

UNION CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
Monday, January 25, 2021 – 6:00 P.M.
Leonard Almquist Council Chambers, 342 S. Main St, Union, OR 97883

This meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Councilor Leslie McMillan, Councilor Terra Richter arrived at 6:04 p.m., Councilor Timothy Cox, Mayor Leonard Flint, Councilor John Farmer absent, Councilor Susan Hawkins, Student Liaison Riley Later, and City Administrator Doug Wiggins.

Dan Hall and Heidi Denton will be interviewed later in this meeting

The first topic Council discussed this evening was Fire/EMS Updates. Councilor Hawkins said I have been talking to Tim Sheehy. He wanted to move ahead with merging the two fire departments. She read the letter for the record. I talked to my husband and he said you have to form a merger committee and have to sell it from the beginning of the process. It isn't an easy sell. You need a subcommittee for communication.

Councilor Cox said I would like to review the budget in consideration of this.

CA Wiggins stated at our next business meeting it would be best to make a decision about exploring one new fire district.

Councilor McMillan asked is this something that was a goal. Councilor Hawkins answered the fire board decided this was the best way to go. Council discussed the prospect of looking into the creation of a new district. Council also discussed the memorandum of understanding from the county which allows all fire departments to help each other.

The next item for discussion was City Surplus Real Property Updates. CA Wiggins said I talked to Carter Wells and they were trying to get an attorney review on the contract. They ended up having to find a different attorney, we are waiting still. On the street it is a situation that is not good for any party involved. The city doesn't want to create hardships on anyone. The city attorney looked into this but there doesn't seem to be an answer.

Also, on tonight's agenda was the Goal Setting for Council. CA Wiggins said these goals, when adopted, will help me with planning out the coming budget year. Council and staff discussed that short- and long-term goals would probably need to be identified.

The last item for discussion was the COVID-19 Update. Mayor Flint said I have been to another Mayor's meeting. They are moving through and vaccinating for COVID-19. Teachers will be vaccinated next. The college students had a spike in cases.

CA Wiggins stated we find out tomorrow if we can open up more on the 29th. Mayor Flint discussed how COVID-19 is impacting the world.

The last item tonight was the Council Vacancy Interviews with Dan Hall and Heidi Denton.

Mayor Flint explained how this process works to the candidates and they began the interviews.

Mayor Flint asked I would like your name, address, and tell us why you are interested in the position.

Mr. Hall answered my name is Dan Hall and my address is 167 S Third. I like to volunteer. I have been involved with stock show, I care about this town. My family members all volunteered so I come by it honest. I would like to help. I will have time to commit. I don't have an agenda, I am a taxpayer, I bought my house in 1987. I think that I have knowledge to offer. I want to give back to the community.

Mrs. Denton answered my name is Heidi Denton and we have a business in La Grande, we want to give back to our community. We have worked with the stock show. I thought it would be interesting to be a part of how the city works. Also, to help it grow and move forward. My address is 1488 W Bryan.

Councilor Hawkins asked describe your understanding of the time commitment and are you prepared to meet that.

Mrs. Denton answered I know that monthly meetings are required plus time in between. I am ready and excited to do it.

Mr. Hall answered yes, I am able to do that, I just want to help out and I have the ability to do that.

Mayor Flint said we have two meetings in the beginning of the month on the second Monday. The fourth Monday of each month is a work session. All vouchers are reviewed by two Councilmen before the checks are written. We also have working committees, which will take some time. 12-16 hours per month conservatively is the time commitment. I just want to make sure you both have that in mind.

Mrs. Denton answered I believe I will be able to meet those. I bet your estimate is low.

Mr. Hall answered when the Sportsman Club was still going, I took over the books and I understand it will take time and a commitment.

Student Liaison Later asked what are the most important issues facing community.

Mr. Hall said I want to see the most benefit for the tax dollars. The streets need work, some of the water lines need to be replaced. Franchise fees and street lights that aren't working that should be. I think there is room for sub developments. We should be planning for people moving here.

Mrs. Denton answered development and growth, new and old. I would like to see business and people bring in tax dollars to the city. My fear for this town, is that we will keep shrinking and die. More revenue with growth.

Councilor Cox asked do you have a problem with filing an annual statement of economic interest.

Mrs. Denton answered I am fine with that.

Mr. Hall answered I don't have a problem with that.

Councilor Richter asked outline your experience and expectation with land use within the city.

Mr. Hall answered I would like to see Union grow. I think subdivisions would help everything. Grow slow, generate revenue.

Mrs. Denton answered I agree that there is not enough housing available. Seems like our ordinances are hard to enforce. There is a wide variety of dwellings side by side. It would be nice to see it a little cleaner. I would like to see some type of development.

Councilor McMillan asked if they would be willing to serve in other ways than just Council.

Mrs. Denton answered I would be interested to serve on other committees. I just want to give back to the city. I think it is important to hear what the people want to talk about.

Mr. Hall answered I want to help. I love this town, just make it the best we can. I would like to encourage volunteering. I would like to light a fire and keep it going. I would like to serve on other committees.

Councilor Hawkins asked describe the job of city councilor and the role in the government of the city.

Mr. Hall answered you are a voice for the people, be prepared to get lots of questions. Be objective, do your best, and don't let emotions get in the way.

Mrs. Denton answered I would be a voice for the community, you are an educator. People don't realize what all goes into something. I think it is important to educate the community. You bridge the gap between the people and what is going on within the city.

Student Liaison Later asked the Council will be making decisions about water, streets, and administration throughout the city can you outline your experience and expectations for these things.

Mrs. Denton answered I am not sure; I know there are maintenance issues with everything. I know there is a cost to everything.

Mr. Hall answered I worked for the city and I think we have a nice park; I love it but it needs work. I am very knowledgeable in the water and waste water.

Councilor Cox asked what is Council's role in land use decisions?

Mr. Hall answered I am not an expert on that.

Mrs. Denton answered my knowledge is limited on that as well. I assume that a Councilor is on the Commission.

Mayor Flint said we have a planning commission and they hear the applications. We become involved in the appeals process.

CA Wiggins stated Council is also involved in adding roads and streets, any variances into right of way must go through Council. Zoning issues go through Council. They are the final decision at the local level.

Mayor Flint said at our next Council meeting we will vote. There may be follow up questions at the next business meeting. Council discussed the process of choosing a new Councilor with the candidates.

This meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

Approved: _____
Mayor, Leonard Flint

Attest: _____
City Administrator/Recorder, Doug Wiggins