

TOPIC OF DISCUSSION: PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

Mayor Fatcher called the meeting to order.

Councilmembers in attendance were: Fatcher, Malella, Roberson, Schimmel, Myers, McDaniel, and Karnofski.

Staff members in attendance were: City Manager Dennis Richards, Public Works Director David Sypher, Community Development Director Michael Kerins, Finance Director/City Clerk Brian Butterfield, Library Manager Cindy Donaldson, and Deputy City Clerk Carol Bradbury.

AIRPORT: Public Works Director David Sypher will be attending an airport sub-committee meeting tomorrow afternoon and would like some direction from Council. In order for the Airport Summit Committee to move forward, Councilmembers need to decide if they want to leave the airport the way it is, advance to a new level, or dispose of it. Currently, Kelso funds the majority of the airport. Councilmembers were given a Budget Worksheet for Future Staff and Locally Funded Projects and Annual Funding Options. Also handed out was a copy of an email from the facilitator, Dick Cushing, who feels the other three jurisdictions (City of Longview, Port of Longview, and Cowlitz County) need to agree that a desired future for the airport is unachievable without a change.

City Manager Richards said at a recent airport meeting he was surprised that nobody spoke about how important the airport is or stepped up to say they would be interested in taking it over. The other entities realize that Kelso has been carrying the financial load at the airport.

Community Development Director Michael Kerins said the airport has been brought up at various community meetings he has attended. The consensus he is getting from the public is that there is a need to understand the costs verses benefits.

Mayor Fatcher said the subcommittee group needs to know our preferred way to handle the airport. Does the Council want to do something else with the property? If we want to keep the airport, we need to decide how much we are willing to put in as our share of the operating costs. Mayor Fatcher asked Councilmembers to voice their opinions as to what they would like to happen at the airport. Discussion followed.

Mayor Fatcher would like to figure out some kind of joint agreement with Kelso paying a very small amount, since we have a lot of value in the land. He asked Councilmembers if they would be interested in keeping the airport if the price is reasonable, or if they want to get rid of it. Discussion followed.

It was the consensus of the Council that they would like to keep the airport going, but they are not willing to shoulder the costs. The other entities need to decide if they want to be involved in a joint management (Kelso would maintain ownership) or if they want to be done with the airport.

TRAIN DEPOT:

Public Works Director David Sypher has been in contact with our City Attorney concerning our agreement with Amtrak that expires on December 31st of this year. We are questioning whether or not we are required to renew the options for the contract. Our attorney cannot tell if we own the depot or if Burlington Northern owns it. The exhibit that describes what is leased from Burlington Northern and what is owned is the same exhibit. The concern is that something in the Burlington Northern or WSDOT agreements would block the option of cancelling Amtrak's contract. If we do not renew the lease, Burlington Northern, in connection with Amtrak, may eventually hold us responsible for making improvements to the depot at a cost of perhaps a million dollars. Also, if we don't maintain the depot, we may lose it as one of Amtrak's stops.

The situation is similar to that of the airport in that Kelso pays for this regional transportation expense; however, we are the minor user of it. We lease it, but we have agreed to maintain it fully. We continue to pay out approximately \$40,000 annually as a minimum operating expense. We should negotiate with the different players that benefit from it.

Mayor Futcher suggested this needs to be discussed at the regional transportation group meetings to discuss alternatives with Cowlitz Wahkiakum Council of Governments. Such solutions as putting CUBS at the depot might be a long-term solution.

It was the consensus of the Council to have David work with City Manager Richards and possibly Rosemary Siipola from COG. A workshop may be held at a later date.

There being no further business, Mayor Futcher adjourned the special meeting at 6:55 p.m.



MAYOR



CITY CLERK