

**CITY OF RUSTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

The City Council of the City of Ruston met on this date via In Person

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At 7:02PM 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 Kristovich, passed 4-0.

MINUTES - Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the minutes for the Regular Council meeting of February 7, 2023 , with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

STAFF REPORT –

Ruston Police – Chief Bautista – See attached.

Ruston Fire – Chief Allen – See attached.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS – Nothing at this time.

BUSINESS –

ORD 1566 – Update Electric Rates (1st Reading) – The City of Ruston is entitled to operate its own electrical utility to sell power to its resident and to set the rates for such electrical utility. The City is experiencing higher costs to operate the electric utility based on the rates charged by its electricity provider (City of Tacoma). The City of Ruston last increased rates in 2019 (effective 2020). Since that time Tacoma has increased its rates by 3.5 percent in 2023 and another 3.9 percent for 2024 which Ruston is passing along to its customers. An increase is proposed for both fixed rates in the amount of 9 percent to account for inflation since the last update. These fixed fees help pay for infrastructure and to replenish depleted reserves. The kWh rates (consumption rates) are being increased for 2023 in the amount of 3.5% and by 3.9% for 2024 to keep up with the rate increases imposed by Tacoma. The first step of this rate increase is proposed to take effect on March 21, 2023 with the second step taking effect on March 21, 2024.

Consumption Charges

Customer Class	Current kWh	Effective 3/21/2023	Effective 3/21/2024
Regular Rates (kWh)	\$0.1076	\$0.1114	\$0.1157
Low Income/Disabled	\$0.0768	\$0.0795	\$0.0826

Fixed Charges

Customer Class	Current Minimum Charge	Effective 3/21/2023
Regular Rates	\$22.25	\$24.25
Low Income/Disabled	\$18.11	\$19.74

This increase will ensure that the City recovers the increased cost of purchasing electrical power from Tacoma Power as well as recovering the costs of operating this utility system. The new rates will help ensure that the City’s electrical utility will continue to be fiscally sound and have the resources needed to replace and refurbish the capital infrastructure and maintain high quality operations. Mayor Hopkins provided an overview of Ordinance 1566. Councilmember Jensen read through Ordinance 1566 and found it required changes to the information presented. Mayor Hopkins noted these changes would get corrected. The City Council will hold a Public Hearing on this Ordinance during Second Reading on March 7, 2023.

ORD 1567 – Update Sewer Rates (1st Reading) – Under State law, the City is authorized to provide sanitary sewer services to properties within the City. As a sanitary sewer utility provider, the City may establish charges for sanitary sewer service. The City of Tacoma accepts the flow from Ruston sanitary sewers for the purpose of sewage treatment. The City of Ruston pays Tacoma for this service. The last time the City of Ruston changed its rates was in March of 2021. Since that time, the City of Tacoma has instituted several sewer rate increases. This ordinance does not change the fixed rate for Ruston customers, which remain unchanged since 2017, but it does bring the flow charges equal to what Tacoma charges its customers for flow charges for both 2023 and 2024. As is the City’s practice for utilities, rate increases are passed through to its rate-payers to ensure continued financial viability of the sanitary sewer utility. The rate increases are outlined below, including a look back at 2021 rates.

Rate Type	2022	Increase	2023	Increase	2024
Fixed Rate - RES	\$ 67.67	\$ -0-	\$67.67	\$-0-	\$67.67
Flow Charge - RES	\$ 5.23	\$0.42	\$5.65	\$0.40	\$6.05
Fixed Rate - COM - Categorized	\$ 55.60	\$ -0-	\$ 55.60	\$-0-	\$55.60
Flow Charge - COM by Category					
1	\$ 7.46	\$0.38	\$7.84	\$0.63	\$8.47
2	\$ 7.76	\$0.70	\$8.46	\$0.68	\$9.14
3	\$ 9.77	\$0.88	\$10.65	\$0.86	\$11.51
4	\$ 11.47	\$1.04	\$12.51	\$1.01	\$13.52
5	\$ 11.65	\$1.05	\$12.70	\$1.02	\$13.72

6	\$ 13.35	\$1.21	\$14.56	\$1.17	\$15.73
7	\$ 15.09	\$1.36	\$16.45	\$1.32	\$17.77
8	\$ 15.61	\$1.41	\$17.02	\$1.37	\$18.39
Fixed Rate - COM - Not Categorized	\$ 66.96	\$-0-	\$66.96	\$-0-	\$66.96
Flow Charge - COM - Not Categorized	\$ 5.23	\$0.42	\$5.65	\$0.40	\$6.05

By increasing the sanitary sewer flow rates to be the same as Tacoma charges its sanitary sewer customers for flow for 2023 and 2024, the City will ensure that its sanitary sewer utility is self-sustaining and that these increased costs are born by the ratepayers rather than the general public. Mayor Hopkins provided an overview of Ordinance 1567. Councilmember Hedrick asked how the City of Tacoma communicates their rate increases so that the City of Ruston could better stay in pace with their changes. Mayor Hopkins has communicated with a City of Tacoma liaison. They suggested we reach out to Tacoma every two years for any increases that could occur to sewer flow rates. Councilmember Jensen asked if the increase was tied to City of Tacoma why is Ruston higher? Mayor Hopkins noted that Ruston has a completely new sewer system, that we continue to paydown against the bond, that our fixed rate remains the same, encouraged Council to look at other municipalities who are also tied to the City of Tacoma for their rates which are considerably higher, and the goal is to retire the surcharge at some point in the future. The City Council will hold a Public Hearing on this Ordinance during Second Reading on March 7, 2023.

PAYROLL – Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Payroll for February 20, 2023, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

MAYOR’S TIME – Mayor Hopkins suggested that the City Council reduce council meetings from two times a month to one. There are other municipalities that hold one council meeting a month. Councilmember Huson agreed that going to one council meeting a month was a great idea, keeping the option of a second for special meetings and during the months of budget review. Councilmember Jensen was not a proponent of reducing to one meeting a month. Even though there may not be business items on an agenda, council meetings provide opportunity for discussions that may not be allowed outside of council. Mayor Hopkins stated there would be additional discussion on this proposal at the next council meeting. Mayor Hopkins shared the City has seen heightened interest in the office space we have available in the Ruston School building. The City is in the process of signing one new tenant this month and have a Letter of Intent from another and hoped to see the building completely occupied by the end of the year. One of the main selling points the new tenants cite is - public safety. The City received a commitment from the contractor working on the Baltimore Street project that the project would resume on March 6th. The contractor and Point Ruston would be entering mediation on March 3rd to resolve their dispute; however, the City has secured the contractor’s commitment that they would be onsite to complete our work regardless of the outcome of the mediation. Mayor Hopkins appreciated everyone’s patience as the City works through the issues in completing the project. Mayor Hopkins thanked Ruston Police Chief Bautista for staffing a great group of officers and providing residents 24/7 coverage.

This coverage was monumental since the increase in criminal activity has become a problem for every municipality and having a fully staffed professional police department has proven to be an effective deterrent. The commitment our officers have in serving the City is unsurpassed and is appreciated. Mayor Hopkins recognized Ruston Fire Chief Allen for all of his hard work and commitment transitioning the Ruston Fire Department from the old firehouse to the new firehouse. Mayor Hopkins thanked the Council for their willingness to support Ruston's public safety departments and providing them with the resources they so desperately need.

Councilmember Hedrick – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Kristovich – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Syler – Was excused.

Councilmember Huson – Apologized for being late.

Councilmember Jensen – Noted the Ruston Council Retreat was on track and shared there was a scheduling conflict in holding the Council Retreat on May 2, 2023. Councilmember Jensen suggested May 16 or June 6, 2023, as alternate dates. Mayor Hopkins asked the City Clerk to reach out to all Councilmembers and confirm a mutual date that could work for everyone.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 7:36PM Councilmember Hedrick moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

ATTEST:

Mayor Bruce Hopkins

Judy Grams



**Chief's Report
Ruston Police Department
Tuesday, February 21, 2023**

In the previous 28 days, the Department logged 229 calls for service, 106 of which were traffic stops. As we approach Spring and the anticipated spike in SOAR violations, the Department is preparing for several months of high-volume traffic stops by the officers.

The 24-hour coverage in Ruston will begin on April 1st. I have asked Lieutenant Ashcraft and Sergeant Grubb to present a plan for them to schedule some of their shifts to provide supervision to the swing and night shift officers. The start times for the three shifts will be 5am, 3pm, and 7pm.

Officer Jason Vela graduated from the Basic Law Enforcement Academy in Burien a few weeks ago. He will undergo one month of field training before taking his assigned graveyard shift.

Presented by Nestor Bautista

Ruston Fire Department Monthly Review for January 2023

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

Presented by Chief Bruce Allen

Total Incidents (YTD) 10, January 10 (3 Fire/Service, 7 Medical Aid)

Volunteer Hours: January 974 Hours, YTD 974 Hours

Membership Roster (20 out of 25): (16 Members, 4 Officers)

State of the Business

- We did our first patient transport.
- We will need to replace our stretcher now that we are transporting.
- Olympic Ambulance transported an ALS patient for us.
- All fire tools are fully operational.