

CITY OF GEARHART
Worksession of the City Council
Tuesday, January 31, 2023
6:30 pm On-site and Virtual/Telephonic

The worksession of the Gearhart City Council was held Tuesday, January 31, 2023. Council members, City staff, and the public were able to attend on-site, virtually, or by dialing in on a telephone.

Mayor Smith called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm. Present were Mayor Kerry Smith, Councilor Reita Fackerell, Councilor Dana Gould, Councilor Austin Tomlinson, Councilor Preston Devereaux, City Administrator Chad Sweet, Police Chief Jeff Bowman, Fire Chief Como, Executive Assistant Krysti Ficker, and City Treasurer Justine Hill. A quorum of the Council was present.

The purpose of the worksession was for the Council to discuss benches and do another review of the City's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).

Administrator Sweet explained that the City would like direction on the current memorial bench policies. He referenced the Gearhart Parks Master Plan document, which lays out guidelines for bench placement, but also allows City Council to approve other locations. Administrator Sweet is requesting the Council consider placement of benches at the newly created playground area in the Trails End area.

Administrator Sweet went over the history of memorial benches, the current waiting list for benches, and the need for some additional guidance from the City Council regarding bench policies. By consensus, the City Council had no concerns for City staff to work on a plan for the memorial bench program.

Councilor Devereaux commented that the memorial benches that are currently placed around the community were dedicated and paid for by families. He wondered if it would be appropriate to reach out to these families to ask if they would be willing to pay for the required maintenance of the benches. Administrator Sweet explained that the original program had the Gearhart Home Owners' Association (HOA) find the donors and locations and the City installed them. To his knowledge, there was no discussion on bench maintenance or how to handle the long-term, dilapidated status of the benches. At this point, it is the City's responsibility to maintain the benches. Councilor Devereaux mentioned exploring other options for memorializing local residents (e.g., permanent plaques/tiles).

Administrator Sweet also discussed the need for moving memorial benches in the Gearhart dunes due to natural, environmental landscape changes. City staff have been working with the Oregon State Parks because

placement in the dunes areas crosses over into their jurisdiction. He will continue to keep the City Council notified of any developments regarding moving any benches.

Administrator Sweet reiterated the need for City Council's input on City memorial bench policies; however, he wanted a more immediate answer on placing benches at the new playground area. He feels this placement would be a park enhancement and would allow parents an area to sit while watching their children play.

Councilor Gould agrees that the current bench policy does not seem sustainable. She does not want the City to be in a position where it appears the bench process is showing preferential treatment. The intent and contribution of the memorial benches in the community is valued; however, the process should be equitable and sustainable. She suggested the possible concept of having multiple names per bench.

Mayor Smith suggested the concept of renaming the park to include the word "Memorial," which may include some type of plaque, memorial wall. This may provide a more sustainable opportunity to celebrate Gearhart residents.

Councilor Tomlinson asked for clarification again on how many memorial benches were on the waiting list and confirmed that the Council would have to pick the three types of benches that would be acceptable for placement within the City.

The meeting transitioned to discussion on the EOP. Administrator Sweet went over the scope and purpose of the City's EOP. He read the first paragraph of the Letter of Transmittal (page v). He mentioned Councilor Gould and Mayor Smith had submitted their comments in advance of the meeting. Fire Chief Como again went over the purpose of the EOP and reiterated that it was a tool to provide a framework for everything they are trained to do in an emergency situation. He talked about the background, coordinating partners, and the processes. Mayor Smith asked for clarification on the definition of "operational period," which Chief Como explained was an eight (8) to 12 hour shift. Chief Como continued the discussion on stakeholders and "The Planning P" process. He distributed "The Planning P" diagram and explained that 90% of Gearhart's incidents never leave the initial response phase.

Administrator Sweet went over the EOP Action Guide (page ix-xi). He highlighted operational coordination in number four (4), section 6.4. He went over section 3.1.1 Responsibilities of the Mayor and City Council (page 3-1). He distributed and referenced the Oregon Office of Emergency Management Emergency Declarations Guidelines for Local Elected and Appointed Officials. He recommended specific training courses that would be beneficial for the Mayor and City Council, which is the same training system that is given across the nation.

Mayor Smith went over his suggestions, which included a grammatical correction on section 3.4; an already answered question on 5-2; concerns with the level of duties for the City Administrator on 5-8; and, concerns with the responsibilities of public works repairing/restoring electrical and natural gas issues.

There was continued discussion, which included clarification that the City does not control Nixle; grant funding; having a tabletop exercise; forms of communication; notifying the residents in an emergency; CERT volunteers; and, the use and access of the tsunami sirens.

Councilor Gould feels it is important to have an inventory list and helpful “how to” guides in the EOP document. She felt that it could be added as an appendix. Executive Assistant Ficker has an inventory list that can easily be added.

Councilor Fackerell requested a correction on section 3.1.1, which provides clarification to allow both elected and appointed officials. She pointed out that not all members of the Council are necessarily elected.

Administrator Sweet mentioned that the EOP document is not released to the general public but should have Council approval.

Mayor Smith adjourned the worksession meeting at 7:45 pm.


Chad Sweet, City Administrator


Mayor Kerry Smith