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CITY COUNCIL February 8, 2016
WORKSESSION 6:30 PM
City Hall, 1001 Bridge St. Vernonia, OR 97064

Mission Statement

The City of Vernonia pledges to be an ethical and responsive government using community collaboration to foster leadership and a vision for civic improvement while providing a safe, peaceful, economically viable community.

MINUTES

Call to Order -- Mayor Parrow

Mayor Parrow called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Additions or Removal of Agenda Items

Councilor Tierney would like to have a discussion regarding the culvert and pilot lounge at the Airport added to the agenda.

Council consensus is to move the scheduled time of work sessions to 7:00pm.

Councilor Hult made a motion to approve the agenda with the requested additions. The motion was seconded by Councilor McNair, motion carried.

New Business

- Discussion Regarding the Airport Vision

Councilor Seager presented to Council a Vernonia Municipal Airport information review sheet. He gave a brief overview and then discussed some of the key points with Council.

Councilor Seager stated that UNAVCO has a contract with the airport from 2005 to 2020 which paid the city \$7500. It is his understanding that they will renew their contract at the end of this contract term.

Councilor Tierney raised the question of whether or not people are paying to use the airport. Councilor Seager stated that they do not as it is a public airport. Pilots do not have to pay if they are flying in and out of the airport, they only have to pay if they are tying down. The tie down fee is \$25 a month and is for parking your plane outside of a hanger.

Councilor Seager advised Council that the Airport Economic Impact report is put together by the Oregon Department of Aviation and is not based on actual city costs. They take into account the potential revenue to the City of Vernonia due to people flying in and spending money in the community.

Councilor McNair asked if any RC model airplane groups have come out to the airport. Councilor Seager stated that while they haven't had any groups come out to the airport, they have several individuals who come out to fly their model airplanes. Councilor Hult would like clarification on whether or not these groups are able to close down the airport for group use. Councilor Seager stated that the airport is always open and the runway cannot be closed down. If a plane comes in to land at the airport, any model airplanes in the area must vacate the airspace and land. Councilor McNair was under the impression that model airplanes held shows at airports and therefore shut down or reserved airport runways. Councilor Seager stated that these events are typically held at larger airports where they can reserve a runway for a specific block of time or in areas of the airport that are unused.

Councilor McNair would like to explore ways to generate income for the Airport. One possibly way to generate revenue is to charge for use. Councilor Seager stated that historically, Airports have been free and that he would not fly into an airport that charged a fee for landing. Councilor McNair doesn't feel that the community views the airport as a necessity and he would like to change that by increasing its uses and revenue. City Administrator Mitchell stated that it would be impossible to charge pilots a fee for parking for a few hours without someone stationed out at the airport full time. Councilor Hult would like to know more about the airport and possible ways to generate revenue. Counselor Seager would like clarification on what account the generated revenue would be deposited into. Councilor McNair stated that the income from the Airport would be deposited into the Airport fund.

Council then discussed what could be done to improve the airport. Councilor Seager stated that he thinks that the Vernonia Municipal Airport is one of the nicest grass strip airports in Oregon. When the blue print for the Airport Vision was first created, the intention was to add hangers and pave the runway, but unfortunately there hasn't been a way to fund the project. Councilor McNair questioned whether or not the surrounding terrain limits the capability of improving the Airport. Councilor Seager stated that this was the case. Councilor McNair would like to know what the capabilities of the airport are. He believes that improving Airport Park could help to bring people to the airport.

Councilor Seager believes that the Airport is not developed to its limit but will never be as large as say, Scappoose Airport. The Vernonia Municipal Airport has always generated enough revenue to cover expenses in the past and has never been in the red. Councilor McNair stated that that is not currently the case as we are looking at transferring money into the account from the general fund for the culvert project. Historically, the airport has generated just enough revenue to cover insurance. Councilor Seager replied that the Airport has averaged yearly savings of \$2000 and had a large amount in the fund until they had to drill the well for the trailer at the park host location. When the trailer was removed, that greatly reduced the revenue for the Airport. The Airport needs to finish replacing the culvert and has already spent \$2190 on the project. Councilor Hult would like to know what other possibilities for generating revenue for the Airport are aside from building a new hanger or ground leases. Can we rent out the trailer space that was previously rented? City Administrator Mitchell stated that the space is being rented by the park hosts in the park off season which is put into the Airport fund. Park revenue is deposited in the park fund as that fund pays for the maintenance of the park.

There are currently 7 hangers at the Airport, of which 5 are privately owned and 2 are City owned. The privately owned hangers are all on ground leases of .35 a square foot/month. One of the City owned hangers does not have a door but would be more easily rented, and generate more revenue, if it had them. Councilor Seager advised against raising ground lease rates as renters are already paying more per square foot then other airports are charging.

Another possible option of increasing Airport revenue is improving the park. Councilor McNair would like to give Airport Park responsibility and revenue back to the airport. City Administrator Mitchell would like to know who would maintain the park as the airport does not have the financial ability to pay for the maintenance. Mayor Parrow stated that maintenance funds were created for the parks so why couldn't we do the same for Airport Park in the Airport fund. Councilor Seager gave a little history of the Airport and stated that there were times it was not accessible due to lack of maintenance. That all changed in early 2000 when the park was developed and the vault bathroom was added. City Administrator Mitchell stated that Airport Park became part of the parks department when the Airport and Parks Committees agreed to give it to parks. Councilor Seager would like to look at the park revenue for the last 5 years before making any decisions.



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Councilor McNair stated that the Airport fund could pay for a city worker to maintain the park. He believes that the reason the parks committee doesn't want to give up Airport Park is because it generates more money than it costs to maintain. Doug Davenport suggests putting the park host in charge of the park maintenance. The park host already cleans the park and empties the garbage into the city dumpster out there. City Administrator Mitchell stated that if we were to give the park revenue back to the Airport fund then we would need to delineate the budget as the park hosts are currently paid out of the park fund. The reason the park was given to the parks fund in the first place was so that it would be better maintained.

Councilor Tierney would rather figure out ways to bring revenue to the Airport than take revenue from the parks and give it to the Airport. She thinks that parks should stay the responsibility of the parks department and fund. City Administrator Mitchell is concerned that taking Airport Park from the parks department fund will put the parks fund into the red. The best route to better the Airport would be to improve the airport itself.

Councilor McNair would like to know when Airport Park was given to the parks department and if there is an obvious increase in revenue in the parks fund. City Administrator Josette stated that this was not part of the agenda so she does not have that information on hand, but can look into it.

Culvert Replacement Project: The funds needed to finish the project are \$6,480 for material plus labor. The Airport Committee would like to borrow money from the general fund to pay for the project and pay it back over the next few years. They are hoping that the sale of the trailer will pay for a significant amount of the project.

Council then moved onto discussing the sale of the pilot lounge trailer. City Administrator Mitchell gave Council an update on the status of selling the trailer. She stated that only one bid came in for the trailer, which was submitted after the bid deadline, and Councilor Seager did not think the bid was high enough. City staff would like to know if Council would like to reopen the bidding for the trailer. Councilor Seager would rather keep the trailer then sell it for the current bid amount as it cost more than the bid to move the trailer to its current location. Councilor Tierney is concerned that it could cost a lot of money to dispose of the trailer if it is not maintained and we don't accept the bid. Doug Davenport addressed council and stated that the reason the Airport Committee decided to sell the trailer was to help pay for the culvert project. Councilor Seager stated that he believes he has a potential buyer for the trailer and that they would pay significantly more than the current bid. City Administrator Mitchell stated that due to the trailer containing formaldehyde, the buyer will have to sign a form stating that they will not inhabit the trailer.

Council consensus is to reopen the bidding for the trailer on April 1, 2016 and close the bidding on May 31, 2016. A minimum bid requirement will be added of \$2000. City staff will expand the advertising for the trailer sale to encourage more bidders.

Adjournment

Mayor Parrow adjourned the meeting at 8:55pm.

These minutes were approved at the March 7th, 2016 City Council Meeting.



Stephanie Borst, City Recorder



Randall J. Parrow, Mayor