

SUSANVILLE CITY COUNCIL
Special Meeting Minutes
July 5, 2018 – 6:00 p.m.

Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Stafford.

Roll call of Councilmembers present: Brian Wilson, Mayor pro tem Joseph Franco, Brian Moore, Mendy Schuster and Mayor Kevin Stafford.

Staff present: Dan Newton, Interim City Administrator; Jessica Ryan, City Attorney, Daniel Gibbs, Acting Public Works Director, Kelley Merritt, Acting Police Chief, James Moore, Fire Chief and Gwenna MacDonald, City Clerk.

1 APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Motion by Councilmember Wilson, second by Mayor pro tem Franco, to approve the agenda as submitted; motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Wilson, Franco, Moore, Schuster and Stafford.

2 PUBLIC COMMENT: No comments.

3 CLOSED SESSION: No business.

4 SCHEDULED MATTERS:

4A Consider Transactional and Use tax Ballot Measure for November 5, 2018 Election Mr. Newton explained that the City and County worked together to develop a proposed tax measure that was placed on the ballot for the June 5, 2018 election. Passage of the measure would have imposed a tax on sales transactions in the entire County. The ballot measure did not pass, and the opportunity to place a measure on the November ballot requires immediate consideration and action due to the short timeline required. Due to increasing costs and financial projections over the next several years, and the impact of the Calpers obligation, additional revenue from a sales tax increase will help the City to meet its financial obligations and continue to provide services at the current level. Members of the public have expressed support of a tax restricted to public safety use, however special taxes require a two-thirds majority vote to pass. The County may be interested in pursuing a November ballot measure, however if the City places a measure on the ballot it would require a finding that an emergency exists because the City does not have Councilmembers on the ballot for election. That declaration of an emergency must be unanimous.

Mr. Newton stated that the options for consideration are whether to place a measure on the ballot; whether it should be a special or general tax, and if it would be dedicated entirely to public safety if it were a special tax, if the City would be working jointly with the County or proceed independently, and what the percentage of the proposed tax would be. A half-cent sales tax is estimated to generate approximately \$900,000 additional revenue for the City.

Mayor pro tem Franco stated that he has been considering the matter, and he is struggling due to the lack of support that the measure received at the last election. It was defeated and even if it was a special tax in support of public safety, all indications are that it would not be successful either. He does not want to be someone who ignores the voice of his constituents, but also does not want to have to cut services.

Councilmember Moore stated that he would prefer to have a special tax placed on the ballot, and he believes that people would vote for it. There is more support for public safety, and with a general tax, the

City Council can change and in four years, have different councilmembers with different priorities. He suggested a focus on what other communities are charging for sales tax so that the voters can see that an increase in sales tax would still be comparable with what other cities charge.

Mr. Newton commented that those points were made during the public workshops held with the County, so the information was put out there before the election. Whether the revenue was for a general tax or special tax, the City would have an obligation to spend the additional revenue correctly. The Advisory Measure showed that there is support of public safety, and other areas that have placed special tax measures on the ballot are often very specific about what the money will be used for. The upcoming increases in Calpers payments are for payments of retirees, so cutting services may be inevitable.

Councilmember Wilson stated that it has been mentioned repeatedly that the special tax for public safety would have been successful, however a two-thirds vote is a very high bar to set. He gave an example of the Big Valley area that didn't even have ambulance services, and the voters still voted no. If the ballot measure could not even gain fifty percent voter support, then the chances of a two-thirds vote is probably not possible. He would not want to proceed without the County, and does not believe that the matter is an emergency.

An unknown member of the audience suggested spending the next two years educating the public and conducting outreach so that at the next election, the public will be more informed.

Dean Growdon, Lassen County Sheriff, agreed with the comments made and does not believe that the tax measure as it was written did not make things very clear for the voters. He feels an obligation to do whatever he can to let the citizens know what will be coming if the measure does not pass. It takes a long time to repair morale, and his department will be making cuts.

Councilmember Schuster stated that she believed the City and County did a good job of conducting workshops and notifying the public, but now she realizes that perhaps they did not. The public safety community needs to get involved to support the tax increase, and talk about it so that the public is informed.

Mayor Stafford stated that he believes the City owes it to the public and the departments to support them however possible, and that means moving forward with a tax measure so that the department can be adequately staffed and have the resources needed to do their jobs.

Mr. Newton explained that he has been in communication with the County, and if they choose to move forward with a November ballot measure, the City could be added with an agreed upon spending plan, which takes away the requirement for an emergency declaration for the ordinance.

Richard Egan, Lassen County CAO, explained that the Board met and has expressed the desire to keep the County's options open. The consensus was an indication that there was no reason to move forward, however Sheriff Growdon and others came forward to speak and the Board will revisit the discussion at the next meeting on July 10, 2018. A special tax means different things to different people, but three things that everyone can identify with are the Sheriff's Office, the City Police Department, and the Jail, and the addition of a measure on the November ballot will have to include a grass roots effort to support the measure from everyone involved, and his suggestion would be to keep the focus narrow and very defined as far as what the special tax would be for.

There was an extensive discussion regarding public safety, the results of the June election, and effort that needs to be dedicated for the passage of a November ballot measure.

It was the consensus of the City Council to schedule a special meeting for July 10, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss and consider information related to the November ballot measure.

4B Consider formation of Ad Hoc Committee for Police Chief and City Administrator interview panel selection: Appoint Committee Mr. Newton explained that as part of the recently adopted procedures for the recruitment and selection of City Department Heads, it is necessary to appoint two members of the City Council to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee. In addition to the two councilmembers, the City Administrator will serve on the Committee to facilitate the formation of the Community Interview Panel and the Professional Interview Panel. The City has open recruitments for the City Administrator and Police Chief positions which have closed June 21 and July 6, respectively. The Ad Hoc Committee must meet to select the interview panel participants and establish the interview questions.

It was the consensus of the City Council to appoint Councilmember Schuster and Councilmember Stafford to serve on the Ad Hoc Committee.

4C Consider entering into Memorandum of Understanding with Historical Society Memorandum of Understanding Mr. Newton explained that the Lassen Historical Society utilizes the buildings at Roop's Fort for display and storage of artifacts, and the original agreement is in need of updating. Many of the buildings are experiencing issues and are in need of repair and maintenance, and staff is requesting direction from Council regarding the development of language for an updated MOU related to the use of the buildings. There is some competing interest for the space available so hopefully those issues can be worked through as well.

Councilmember Wilson stated that the Roop's Fort Complex has been utilized for years by the Historical Society, and he requested that this item be placed on the agenda in order for the Council to address some of the issues that have been coming up regarding the condition of the buildings. He suggested having the attorney review the existing agreement and develop an MOU based upon the City's responsibility and liability for the property.

Susan Couso, Lassen Historic Society, stated that the Historic Society has been in partnership with the City for 58 years and having an MOU in place would help them to understand their responsibilities.

Motion by Councilmember Wilson, second by Mayor pro tem Franco, directing staff to work with the Lassen Historic Society to develop a Memorandum of Understanding for use of the Roop's Fort complex property; motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Wilson, Franco, Schuster, Moore and Stafford.

4D Consider implementing the payment of a Signing Bonus for new police officers Mr. Newton explained that there is currently one Police Officer vacancy in the Susanville Police Department, with the possibility of additional vacancies due to promotional opportunities that also exist within the Department. The City has had a difficult time in attracting lateral transfer police officers over the past several years, and staff is working to review the recruitment flyer and materials to focus on the City's benefit package. Police officers are in high demand with other departments across the State so it is a very competitive hiring environment. Staff has conducted research and discovered that several law enforcement agencies offer a signing bonus for lateral transfer officers. Bonuses range from \$5,000 to \$15,000 with varying payment terms, depending upon the agency.

Mr. Newton reviewed signing bonus packages offered by four other agencies, and the payment terms which varied based on the experience of the officer, duration of employment, adding that the City could consider some variation based upon the City Council's direction. He requested comments and feedback from the Council.

Councilmember Wilson asked Acting Chief Merritt if he had a preference for the payment, based upon the options given.

Acting Chief Merritt responded that he preferred a three-part pay off, based upon an initial payment, a second payment after one year of probation and a third payment after three years of service to the department.

Councilmember Wilson commented that the bonus cost could be offset by a reduction in overtime pay that the officers are receiving when the Department is understaffed.

Mayor Stafford supported the three-payment option as implemented in the City of Modesto which would retain the officer for a three-year period.

Mayor pro tem Franco supported the concept, but is concerned regarding the potential drain to the Sheriff's Department.

Sheriff Growdon discussed the Lassen County Sheriff's Police Officer Trainee program, and the challenges faced in hiring lateral officers. The County has had success in recruiting people locally who are already invested in the community and interested in staying to further their career.

There was a general discussion by the City Council regarding the various payment options, and the model in place at the City of Antioch, whereby the employee was paid a \$2,500 signing bonus, a \$2,500 payment upon successful completion of probation, and a \$5,000 payment upon completion of three years of service, was the preferred methodology.

Motion by Mayor pro tem Franco, second by Councilmember Wilson, directing staff to develop implementation of the three-payment hiring bonus as discussed; motion carried unanimously. Ayes: Franco, Wilson, Schuster, Moore and Stafford.

Motion by Mayor pro tem Franco, second by Councilmember Schuster, to adjourn the meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 7:41 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by

Kevin Stafford, Mayor

Gwenna MacDonald, City Clerk

Approved on September 5, 2018