

**CITY OF RUSTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, February 1, 2022

The City Council of the City of Ruston met on this date via Virtual Teleconference

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At 7:00PM Mayor Hopkins called the regular Council Meeting to order. Councilmembers present were Councilmember Hedrick, Councilmember Kristovich, Councilmember Huson, and Councilmember Jensen. Councilmember Syler was excused. Following the flag salute, Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the agenda, with a second from Councilmember Huson, passed 4-0.

MINUTES

Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the minutes for the Regular Council meeting of January 18, 2022, with a second from Councilmember Huson, passed 4-0.

STAFF REPORT – Nothing at this time.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS – Nothing at this time.

BUSINESS – Nothing at this time.

CLAIMS/PAYROLL – Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Claims of February 1, 2022 and Payroll of January 20, 2022, with a second from Councilmember Huson, passed 4-0.

MAYOR'S TIME – Mayor Hopkins noted that Councilmember Jensen was researching the snow policy initiative and exploring several options the City may have. The City reached out to the city's landscape service who is based in Thurston County. They did not offer snow or ice removal. Mayor Hopkins planned to contact Curtis Kingsolver, with City of Tacoma, to ask if they could add 51st Street into their snow plan, as it was in their plan years ago. Another option would be to reach out to Metro Parks. Metro Parks has a spray tank that they use for brine application prior to a snow event. The City would also look at adding an extra person, such as Steve Taylor, to provide support to Public Works in the event of snow. This would enable the city to operate existing equipment which requires two people. Mayor Hopkins was happy to report that a suspected arsonist was in custody and thanked Ruston Police and Ruston Fire for all their work, their added patrols and all their efforts related to the fires within the City of Ruston. Mayor Hopkins was preparing a draft letter to EPA, objecting the remedial proposal EPA has granted to Point Ruston. Ruston is opposed to the building of a parking lot, on Lot 15, where the mound of dirt next to the Silver Cloud, is being moved.

This was a violation of the Master Development Plan. The city will emphasize that EPA should not knowingly allow the developer to violate Ruston zoning and planning codes. Mayor Hopkins planned to send the letter out to Council for their comments before sending on to EPA.

Councilmember Hedrick – It has been a long week in the City of Ruston, and it was good to see an arrest had been made. Councilmember questioned whether there were more arrests to come. Chief Bautista responded there were no accomplices involved. The suspect is being held on a 3MM bond and was responsible for thirteen fires in total. The Ruston Police Department has a Twitter feed which provides updates. The suspect was loosely associated with someone the Police Department was familiar with. This person lived in Ruston and has since moved away. He had created problems for the city and had made some claims related to building codes. The police department was familiar with the vehicle he drives and were watching closely for him. Councilmember thanked Ruston Police and Fire, Tacoma Police Department and the Pierce County Sheriff's Office. It was a frightening week for Ruston citizens and appreciated everyone supporting the Sharkey family and the investigation.

Councilmember Kristovich – This has been a difficult time and Councilmember Kristovich was proud to see how the community, as neighbors, gathered together in support of the Ruston Police and Fire Departments working together along with the City of Tacoma.

Councilmember Syler – Excused.

Councilmember Huson – Joined after listening to Councilmember Jensen's comments below, Councilmember Huson stated there were only two Councilmembers who are currently on Council, that were party to major discussions related the Ruston Fire Department and the building of the Commencement. Councilmember Huson noted that now was a good time to discuss the Fire Department, a potential levy, the developers mitigation responsibilities the future of our Fire Department and what will be best for the City and its citizens. Councilmember Huson would be happy to be part of the discussion by bringing historical relevance.

Councilmember Jensen – Thanked Mayor Hopkins for staying on top of the snow policy and his discussions with city staff. Councilmember Jensen thanked the Ruston Police and Fire Departments for their extra efforts in response to the arson and their presence in town was comforting. Councilmember Jensen recognized that social media puts out a lot of misinformation and she appreciated that Mayor Hopkins increased communication by presenting the facts and encouraged this going forward. With the Ruston Police Twitter feed in place and the Mayor's efforts in establishing an email system in support of making statements was and will be helpful in emergencies. Councilmember Jensen noted there were some lessons learned from the house fire that took place down the street from her home. One take away was access.

The City recently built bulb out sidewalks off of Pearl Street into Highland Street for beautification and for slowing down traffic. The bulb outs prevented a Tacoma fire truck from getting to the house which took five extra precious minutes. This was a traffic impediment which hindered a faster response and was the observation from neighbors that were on scene the night of the fire. The Ruston Fire Department is awesome. They are all volunteers which can take some time to get on scene. The budget for the Fire Department is tiny and Councilmember Jensen asked that, as we move into the next budget season, we look to what the Fire Department may need in better equipment, as well, to be able to get on scene more rapidly. We need to ask the question, if citizens want more, how we get it for them and how much it would cost. Mayor Hopkins responded addressing the bollards. Their purpose is for public safety and are not a deterrent for fire trucks. In an emergency fire trucks will knock them over by bumping them. The reason why the fire truck did not come down the road, and had to turn around, was because the Ruston fire engine was first on scene and had the road blocked. Mayor Hopkins was on scene and debriefed with the Fire Department. The bollards would not prevent a fire truck from making a turn. Fire trucks will take out fences, cars and whatever they need to do to get to an emergency. Mayor Hopkins values public safety immensely and the bollards provide pedestrian safety. As a Council the City consider a levy in funding the Fire Department. The City will also need to evaluate the mitigation that is owed to the City for public safety. One component of the mitigation was for improved Fire and Police Department resources. Mitigation would bring the need for a fire station within the Point Ruston development or within the City of Ruston. Whether it is a Ruston or Tacoma Fire Department will be dependent on economics. Mitigation was arranged with the developer and one of the components was public safety.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 7:33PM Councilmember Hedrick moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Huson, passed 4-0.

Mayor Bruce Hopkins

ATTEST:

Judy Grams