

**CITY OF RUSTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

At 7:01PM Mayor Hopkins called the regular Council Meeting to order. Councilmembers present were Councilmember Hedrick, Councilmember Kristovich, Councilmember Syler and Councilmember Huson. Councilmember Jensen 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 October 3, 2023, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

STAFF REPORT –

Ruston Police Officer Vela – See attached.

Ruston Fire Chief Allen – See attached.

GENERAL PUBLIC COMMENTS – Nothing at this time.

BUSINESS –

ORD 1573 – Public Hearing 2023 Property Tax Levy - Councilmember Hedrick moved to open Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0. Councilmember Hedrick provided an overview of the 2023 Property Tax Levy. Ruston resident, Jessica Menser, presented a public comment, asking what the total household tax would be. Mayor Hopkins referred Ms. Menser to the Pierce County Assessor’s website to look up her property address, where she could find a breakdown of her taxes. Councilmember Hedrick moved to close the Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

ORD 1573 – 2024 Property Tax Levy (1st reading) – As part of the budget process, Ruston considers the budget and the revenue sources for City operations and capital expenses. As part of that process, the City is required to hold a public hearing on this topic. The public hearing on revenue sources was scheduled to coincide with the First Reading of Ordinance No. 1573 on October 17, 2023. Ruston is required to adopt its property tax levy in November of each year by ordinance and transmit a certified copy of the ordinance to Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer and to the Pierce County Council no later than November 30th. A Levy Certification must also be transmitted with the Ordinance. Adoption of this Ordinance will be scheduled on the agenda during the meeting of November 7, 2023. This levy ordinance increases the property taxes levied by Ruston by the maximum amount allowed by law (one percent plus new construction, etc.). The maximum amount allowed by law is \$635,591.40.

This would be a 2.1321 percent increase from 2023, or a \$12,840.36 increase. The assessed value of new construction in the current year would be \$1,878,023 which generates \$2,565.73 in property taxes for Ruston. Councilmember Hedrick would be supporting the 2024 Property Tax Levy. Councilmember Hedrick noted one of his pet peeves was that there is only one government in the State of Washington that did not have to take this vote. Every Fire District, Mosquito District, Junior District, City and Municipality, in the county, has to take this vote, except the State Legislature, they automatically take it. Councilmember Syler assured the public that the Pierce County Assessor's website was an excellent resource, providing good information, when searching their property address.

ORD 1575 – Public Hearing Preliminary 2024 Budget – Councilmember Hedrick moved to open Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0. Mayor Hopkins opened Ordinance 1575 for public comment. Jessica Menser noted that the Ruston sign, when entering the City, looks a little sad and could use some attention. The speed limit sign, across from Coles, felt like it was on the wrong side of the road, so sign with speed camera should be placed on the right side of the road. Ms. Menser had questions about speed cameras and Mayor Hopkins recommended Ms. Menser reach out to the City Police and Public Works so they can include it in their budgets. Councilmember Hedrick moved to close the Public Hearing, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0. In accordance with State law, the Mayor of the City of Ruston will complete and place on file with the City Clerk-Treasurer a proposed preliminary budget and estimate of the amount of monies required to meet the public expenses, interest, reserve funds, and expense of government of the city of Ruston for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2024. The Council is required to adopt its budget ordinance prior to January 1, 2024. On October 17, 2023 the Council will hold a preliminary public hearing to hear from the public about their budget priorities. The final public hearing on the budget will be held on November 21, 2023. The final public hearing must take place prior to budget adoption. The City is required to pass the budget before the end of this calendar year.

The City Council Budget consideration schedule for Fiscal Year 2024 is as follows:

Mayor's Budget Message to Council:	October 3, 2023
Council discussion of revenue sources:	October 17, 2023
Public Hearing on Revenue Sources	October 17, 2023
Public Hearing on Preliminary Budget	October 17, 2023
Adoption of Tax Levy Ordinance No. 1561	November 7, 2023
Public Hearing on Proposed Budget	November 21, 2023
Budget Discussion #1:	October 17, 2023
Budget Discussion #2:	November 7, 2023
Budget Discussion #3:	November 21, 2023
Budget Discussion #4:	December 5, 2023
Adoption of Final Annual Budget for 2023	December 5 or 19, 2023

Prior to budget adoption, the City Clerk will have fully complied with state law by publishing notice of the availability of the budget for public review and publishing notice of the required public hearings on the City's proposed tax levy and budget, including a preliminary and final budget hearing. The 2024 Budget Ordinance will establish the appropriations necessary to authorize expenditures for each of the City's funds. This information will be detailed in Ordinance #1575.

RES 777 – SCJ Alliance – First Amendment - Ruston entered into a Professional Services Agreement with SCJ Alliance on December 21, 2021 for on-call engineering services which was authorized by the City Council via Resolution No. 738. The Scope of Work for that Agreement was updated and expanded via Resolution No. 747 following the award of TIB funds to the City for the Park Avenue – End of Road to Bennett Street Improvement Project (SEP 22-00039) (hereinafter “Project”). The budget for the Project was set at \$73,674.00, however, due to unforeseen issues with stormwater system conflicts, additional work related to the street lighting design and undergrounding of existing electrical facilities, the current contract maximum is insufficient to complete the work. In order to complete the Project work, the new project maximum should be set at \$110,542.48. Resolution No. 777 authorizes the amendment of the Agreement to increase the project maximum to be set at \$110,542.48 to enable completion of the work. By entering into this Agreement, the City will increase the engineering costs for this project by \$36,868.48. The City has adequate funds in the budget to cover this increase. Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Resolution 777, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

RES 778 – Solid Waste Temporary Rate Increase Adjustment – Murrey’s Disposal – The City has contracted with Murrey’s Disposal (“Murrey’s”) for solid waste services in Ruston since mid-2020. The current service contract was approved by Resolution No. 711. Section 9(d) of the Agreement allows Murrey’s to request a temporary increase in rates due to unforeseen costs. It provides:

d) Rate Increases/Unforeseen Costs. Contractor may apply to the City for temporary rate adjustments to reflect unforeseen costs arising during the term of this Agreement including without limitation, fuel, tax charges, governmental fees and surcharges, approval for which adjustments shall not be unreasonably withheld by the City. Such temporary rate adjustment shall be on granted an annual basis only, provided, however, when such increase is approved, the Contractor shall provide quarterly updates on these "unforeseen costs" and the temporary rate increase will expire after one year, unless the Contractor provides adequate information for extending such temporary increase.

Since the Agreement was executed, the State Legislature has adopted the Washington Climate Commitment Act which adds a carbon fee on all fuel purchases. This new government fee was not anticipated at the time of the Agreement. Allowing this additional rate increase will cost residential customers an additional \$0.19/month and commercial customers a range of \$0.28 to \$2.84 per month depending on the level of service.

In accordance with Section 9(d) of the Agreement, Murrey's will be required to provide the City with quarterly updates on the impacts of the Washington Climate Commitment Act on customers' bills. This increase will expire automatically in one year. However, if Murrey's desires to request a renewal and/or modification of this temporary rate adjustment, it may apply to the City for such renewal 90 days before expiration of this temporary rate increase.

This temporary increase will result in modest increases to customers' bills in the following amounts:

Service Level	Monthly Carbon Fee
Residential – All cart sizes and service levels	\$0.19
Commercial – Cart service	\$0.57
Commercial – Container 1X week service	\$0.57
Commercial – Container 2X week service	\$1.14
Commercial – Container 3X week service	\$1.70
Commercial – Container 4X week service	\$2.27
Commercial – Container 5X week service	\$2.84

Steve Hopkins, Murrey's Disposal, attended to answer questions. Councilmember Hedrick asked if Murrey's Disposal has asked other cities to take a temporary increase. Mr. Hopkins noted they have included other cities for a temporary increase and that Murrey's Disposal was being transparent with what their expenses are. Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Resolution 778, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0

PAYROLL – Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Payroll for October 5, 2023, with a second from Councilmember Kristovich, passed 4-0.

MAYOR'S TIME – Mayor Hopkins and Planning Director Rob White will be attending a meeting with the Tacoma City Manager to discuss the status of the EIS and why there is a delay. City of Tacoma is the lead agency on the Point Ruston EIS. Ruston provided final comments last December and it was now coming up on a year with no formal EIS in place. If a formal EIS is not in place at the time the Point Ruston properties, held in receivership are sold, it will make it difficult for the City of Ruston to allow the developer to move ahead. The City of Tacoma needs to understand that Ruston needs development at Point Ruston to provide additional revenue for Ruston City services.

Councilmember Hedrick – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Kristovich – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Syler – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Huson – Nothing at this time.

Councilmember Jensen – Was excused.

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

Mayor Bruce Hopkins

ATTEST:

Judy Grams



**Chief's Report
Ruston Police Department
Tuesday, October 17, 2023**

Chief of Police:

The Department has re-examined its' goal of working toward law enforcement accreditation and has paused the project for now. Instead, we are determining if the effort for accreditation would be better placed toward nationwide accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). CALEA is the only nationally recognized accreditation organization, requires less internal effort since it aligns more closely with the company that our maintains our Policy Manual, and may cost less. This project would take approximately 2 years.

One of our officers is in the background for a larger law enforcement agency. This officer states he loves our community and the Department, but the higher wage and \$25,000 signing bonus will help him provide for current his family's needs.

Officer Vela investigated a financial fraud crime against the City and was able to develop the case to the point that the suspect has been charged with felony and gross-demeanor crimes. Financial crimes are generally very difficult to investigate and present to a prosecutor, but Vela was able to complete the case within 2 months of detection.

The Department is considering the applications of 3 retired law enforcement officers. The top criteria for selection is a desire to serve the Ruston community, specific skills and work experience that benefit the Department, willingness to adhere to our Core Mission. We believe retirees seek employment with the Department because of the reputation for service the officers are building in our area.

Prepared by Nestor Bautista

Ruston Fire Department Monthly Review for September 2023

Tuesday, October 17, 2023

Presented by Chief Bruce Allen

Total Incidents (YTD) 142, September 15 (2 Fire/Service, 13 Medical Aid)

Volunteer Hours: September 1318 Hours, YTD 13,012 Hours

Membership Roster (21 out of 25): (17 Members, 4 Officers)

State of the Business

- We have surpassed last year's call volume (130) as of September 9th.
- **BULLET PROF VESTS**, I'm figuring about \$3500.00 for them.
- Fire inspections are moving along nicely.
- We will need to replace our stretcher soon now that we are transporting.
- All fire tools are fully operational.