

**CITY OF RUSTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At 7:02PM Mayor Hopkins called the regular Council Meeting to order. Councilmembers present were Councilmember Kristovich, Councilmember Syler, Councilmember Huson and Councilmember Jensen. Councilmember Hedrick was excused. Following the flag salute, Councilmember Kristovich moved to approve the agenda, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

MINUTES - Councilmember Kristovich moved to approve the minutes for the Regular Council meeting of February 21, 2023 , with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

STAFF REPORT – Nothing at this time.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS –

Fred Byzinker – Thanked Mayor Hopkins and Councilmembers for building a great Police and Fire Department. Mr. Byzinker learned recently that City of Tacoma lowered their speed limits and was curious if Ruston would consider lowering its speed limits. Mayor Hopkins recommended that Mr. Byzinker discuss his inquiry with Ruston Police Chief Nestor Bautista.

Jim Jackson – Was unclear what the noise concerns were and why customers could not use outdoor patio seating, at his new business, North End on Pearl, past 10PM. Mr. Jackson noted that his business was commercially zoned and when he started this project three years ago noise concerns were not brought to his attention. Mr. Jackson would like outdoor dining hours extended to midnight. Mayor Hopkins shared that several months ago an ordinance, to extend hours for outdoor seating, went before Council but did not pass because there was no support from the businesses. Mr. Jackson said he would work with Coles and Macaluso’s and bring this initiative back to City Council for consideration.

BUSINESS –

Chad Greif – Springbrook – Budget Presentation - Ruston City Finance Director, Chad Greif, provided a step-by-step overview of required budget processes and procedures for the City of Ruston, under RCW Chapter 35A.33. Mr. Greif shared a link to the MRSC (Municipal Research and Services Center of Washington) website as a resource; <https://mrsc.org/explore-topics/finance/budgets/city-budget-procedures>. Mr. Greif’s presentation would prepare City Councilmembers, and any interested residents, when holding future discussions related to vision and goals for the City at a Council Retreat and Workshop.

ORD 1566 – Public Hearing - Update Electric Rates – Councilmember Kristovich moved to open Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0. There was no public comment. Councilmember Kristovich moved to close Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

ORD 1566 – Update Electric Rates (2nd Reading) – The City of Ruston is entitled to operate its own electrical utility to sell power to its residents 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 July of 2022 by adoption of Ordinance No. 1558 (effective 8/1/22). Since that time Tacoma adopted increases in its rates by 3.5 percent to be effective in 2023 and another 3.9 percent to be effective in 2024 which Ruston is passing along to its customers by adoption of this Ordinance. An increase is proposed for 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. Councilmember Kristovich moved to approve Ordinance 1566, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

ORD 1567 – Public Hearing - Update Sewer Rates – Councilmember Kristovich moved to open Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0. There was no public comment. Councilmember Kristovich moved to close Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

ORD 1567 – Update Sewer Rates (2nd 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 January of 2022 (via an ordinance adopted in March of 2021). Since that time, the City of Tacoma has instituted sewer rate increases. Ordinance No. 1567 does not change the fixed rate for Ruston customers, which has remained 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 ratepayers 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	\$ 67.67	\$-0-	\$67.67	\$-0-	\$67.67
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. Councilmember Kristovich moved to approve Ordinance 1567, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

PAYROLL – Councilmember Kristovich moved to approve Claims for March 7, 2023 and Payroll for March 5, 2023, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

MAYOR’S TIME – Mayor Hopkins reported that the Baltimore Street project had started up again and the contractor was pouring curbs. Also the contractor was unable to reach an agreement with the Point Ruston developer. Mayor Hopkins had an opportunity to attend a Police Department staff meeting and met with an impressive group of officers. Mayor Hopkins learned the City of Tacoma reported that crime was down. One reason for this was they were not classifying drive by shootings as attempted murder but instead were reporting it as vandalism.

Councilmember Hedrick – Was excused.

Councilmember Kristovich – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Syler – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Huson – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Jensen – Nothing at this time.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 8:31PM Councilmember Kristovich moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Syler, passed 4-0.

ATTEST:

Mayor Bruce Hopkins

Judy Grams