



MINUTES

SOAP LAKE CITY SPECIAL MEETING

Soap Lake Community Center/Senior Center
121 2nd Ave SE, Soap Lake, WA 98851

Tuesday, April 9, 2024 at 5:30 pm

Meeting called to order at 5:30 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
2. ROLL CALL

In attendance: Mayor DuPuy; Council Members: Bryson, Carlson, Carson, Gorman, Sharp, Taylor and Woodhouse (via phone); Police Chief Cox, City Attorney Sears and Administrative Assistant Siebert

3. UTILITY COMMITTEE PRESENTATION & PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD- Councilmember Carlson reviewed the presentation presented at the last Council Meeting and then opened a public comment time.
 - Thomas Page, 636 Aster St S- cited RCW 42.30 and questioned the committee's meetings being open to the public. Later, City Attorney Sears clarified that this committee is not required to have meetings open to the public.

- Michelle Agliano, 37 Hemlock St N- she stated that as a former mayor, she was not surprised by the need to raise utility rates. There was no rate change for 2023. She agreed that the debt needs to be cleared so that the City can remain eligible for future grants and loans.
- Mark Novik, property owner and builder- concerned about the impact on those living on a fixed income. He would like to see the rates not be permanent and believes the City is also receiving revenue from increases on utility hook-up fees.
- Eileen Beckwith, 33 Dogwood St N- she has reviewed the state auditor reports and recommendations for the City. She thanked the committee for making their recommendation. She asked everyone what happens if the rates do not increase? Where does the City get the funds to balance the water/sewer fund and maintain the services?
- Raymond Gravelle, 119 Fir St N- also as a former mayor, he appreciates the committee's time because he recognizes the complexity of this and he thanked them for their effort. He would have liked the City to have hired professional services to give the City a comprehensive plan for revenue options besides just raising rates. He pointed out government grants and loans that the City has used in the past such as Public Works Trust Fund and CERB Grants. He would like to see more transparency in future council decisions and plans defined for future infrastructure upgrades. He is in favor of the resolutions, but would like to see the increases done over the next two years.
- Mrs. Sharp, 625 2nd Pl SE- she expressed her concern that residents living in Soap Lake now are paying for increased utility rates that should have happened over time in the

past. Having to increase rates substantially now to bring the City out of the “red” seems unfair to new residents of Soap Lake. She appreciates the committee’s time and effort to bring this recommendation forward, but thinks that it is too aggressive.

4. MOTIONS, RESOLUTIONS, ORDINANCES:

- a. Motion to remove from the Table: Resolutions 1012, 1013 and Ordinance 1343- **M/Gorman, S/Carlson**; to remove Resolutions 1012 and 1013 and Ordinance 1343 from the table. Councilmembers Sharp and Carson voted “Nay”.

Motion passed.

- b. Resolution 2024-1012: A Resolution of the City of Soap Lake Adopting a Schedule of Rates and Fees for Water Service- **M/Gorman, S/Taylor**; move to adopt resolution 2024-1012, a resolution of the City of Soap Lake adopting a schedule of rates and fees for water service. Councilmember Sharp thanked the committee for their hard work. He would have liked more information put out to the public to explain the increases. Councilmember Gorman said that the committee’s focus was for a recommendation. She would like to see services implemented to assist residence who may need help making future utility payments.

Councilmember Carson agreed that increases are needed but would have liked to see more transparency from the committee and a two-step process for the increases. She is hoping that the City will set up grace periods and payment plan options to help residents with increased costs.

Councilmember Taylor referenced the state audit reports and how important it is for the City to be in compliance with the audit findings. Councilmember Bryson asked City Attorney Sears if he had any input. He stated that the Council was able to take action on the resolutions and ordinance that were on the agenda as recommendations

from the committee. He also commented on the committee's requirements concerning being open to the public for meetings. Councilmember Carlson agrees that the committee could have provided more information to the public explaining their decision process. Councilmember Woodhouse believes that these recommendations were not taken lightly by the committee members. She would also like to see grace periods, options to donate funds to help those who made need it and payment plan options offered by the City. Councilmember Gorman explained that the committee members all had their own opinions and were able to come together for this proposal which was made unanimously. Councilmember Sharp would like to review the data used to come to the recommendations.

Councilmember Sharp voted "Nay". **Motion passed.**

- c. Resolution 2024-1013: A Resolution of the City of Soap Lake Adopting a Schedule of Rates and Fees for Sewer Service- M/Taylor, S/Gorman; move to adopt resolution 2024-1013 a resolution of the City of Soap Lake adopting a schedule of rates and fees for sewer service. Councilmember Sharp would like to see the increases done over two years. Councilmember Bryson said that the sewer system needs upgrades. Councilmember Sharp voted "Nay". **Motion passed.**
- d. Ordinance No. 2024-1343: An Ordinance Amending the City of Soap Lake Municipal Code Section 3.44.030 Titled "Occupations Subject to Tax – Amount"- M/Taylor, S/Gorman; move to adopt ordinance 2024-1343, an ordinance amending the City of Soap Lake Municipal Code section 3.44.030 titled "Occupations subject to tax-amount". Councilmember Carlson explained that the current percentages going to the general fund from the water fund is 35% and the sewer fund is 30%. A recommendation from

Gray & Osborn in 2022 was to lower these amounts to allow for more revenue to stay in the water and sewer funds for expenditures and future maintenance. These percentages may need to be adjusted again in the future. The recommendation made in this ordinance is for the water and sewer percentages to be lowered by 2.5%. Councilmember Taylor explained that the City recognizes it's need to "tighten it's belt" as the City is asking residents to pay higher rates. Mayor DuPuy concluded discussion by thanking everyone for coming to the meeting. He encouraged residents to submit their suggestions on the City's website. Councilmember Sharp voted "Nay". **Motion passed.**

5. NEXT ORDINANCE #1344; NEXT RESOLUTION #1014

6. ADJOURNMENT

M/Sharp, S/Carson; to adjourned at 6:50 PM. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Allen DuPuy, Mayor

Jody Siebert, Admin. Assistant