developed, and because we're not seeking to gain more water access, our plan should be relatively easy to review.

Mr. Sweet and Councilor Gould questioned the status of our 2014 “Claim for Beneficial Use” submission to OWRD. The City will follow up again to ensure it’s still in the queue. Mr. Henkle reiterated that they are substantially behind; hurry up and wait.

Mr. Sweet shared the City is overall timely where water is concerned. The water system is operating well. We haven’t needed to use the Seaside intertie. We are slowly purchasing less. Mr. McFadden confirmed that the City’s geologist/hydrologist looks at our numbers every month; no red flags or concerns in the 12 years of working with him. No negative impacts to groundwater aquifer, no saltwater intrusion.

Councilor Tomlinson questioned the location of water quality data (section 2.9) within the plan due to a typo. Mr. McFadden explained that the monitor data is done by our geotech annually via our Water Quality Report (WQR), which is a separate document from the WMCP. He shared where the monitors are located (3 in town, 3 in the dunes) and how saltwater reads in the Neacoxie monitoring well correspond to the tide. The WQR goes to the State and is not required to be sent to the County. Mr. Henkle added that the data is just summarized and the WQR is not provided as an appendix.

Councilor Gould noted typos in sections 1.1 (north to Seaside) and 2.5 (serves), and requested omission of the elementary school reference in section 2.7 as we no longer have one.

Mr. Sweet suggested Council go page-by-page to discuss comments/concerns for the remainder of the session. He also noted a correction being made to the tourism statement in section 1.1.

Councilor Gould questioned the March due date. Mr. Sweet and Mr. McFadden shared the City has been working on the plan since well before March, it just took this long. Mr. Henkle stated we are a bit late but it’s not uncommon to be late and OWRD will be fine with it; there will be no penalty. Mr. Sweet advised the late submission is not holding up any other agreements.

Continuing on, Mr. Sweet noted the corrections being made regarding tourism and short-term rental occupancy, this time in section 2.3.

Councilor Tomlinson acknowledged the 14 wells, but per Mr. McFadden, only 8 wells are productive as stated in section 2.2. In response to Councilor Fackerell, the City has never had a well fail. Mr. Sweet explained the system runs more efficiently thanks to Mark McFadden installing break tanks.

Councilor Gould requested Exhibit 2-1 be enlarged and/or rotated.

Mr. Sweet stated the intertie paragraph description was backwards and will be amended south to north (section 2.4) and doesn’t have to be labeled emergency. He noted the trend of increased water use shown

in Exhibit 2-2. Councilors Tomlinson & Fackerell questioned water allocation. Mr. McFadden stated we don't make a lot during the spring, but in the summer months we're only allowed so much. In the months we can take the water, we're not taking it and in the months we can't take the water, we're taking everything they'll give us.

Mr. McFadden addressed a correction needed in section 2.7 as all City lines are metered as of 2021-22. (Fire station, irrigation, Centennial Park, Water Treatment Plant, City Hall.) Mayor Smith questioned the water treatment facility backwash cycle; Mr. McFadden said it is regularly averaged. The goal is to have it metered but it will be costly. Councilor Fackerell questioned unmetered connections and what if there was a leak. Mr. McFadden said the fire station was the only one previously unmetered. The issue was they weren't being read.

Councilor Gould questioned billable consumption, section 2.8. Mr. Henkle and Mr. Sweet addressed the issues with utility billing. Production reports and billing reports were very different. Ms. Hill explained that prior processes and transactions weren't always entered correctly in billing, skewing the numbers. When adjustments were made, the billing was corrected for the customer, but the consumption usage wasn't always reversed correctly; reports don't reflect the consumption adjustments as they should. Ms. Hill stated she believes we've gotten a better handle on the problem going forward. One ongoing issue is the City billings are every two months (mid-month), and the plant data records monthly. Mr. Sweet pointed out production and consumption numbers are much closer now. Councilor Gould asked about the new utility billing software. Mr. Sweet said we're still finalizing our quote and reiterated the last two years have reflected improvement. Councilor Gould questioned the possibility of over or under billing. Ms. Hill explained customers were billed correctly, the adjustment procedures were incorrect. Mr. Henkle also stated it was documented as administrative error versus loss. OWRD will raise an eyebrow and likely make a comment, which is why it's noted on our benchmarks, and the City can show progress.

On Exhibit 2-7, Mr. Sweet pointed out where numbers were transposed on max authorized rate (should be 2.81; not 2.18) and Mr. Henkle confirmed that correction. Mr. McFadden shared he has to submit a report every December documenting how much water he took out of every well.

Mr. Sweet requested correction on the number of feet from the well to Neacoxie Creek; it should be 2300 feet, not 600 (section 2.9.2). He also stated the City's largest pipe is actually 14", not 20" (section 2.10).

Mr. Henkle reiterated no penalty for late submission.

Mr. Sweet pointed out what the City is working on in regards to Exhibit 3-1 Benchmark Progress. Mr. McFadden addressed the citywide meter replacement and why it stalled. (Outside company, COVID,

small crew.) Councilor Fackerell asked how we conduct a leak detection survey? Mr. McFadden stated listening devices are placed on pipe listening for an echo; however, this procedure doesn't work well in sand. Therefore the City hasn't conducted one since 2012. The City could purchase some equipment and conduct some tests at night, ourselves. Mr. Henkle said since Gearhart is committing to doing them in the future, we'll be good with OWRD. If water loss is under 10%, leak detection isn't a huge concern.

Councilor Fackerell pointed out Gearhart has no public library; a correction will be made. There was consensus on the importance of the Public Education factor (section 3.4.6).

Ms. Hill questioned the first sentence of section 3.2. Mr. Sweet explained how customer leak detection works. Up to a 40% financial reduction on the water bill is given if public works tests the meter, detects a leak, the owner can "find the villain" and repair it.

Mr. McFadden disagreed with the statement in section 3.4.3 that most City meters are over 20 years old. Both Ms. Hill and Mr. McFadden confirmed we've already addressed the 0 reads benchmark.

Mr. Smith questioned the statement that the City will update the utility billing software in the next 2 years. Ms. Hill explained it's both a huge undertaking and a training benefit. Councilor Gould suggested we try to get it done, potentially partnering with Warrenton for training.

Councilor Fackerell requested removal of the word library in section 3.4.6.

Councilor Gould questioned the possibility of requiring water conservation notices for short-term rentals, like hotels provide.

Councilor Fackerell questioned the definition of drought; it is based on multiple factors, usually declared by the State. Mr. McFadden pointed out he would be the first to notice based on monitoring. Councilor Tomlinson asked if there was room for another water storage tank. Mr. Sweet and Mr. McFadden both stated there is. Mr. Henkle said most cities have up to 3 days of water stored. Depending on the disaster, storage could be used much faster or slower. Mr. McFadden stated a declaration for drought and conservation is a judgment call. Communication with both Warrenton and Seaside would be necessary.

Ms. Hill questioned the service area statement since grandfathered agreements have the City service areas just outside our UGB (urban growth boundary). The extended area is referenced earlier in the plan, but not in section 5.1. Mr. Henkle stated he'd make the statement consistent throughout the plan.

Mayor Smith noted a circular reference in section 5.5 that Mr. Henkle confirmed would be corrected.

Mr. Sweet pointed out that, per Mr. Henkle, City Councils do not have to adopt a WMCP. The purpose of

going through the plan as a group was to keep the Council informed. Mayor Smith suggested the WMCP be mentioned as a talking point at the next Council meeting.

Councilor Gould requested tracking progress on the difference in billable consumption to water production. Mayor Smith suggested part of the talking point address the direction we want to take with the utility billing software.

Mr. Henkle suggested, in addition to the draft comments, he contact the State and point out where the 2.18 versus 2.81 transposed number correction was made (Exhibit 2-7) explaining we found an error, and are not using more water than allowed.

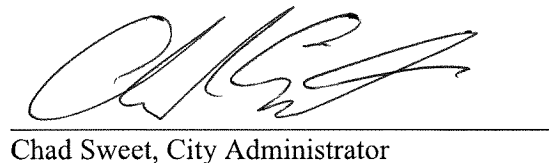
Mr. Sweet mentioned the upcoming water rate study, which will evaluate our fees. Councilor Tomlinson said he likes our current fees. Mr. McFadden said the contractors do, too.

There were no other questions, comments, or concerns.

Mayor Smith adjourned the worksession at 7:57 p.m.



Mayor Kerry Smith



Chad Sweet, City Administrator