

Gearhart Planning Commission Minutes for July 13, 2023

MEMBERS: Virginia Dideum, Russ Taggard, Don Frank, Terry Graff, Paulina Cockrum, Judy Schector, and John Mesberg

STAFF: Chad Sweet, Garrett Phillips, and Angoleana Brien

Minutes

The regular meeting of the Gearhart Planning Commission for Thursday, July 13, 2023, was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by President Virginia Dideum. All *Members and staff were present.*

CONSENT AGENDA

On **MOTION** by Taggard, 2nd by Graff, the consent agenda was approved. Said agenda approved Minutes for April 20, 2023, Minutes for May 11, 2023, and the financial report for June 23, 2023, 2023. There was no correspondence.

6 - Approved (Dideum, Taggard, Frank, Graff, Schector, Mesberg), 1 - abstained (Cockrum)

STAFF REPORT

Sweet provided updates on various matters. The 4th of July celebration went well, with fewer complaints than in previous years, thanks to dedicated volunteers. The fire department handled about 30 calls that night, mostly public assists and minor fires. A successful street dance was organized with a large turnout of about 400 to 450 people.

The city is currently working on water rates, discussing an increase of approximately 15% to address rising expenses, which is about \$39 every two months and about \$5 more every two months. The city's population has grown significantly, impacting planning and resources. However, there are challenges in accurately counting the new residents, some of whom may be second homeowners.

The city's population has grown significantly, with around 380 people added in the past decade. However, the census did not cover the pandemic's impact, making the exact count challenging due to an influx of new residents and second homeowners.

Increasing our water rights is being considered to meet water demands. Currently, there are eight wells and permits for additional wells have been secured, but water rights regulations limit the city's ability to extract more water.

The city plans to hold a town hall meeting to inform residents about the rate increase and potential conservation efforts Wednesday the 26th. There is also consideration of revisiting rates annually and exploring a sliding scale system. Expanding wells is an option, but the city faces limitations due to water rights issues and regulations.

Overall, the staff is handling the situation well, and coordination between the city of Warrenton and Gearhart remains positive. The report acknowledges the need to adapt to changes and find sustainable solutions for the city's growth and water management.

COMMISSIONERS REPORT - None

GOALS LIST -

Removed - Summary of Comp Plan

Added - Envisage Optional R-3 Zone Ordinance Changes/Alterations

VISITORS COMMENTS - None

PUBLIC HEARINGS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Dideum wanted to remind everyone how this discussion started back in May. It was initiated by someone, probably she, who raised the topic of tree planting. The discussion was divided into two distinct sessions: one on tree planting and the other on tree permitting. The first discussion focused on the possibility of individuals planting trees and the city taking over their care. The second discussion dealt with the city's tree-permitting process and the concerns about the number of trees being cut down.

Discuss the tree-planting aspect. For tree planting, it's important to have a clear vision of where and how the city wants to plant trees, considering factors like watering, trimming, and maintenance. Once this vision is established, the city can assess the costs and requirements to implement the plan.

However, we need to address the issue of maintaining the planted trees. Currently, the staff is unable to handle the workload and budget for maintaining a large number of trees. Perhaps, it's worth considering a survey to gauge community interest and support for such a tree-planting initiative.

Regarding the trees to plant, we need a concrete plan in place to ensure proper care and maintenance, and the city must be capable of fulfilling those requirements. Sharon's suggestion of having a comprehensive plan for tree planting aligns with this approach. Once we have a well-defined plan, we can then discuss how to proceed with planting and caring for the trees while ensuring the city's capabilities are considered so we avoid any future issues. With such a plan in place, we can better address concerns related to tree planting, care, and root placement and avoid potential disruptions to sidewalks and streets.

Discussion on the tree-cutting issue. Is there a need to tighten the existing tree ordinance regarding tree cutting? The current regulation allows property owners to cut down up to five trees with a diameter greater than twelve inches per year without a permit. This has resulted in some concerns about tree loss in the city. We could explore revising the ordinance to lower the diameter limit to eight inches and require a permit for any tree removal. The permit process could help track tree cutting more effectively and ensure that it aligns with the city's vision for tree preservation.

During Mesberg's research, in the Clatsop area, through online sources, one interesting concept (he) came across in some places was the notion of "legacy trees." This involves the town surveying its tree stock and identifying important trees, even on private property. These legacy trees could be significant due to their size, age, or other factors, and the town would have specific policies to limit certain actions concerning these trees while still allowing for certain activities.

The commission discussed the important perspective regarding the potential consequences of not having a proper permitting process with adequate guidelines in place. Graff mentioned if a storm hits and causes damage, we might have to deal with unforeseen situations. However, with that being said, the Planning Commission currently has the authority to grant or deny tree removal requests based on certain criteria when it involves cutting down more than five trees outside of construction projects.

The commission feels they should also consider how to address situations where the arborist claims a tree is dangerous or dead, as this can be a subjective matter. Creating a simplified permitting process could be beneficial, and the commission is open to working with the community to develop a clearer and more effective plan.

Ultimately, the commission needs to decide on the philosophy guiding these decisions. Is the focus on promoting tree planting and preservation of existing trees, or is it more lenient towards property owners' rights to cut down trees on their land? The commission could work on developing a proposal that strikes a balance between these perspectives and brings clarity to the tree planting and cutting processes.

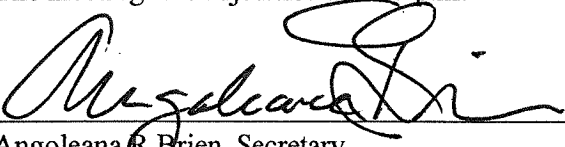
In the meantime, the two commissioners, Taggard & Mesberg, can work on drafting a proposal for discussion next month, taking into account community input and concerns. This proposal can serve as a starting point for refining the city's approach to tree planting and tree cutting while considering environmental, aesthetic, and practical factors.

NEW BUSINESS - None

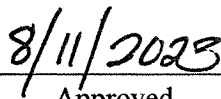
CONCERNS OF THE COMMISSION - None

QUESTIONS FOR LAND USE ATTORNEY - None

The meeting was adjourned at 6:57 p.m.



Angoleana R. Brien, Secretary,



Approved