City of Selah
Council Minutes
June 24, 2020

Special Meeting
Electronically Via Zoom
115 West Naches Avenue
Selah, WA 98942

A. Call to Order — Mayor Raymond called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

B. Roll Call

Members Present: Kevin Wickenhagen; Jacquie Matson; Clifford Peterson; Roger Bell; Christopher Lantz; Russell Carlson

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Donald Wayman, City Administrator; Rob Case, City Attorney; Rick Hayes, Police Chief; Joe Henne, Public Works Director; Andrew Potter, Human Resources Manager; Monica Lake, Executive Assistant

C. Councilmember Absence – Motion to Excuse **None**

D. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Raymond led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Raymond asked City Attorney Case if he wished to speak now.

City Attorney Case answered not at this time, adding that he believed that Executive Assistant Lake had provided her with a statement to read.

Mayor Raymond read aloud the following statement, provided verbatim from the original source:

We will now enter an Executive Session. Consistent with law, the public will be excluded from participating or watching. The general subject matters that will be addressed during this Executive Session have already been stated via the written Agenda. However, I will state them again now orally. There are two subject matters. (1) to evaluate complaints brought against a public employee. (2) to review the performance of a public employee.

Pursuant to Selah Municipal Code section 1.06.060, no councilmember or other participant in the Executive Session is permitted to disclose to non-participants what is said during the Executive Session. Specifically, the relevant sentence of such section says: "All members of the city council, mayor and city staff shall hold in confidence all discussions concerning issues in the executive session and shall not discuss them outside of executive session except upon approval of the council."

Human Resources Manager Potter inquired if the executive session would still be one hour in length.

Mayor Raymond asked Council for a show of hands of those who would like to make it one and a half hours versus one hour.

Council Member Carlson moved, and Council Member Wickenhagen seconded, to extend the Executive Session to one and a half hours. By a show of hands, approval was unanimous.

E. Executive Session

1. 60 Minute Session to evaluate complaints brought against a public employee – RCW 42.30.110 (1)(f) and review the performance of a public employee – RCW 42.30.110 (1)(g)

Council went into Executive Session at 6:05m. At 7:35pm, Council went back on the record.

Mayor Raymond asked if there was a motion to take a five-minute recess.

Council Member Peterson moved, and Council Member Wickenhagen seconded, to take a five-minute recess. By a show of hands, approval was unanimous.

Mayor Raymond stated that they would be extending the Executive Session for an additional 30 minutes after their five-minute break.

Council went back into Executive Session at 7:47pm. At 8:17pm, Council went back on the record. Mayor Raymond stated that no action was taken during the Executive Session.

Mayor Raymond said that their community was in turmoil now for many reasons. She extended an apology to a few people who had sent emails or called that she had yet to respond to, saying that there had been so much going on in the City with everyone having their own opinions on the topics. She appreciated Council's honesty that night, as these are different times for them, and they have never had to make or update policies during something like this. She remarked that she had a Selah Council code of conduct done years ago, that Executive Assistant Lake thought was done by former City Attorney Bob Noe but never finished by prior councils, and they also have policies to set up on what is expected from City employees and Council Members regarding conduct with citizens. She mentioned talking with Executive Director Henkle form the Selah Downtown Association about Anthony Blue, who does trainings. She expressed appreciation everyone's honesty that night, and asked if anyone wished to make a motion.

Council Member Wickenhagen read aloud the following statement:

To My fellow Selah Residents

As you all know, I wrote a letter to our citizens last week that has generated a great deal of angst in our community.

On reflection, and I have spent a great deal of time reflecting, I didn't stop to think that most of the Selah citizens that marched, or supported the march, probably didn't care about the politics, political affiliations or some of the underlying policies of the organization Black Lives Matter. The emails I received tell me they were marching because another black person died unnecessarily at the hands a police officer. They were marching because racism continues to occur in communities, and it needs to stop. They were marching because they want to do what Selah does best and pull together during a troublesome time. I failed to fully address those reasons, and I focused on the politics of an organization. I do not agree with the all the foundational policies of Black Lives Matters or the organization Movement 4 black lives, but I'll defend the right of these organizations to peacefully protest. There are two areas I agree with. Black lives DO matter and we need to have open dialogue on how we best go about that ending racism.

My worst nightmare as a councilmember occurred and I caused division and pain to our community. I truly love this city, it's citizens and the way they pull together during difficult times and I damaged some of that. So, as one of our citizens suggested in her letter to me, I will listen, I will ask questions and not be so quick to react, not so quick to justify a position without first listening to the people in this community and better understand how they actually feel about an event or cause.

I apologize for not considering the worthy goals of those who were supporting the march, and to those that felt I attacked their character, I am truly sorry.

Mayor Raymond thanked Council Member Wickenhagen.

Council Member Carlson agreed with the Mayor that the executive session was very important and very good, and commended Council Member Wickenhagen for his personal introspective. He didn't think anyone on the Council had a desire to deal with the repercussions they've seen, and that he personally had reviewed information and filtered out what he didn't know to be factual or real, as opposed to hearsay. He thought it important that the City finish the Code of Conduct for Council Members and staff, as they ask for a specific decorum at their own Council Meetings that should apply to each of them at Council Meeting and in public.

Council Member Carlson moved, and Council Member Peterson seconded, to finish the Code of Conduct and request a recommendation of the date when it can be done.

Council Member Carlson clarified that he desired a recommendation from the Mayor and staff as to how long to take that official vote.

Mayor Raymond responded that she would give it to City Attorney Case to review, and that it could be done by the July 14 meeting.

Council Member Carlson amended his motion to include the date of July 14th as a time frame. Roll was called: Council Member Wickenhagen – yes; Council Member Matson -yes; Council Member Vargas – yes; Council Member Peterson – yes; Council Member Bell – yes; Council Member Lantz – yes; Council Member Carlson – yes. By voice vote, approval was unanimous.

Mayor Raymond posed asked Council whether they wished to clarify or amend the City's Code with regard to graffiti or chalking on city property.

City Administrator Wayman noted that, as with all street cleaning, they don't have a policy for cleaning streets or sidewalks but simply do it when they see it or it's reported to them, as they are very aggressive with removing anything that defaces streets, sidewalks, or walls. He stated that they don't differentiate based on message or artistic virtue; if it's something that's truly destroying property then they would look to take legal measures but other than that they simply clean it up.

Mayor Raymond felt that the question from Council was chalk, as it is not specified in the City's Code.

City Administrator Wayman said that they clean it whether it's chalk or anything else.

Council Member Carlson requested clarification on that, saying that he would like the graffiti code studied and clarified because under definitions what was there is considered graffiti but another part of code eliminates chalk from that. He opined that one of the biggest issues is interpretation of the Code.

Mayor Raymond replied that they would look at the code and work with code enforcement, and come back with it at the first meeting in July.

Council Member Carlson said that as he pondered comments that have been made and listened to those comments be confirmed by the City Administrator, he was concerned and bothered that it was creating division in the city, which he as a taxpaying person doesn't appreciate. He went on to say that if was his business and he had an employee speaking out like that they would receive discipline and training, and subsequently be fired if unchanged, and that while his recommendation wasn't for the City Administrator to be asked to resign or fired, he should have training for what's appropriate. He requested that a formal reprimand be placed in his file.

Mayor Raymond responded that as they discussed earlier, they were already in talks of doing some training.

City Administrator Wayman read aloud a prepared statement, clarifying prior to reading it that they were his opinions, not those of the City of Selah. The following is a copy of said statement:

We, as Americans, have been blessed with a legacy of governance that provides protections from the depredations of evil men. Our constitution has a vision for unity that presupposed a flawed human nature. People were capable of bad behavior individually but capable of the greatest of sin when backed by the power of the will of the people. The founding vision of unity (our constitution), also presupposed an agreement on the nature of rights and liberty: No man had a right to demand anything from his neighbor. Furthermore, the founding version for unity presupposed our strongest relationships would exist outside of government – in our families, our churches and local communities.

This founding vision has now been abandoned in pursuit of something more fulfilling to burgeoning tyrants: A communitarian vision of reality in which the mob is perceived as virtuous; in which every man has the right to protect himself from the hardships of life and the cruelties of history by demanding recompence from his neighbors.

This second path toward unity requires purification. This is where my current situation stands. My observations of a local BLM protest were critical of the sloganeering and the origins and intentions of the BLM movement. I made no racist comment or racist insinuation. These comments and observations have come to the attention of the directors of false racial outrage. This has precipitated a

very coordinated DEMAND for me to be fired by left wing agitators and their acolytes, angrily emoting based upon their own flawed assumptions and poorly informed opinion. There is a loud clamor for homogeneity of thought. There has been no rational discussion of the merits of my opinion and observations. However, there has been a demand for me to bow to a set of beliefs that are illogical, devoid of reason, untrue and unconstitutional. Ideological enforcers are now conducting a coordinated campaign to destroy my reputation and eliminate me as your City Administrator.

Diversity of viewpoint cannot be tolerated by neo-Marxists. Unity of viewpoint is essential in all things great and small. To them, unity of viewpoint is a requirement for all serious change. Once the group has been purified, change will only require the snap of a finger. No more gridlock; no more conversation. The collective can be activated quickly and powerfully.

The second path is totalitarian in nature, and it is this model that certain members of this council are bending toward. Perhaps some of you believe you are representing a universally outraged community. That is simply not true. The vast majority of our residents still value a City Administrator who is willing to stand up to a group so devoid of intellect, and reason.

The great irony of this situation for those of you who might be swayed by this left-wing mob, is that you will never be able to free yourself from fealty to their required dogmas. If you fall short on parroting their version of ideological purity, the same thing will eventually happen to you.

To the residents of Selah,

As long as I remain as the City Administrator of this fine city I promise the following:

1. I will continue to provide strong and competent leadership for the staff and thoughtful advice to your elected representatives.

2. I will continue to be a responsible steward of your tax dollars and will remain mindful of the great trust you give to me to faithfully execute the city budget.

3. I will continue to be fair in all deliberations. I will not favor one group or person due to a differing viewpoint or race and religion.

4. Equal protection under the law will be strictly followed.

5. I will do everything in my power protect this city from the mayhem that we are witnessing in Seattle and Portland.

6. I will continue to support our police department through adequate funding, emphasis on training and understand the difficult and sometimes thankless work they must do every day.

7. I will always stand for our flag, honor our nation's history and remember the sacrifices of those who made our nation the greatest republic in the history of the world.

8. I will never forget or forsake the oath that I took nearly four decades ago: I swear to protect and defend the constitution against ALL enemies, foreign AND domestic…

9. I will never quit or take a knee. Even in the face of personal slander and lies.

Council Member Vargas took great offense of his characterization of people speaking out against him as left-wing agitators and a mob, saying that those she has spoken to were citizens of Selah speaking out about something that's important to them. She felt that they needed to stop the rhetoric of calling them things like left-wing agitators, as they have a right to speak without being disrespected or spoken of as he just had. She said that she didn't appreciate it or agree with it.

F. Adjournment

Council Member Matson moved, and Council Member Wickenhagen seconded, that the meeting be adjourned. By hand vote, approval was unanimous.

The meeting adjourned at 8:41pm.

Sherry Raymond, Mayor

Roger Bell, Council Member

Russell Carlson, Council Member

Jacquie Matson, Council Member

Kevin Wickenhagen, Council Member

Clifford Peterson, Council Member

Christopher Lantz, Council Member

Suzanne Vargas, Council Member

ATTEST:

Dale E. Novobielski, Clerk/Treasurer