

**CITY OF RUSTON
REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

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

MINUTES - Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve the minutes for the regular Council Meeting of December 5, 2023, with a second from Councilmember Holland, 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 1577 – Ch.3.01 RMC – BLS Transport Fees (1st Reading) - The Fire Department has been increasing its medical response as a portion of its call volume significantly over the past couple of decades. Medical response now makes up a significant portion of Fire’s calls for service. When a person is ill or injured, they may be transported to a hospital. Advance Life Support (ALS) transport is performed by a contractor for Ruston. ALS is used in the types of situations where the person’s life is at serious risk such as a heart attack, stroke, or grievous bodily injury. Basic Life Support (BLS) transport is done by Ruston Fire. BLS is appropriate where the person is ill or injured, but whose life is not in danger such as a broken ankle. Many area agencies have commenced charging BLS transport fees in order to recover the costs of providing this service. Insurance, Medicare, and Medicaid will reimburse the City for these transport fees and may be billed directly if the patient provides billing information. The transport fees proposed are consistent with surrounding agencies. Chief Allen surveyed surrounding agencies and the fees range from \$850 to \$900 plus a per mile fee of between \$21 and \$22. The proposed Ruston fee is in line with these other agencies. This new chapter 3.01 RMC provides the City with the authority to impose these transport fees and to use a contractor for collections. Since there is no Fire Department title in the Code, this ordinance also creates Title 3 RMC. If passed, the City would contract with a known provider to perform the billing for BLS transports. Chief Allen presented during the December 19th Council meeting to answer Council questions. If passed, this Ordinance would allow the City to obtain reimbursement for the costs of transporting BLS patients in the amounts sent forth in the ordinance, which would be limited to the amount of insurance payment for residents who provide insurance billing information to the City. Councilmember Hedrick asked if they bill the insurance company.

Chief Allen responded that the billing company would invoice the insurance company through a billing process. Councilmember Jensen noted there was no language for financial assistance and would like to see language similar to Tacoma for those financially unable to pay. Mayor Hopkins stated the City would not get 100% cost recovery for services. Councilmember Hedrick suggested the City not* charge those that were uninsured. Mayor Hopkins asked Chief Allen if the Ruston Fire Department was fully equipped to transport, and Chief Allen confirmed that they were.

RES 785 – TIB Grant – 2024 Overlay Project 52nd to Park Avenue - Earlier this year, Ruston applied to the Washington State Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) for grant funding for the 2024 Overlay, 52nd to Park Ave Project. TIB awarded Ruston the grant funding in the amount of \$352,222.00 which covers ninety-five percent (95.00%) of the Project cost. Ruston’s match would be \$18,538.00. This Project will provide a overlay for street preservation for the following streets:

- **N. Highland Street – 52nd to Park Ave** (1,278 feet of pavement length with a width of 40 feet)
- **N. Shirley Street – 52nd to Park Ave** (1,267 of pavement lengthy with a width of 30 feet)

This project is included in Ruston’s 6-year TIP and the matching funds were included in the proposed 2024 budget. By entering into this Agreement, the City would secure 95 percent of funding for this project. The City would be required to comply with all of the technical and procedural requirements in accordance with the Agreement and may incur some costs in doing so and would be required to provide the \$18,538 in matching funds. Mayor Hopkins said this was a very impressive grant and would take the project from 52nd to Park for grind and overlay. Should the City encounter any contaminated substrate, the City would have an open dialogue with the Department of Ecology for funds to export the contaminated material. Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Resolution 785, with a second from Councilmember Holland, passed 4-0.

CLAIMS/PAYROLL – Councilmember Hedrick moved to approve Claims for December 19, 2023 and Payroll for December 20, 2023, with a second from Councilmember Holland, passed 4-0.

MAYOR’S TIME – Mayor Hopkins, Councilmember Hedrick and Councilmember Jensen met with Speaker of the House Jinkins, who presented an end of legislative session wrap up. In the discussions Speaker Jinkins wanted to hear if the City had any asks of the State. The City spoke at length about the environmental concerns that remain within the City and the need to meet the Department of Ecology’s standards. Staff have been working on a plan for dealing with the remaining environmental issues. Speaker Jinkins asked that the City submit these issues to her. Since our meeting with Speaker Jinkins, there has been good progress.

The City hoped to secure funding for reimbursement of past remediation expenses and in addition, provide funding for the testing of all the City's rights of way to ensure they meet the Department of Ecology standards. Mayor Hopkins thanked Councilmember Hedrick for his guidance on this process. Mayor Hopkins received a request from the Tacoma News Tribune to comment on the Point Ruston development and noted he would not give comment at this time. The City is in a good place currently. With Point Ruston in receivership, the City will need to determine what the expectations will be for the Farrelli's parcel and the parking garage. Mayor Hopkins would keep the Council updated on any new developments.

Councilmember Hedrick – Wanted to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilmember Holland – Thanked the Ruston Police and Fire Departments and all of the great staff for their hard work in keeping the City of Ruston safe. Councilmember Holland noted that it has been a wonderful year and shared her love for Ruston and Christmas.

Councilmember Syler – Wanted to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Councilmember Huson – Was excused.

Councilmember Jensen – Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and that it was great to be a part of this community. Councilmember Jensen thanked staff for all that they do, especially when it's cold outside.

MEETING AJOURNED – At 7:25PM Councilmember Hedrick moved to adjourn, with a second from Councilmember Holland, passed 4-0.

Mayor Bruce Hopkins

ATTEST:

Judy Grams



**Chief's Report
Ruston Police Department
Tuesday, December 19, 2023**

Chief of Police:

The Department will hire a part time officer, Kevin Jepson, next month. Kevin is a detective sergeant with the Tacoma Police Department and will be retiring at the end of this month after 34 years of service. His experience includes many years of criminal and administrative investigations, was a north end field sergeant for many years, and traveled nationwide to instruct other agencies on police records management and internal risk assessment. His duties will include management of our accreditation project, investigative and supervisory mentoring, and other tasks to make Ruston a regional law enforcement asset.

Prepared by Nestor Bautista

Ruston Fire Department Monthly Review for November 2023

Tuesday, December 19, 2023

Presented by Chief Bruce Allen

Total Incidents (YTD) 167, November 12 (2 Fire/Service, 10 Medical Aid)

Volunteer Hours: November 1296 Hours, YTD 15,719 Hours

Membership (25 out of 25): (22 Members, 3 Officers, 1 Chief)

State of the Business

- Membership is full with a few applicants in the wings.
- We just had 3 members graduate from the EMT programs.
- We have 3 getting ready to graduate from the Firefighter I program.
- Our annual Toy and Food drive was a huge success, we delivered 1179 pounds of food to Nourish and lots of toys to the Salvation Army.
- We are moving forward with billing for medical transports, in early 2024.
- All fire tools are fully operational.