

**April 12, 2017
Work Session
City of Gaston**

Present: Mayor Tony **Hall**, Jerry **Spaulding**, David **Meeker**, Bill **Martin**, Chris **Jeffries**, and Don **Richter**

Absent: Rod **Hale**

Staff: City Recorder Wenonah **Blanchette**, Public Works Director Brent **Whittaker**, City Clerk Sharon **Bregante-Candau**, Washington County Deputy Bobby **Wormington**

Mayor Tony **Hall** called this meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL: Recorder **Blanchette** conducted the roll call for the record with:

Councilor Jerry **Spaulding**: present

Councilor David **Meeker**: present

Mayor Tony **Hall**: present

Councilor Chris **Jeffries**: present

Councilor Rod **Hale**: absent

Councilor Don **Richter**: present

Councilor Bill **Martin**: present

Water Meter Presentation: Pat Hart, AMI Specialist, Ferguson Meter & Automation Group

Pat **Hart** gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Sensus i-PERL magnetic meters. He reviewed the differences between positive displacement meters and magnetic meters and the benefits of the i-PERL water meter features of lowering water cost through accurate measurement, facilitating leak detection, resolving customer disputes through the Data Logger record of water usage, notification of broken pipes and/or water theft through the reverse flow feature, and reducing meter reading time for City staff with the TR/PL in-vault radio and handheld transceiver. Sensus offered a 10-year bumper-to-bumper, as well as a 20-year new meter accuracy warranty. Ferguson's Integration Specialist handled customizations, installations, and training on site. The radio and transceiver were manufactured in Pennsylvania and Mexico. Sensus offered a primary FCC license for a 900 to 950 frequency band that would be unique to Gaston. The equipment was firmware updatable with a 20-year warranty, 10 year bumper to bumper. The handheld device needed to be within 500 to 800 feet of the radio to pick up the data. The system devices were designed to upgrade to an AMI (Advanced Metering Infrastructure) system, if the City chose to do so in the future.

Public Works Director **Whittaker** reported LA Water chose the magnetic meters specifically for their data logging capabilities, which saved LA Water time and money and also improved customer service.

Mr. **Hart** confirmed Sensus manufactured the i-PERL meters to fit a variety of line sizes. Councilor **Richter** asked if the City could put an i-PERL meter on its main water line to verify how much water Hillsboro was selling to Gaston. Mr. **Hart** replied that line would need a positive displacement meter, which would be expensive.

Mayor **Hall** suggested putting a meter on the City's water line up to Hedin Heights. Public Works Director **Whittaker** said the long-term plan was to divide the city into sections and install master meters that he could read to identify water loss locations.

Public Works Director **Whittaker** said they have discussed programming the current handheld device as a backup. Mr. **Hart** said the City's current handheld device was compatible with the new radios. He would have to check on whether the handheld device had a locator on it.

Public Works Director **Whittaker** clarified the problem in the lightning storm that shut down the radio was due to an issue with the surge protector rather than with the radio itself. Mr. **Hart** said he has never heard of any problems using these devices in any kind of weather.

Mr. **Hart** confirmed the equipment could freeze in very cold weather and crack if stuck in ice, but he has received very few calls on that. The Cities of Bend, Redmond, and Mt. Shasta had very cold climates and used this system.

Public Works Director **Whittaker** said the system price was \$123,450 for a one-time installment of 350 radios, which was more than the City needed. Gaston qualified for the State Revolving Fund, allowing the City to receive a \$100,000 loan upfront with \$30,000 forgiven as a grant, leaving \$70,000 to pay back on the loan. Staff has already budgeted to take care of the meters with the rest.

Water: Public Works Director **Whittaker** reported past dues were down to \$532.13 from the \$22,000 when he started. A leak detection contractor located six leaks of approximately 400,000 gallons a month, which Staff was in the process of fixing. The water consumption and loss graph in the Council packet correctly showed a 47% to 48% water loss, which was an improvement over the traditional 20% water loss every month. The City was losing \$3,200 to \$3,600 per month on a water loss of 1.6 million gallons.

Voting Items. Public Works Director **Whittaker** said he would ask for Council votes on the following items in the regular session:

- Water Meter replacements.
- Approval to approach the homeowner about removing the hazard trees identified on First Street between Park and Oak. Brett cleaned up the large fallen limbs for free. Since the trees were in the right-of-way, the City could remove the trees, but the homeowner would be responsible for repairing the sidewalk. He still needed clarification on the exact process for this situation.
- There was an uncapped City storm drain by the high school that extended 20 ft out into the street and simply stopped: it was not connected to anything. Consequently, the CTE building flooded every time it rained hard, causing damage for which the City could be held liable. Following discussions with Public Works Director Whittaker, Gaston Public Schools recently sent a letter asking the City to address the problem. Construction plans from the time showed a connecting line was supposed to have been constructed, but there was no evidence that it ever was. The City needed to fix the storm drain while the construction contractor had the ground open at that location.

He confirmed the contractor currently working at the site could connect the storm drain. Approving the work and allowing the contractor to do it now would be significantly less expensive than doing it later. He estimated it would cost less than \$10,000. The **Council** agreed by consensus to make the necessary funds available.

- Appointment of a committee comprised of Mr. **Whittaker** and two Councilors to pursue negotiations with Clean Water Services (CWS) to create a customized and equitable plan for adding the City's storm drain system to the CWS franchise to cover maintenance, cleaning, and street sweeping, along with the autonomy to make the decision up to \$7.25. With the City currently paying \$900 or more per quarter for those services, this was a huge cost savings to the City. It would add up to \$7.25 to their customer's bill for the benefit of unblocked and maintained storm drains. He clarified the City would retain ownership of its storm drain system; however, the City had no budget or equipment to maintain the system.
- Approval to surplus certain items in order to build up enough money to purchase an all-purpose tractor that would meet all the City's needs.
- The windstorm blew over dugouts at Brown Park, which would be an insurance claim. The City had a \$500 deductible for this over \$40,000 repair claim. The contractor should start the repair work tomorrow. Mayor **Hall** noted the City had to proceed with the repairs, even though it had not received complete confirmation the insurance company would cover it. With the kids already going down there, the insurance company identified that the City's liability was huge.
- There were two quotes on the Hazmat removal, which the Council would see in regular session.
- Lighting for City Hall and the library.

Public Works Director **Whittaker** reported everything on the Fire Marshall Inspection report and the OSHA consultation report has been done. He has not yet been able to find a roof contractor willing to come to Gaston to work on the water leak.

New Chairs

Mayor **Hall** asked for discussion of a Councilor's inquiry about acquiring new chairs for the Councilors. He recommended finding chairs similar to the one he had. One option was finding better used ones at the State level. Councilor **Jeffries** liked the office chair used by the City Clerk. Recorder **Blanchette** said that chair cost \$200. Councilor **Richter** said his current chair hurt his hip, as he had a disability. Clerk **Bregante-Candau** suggested purchasing a chair for Councilor **Richter** if he needed one at every meeting, rather than using her ergonomic chair set up to her body. Mayor **Hall** said they would look into purchasing one chair.

Parks Part-time Help

Public Works Director **Whittaker** asked to hire out 500 hours of seasonal part-time help at the park for mowing, maintenance, etc. He observed that he was more valuable to the City doing the work of a public works director than mowing the grass. The **Council** discussed hiring high school students at \$10 an hour. The City would need to make sure that the students had their work permits. The City's insurance would not allow anyone under 18 years old to operate the riding lawn mower.

Gaston City Police Department

Mayor **Hall** asked for discussion on Gaston creating its own City police department. He cited the recent series of thefts, including his brother's pressure washer from the mayor's property. The Cornelius pawnshop owner, where he and his brother went to try to find the pressure washer, said they were getting a lot of stuff out of Gaston right now from at least five people bringing things in on a regular basis. However, people were not reporting the thefts to the police, which limited the police's ability to investigate the thefts. Councilor **Richter** said he found his two \$1,200 professional grade power saws in Newberg, which had been stolen from the back of his sons' truck in the middle of the day.

Clerk **Bregante-Candau** reported putting a caution alert on the City's website at the request of Deputy **Wormington** to tell people to lock their stuff up and report any suspicious activity or persons. Mayor **Hall** mentioned receiving reports from citizens about people walking around late at night in town.

Public Works Director **Whittaker** suggested researching the cost of reforming a staffed police department versus adding services from Washington County. Mayor **Hall** said he has explored the issue in the last two years. With Council's permission, he would look further into the Carleton Police Department's information about a number of small cities that have gone together and used the same police department that hired enough people to handle multiple cities. He commented Gaston having its own appointed police commissioner and police department qualified it for grants to offset the cost of Washington County's services as well as buildings, improvements, and materials grants.

Councilor **Jeffries** suggested amending the City's contract with Washington County to provide more hours. She preferred keeping all the City's law enforcement with a sole provider for more efficient communication and organization. Perhaps, the City could start a community watch program. Mayor **Hall** said they would need a study to research the Councilors' concerns related to wages, insurance, training, and benefit costs for a police chief and deputies. Dale **Smith** suggested the less expensive option of hiring a security service to patrol at night.

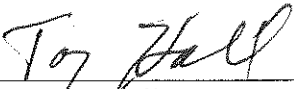
Councilor **Jeffries** reported that in the City of Banks' contract with Washington County, the City met the need of the small town connection by the Sheriff assigning one deputy fulltime as a Chief of Police with additional deputies providing part-time coverage on nights and weekends.

Mayor **Hall** recalled he asked Washington County in their last contract negotiations about appointing Deputy **Wormington** as the Gaston Police Chief and hiring the volunteer Washington County deputies, most of whom were retired deputies, to work in Gaston. Unfortunately, there were labor union issues preventing that scenario.

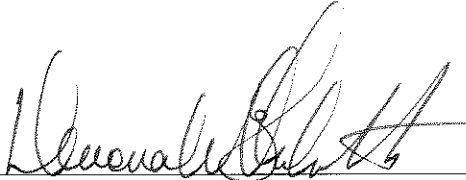
Councilors **Spaulding** and **Richter** stated their preference for Washington County's service. Mayor **Hall** acknowledged staying with Washington County would be easier for the City to manage than having its own police department. The **Council** identified the City of Banks' set up and the security service patrols as options for further study.

Councilor **Spaulding** commented they needed to decide quickly on whether the Council would allocate money for additional police services, as budget discussions started this month.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor **Hall** asked for any further discussion, none heard. Meeting adjourned at 6:57PM.



Mayor Tony Hall

Attest: 

City Recorder Wenonah Blanchette