

**Snohomish City Council Minutes
March 15, 2022**

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Redmon called the Snohomish City Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, March 15, 2022.

COUNCILMEMBERS/MAYOR PRESENT

Lea Anne Burke
David Flynn
Karen Guzak
Judith Kuleta
Felix Neals
Donna Ray
Linda Redmon, Mayor

STAFF PRESENT

Emily Guildner, City Attorney
Scott James, Finance Director
Rob Palmer, Police Chief
Rebekah Park, HR Manager
Glen Pickus, Planning Director
Wendy Poischbeg, Economic Development and
Communications Director
Brandi Whitson, City Clerk

COUNCILMEMBERS ABSENT

Tom Merrill

NOTE: Due to the COVID-19 declared federal, state and local emergency, and pursuant to Governor Inslee's Proclamations 20-05 and 20-28, the Snohomish City Council held its meeting via remote participation.

MOTION by Neals, second by Burke, to excuse Council President Merrill. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

2. **APPROVE AGENDA** contents and order.

MOTION by Guzak, second by Burke to approve the agenda as presented. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

3. **CONSENT ITEMS:**

- a. AUTHORIZE Mayor to Execute Special Event Permit Contract for the 2022 Sky Valley Motorcycle Show
- b. CONFIRM Mayor's Reappointments to the Park and Recreation Board
- c. APPROVE minutes of the March 1, 2022 workshop and regular meeting.
- d. AUTHORIZE payment of claim warrants #76453 through #76527 in the amount of \$234,253.22, and payroll claim warrants # 76445-76452, 76950-76953 in the amount of \$492,632.88, issued since the last regular meeting.

MOTION by Ray, second by Burke to PASS the Consent Items. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

4. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

John Kartak remarked on projects accomplished by Steve Schuller as City Administrator.

Morgan Davis supported fixing the gazebo, but did not support removing the trees.

5. **ACTION ITEM:** CONFIRM Mayor's Appointment of Heather Thomas as City Administrator

Mayor Redmon provided information and background behind her selection of Heather Thomas as City Administrator. She then introduced Ms. Thomas, who briefly shared her experience and qualifications. She remarked on the reasons she chose to accept the position, providing examples of some of her successes.

Council questioned, and Ms. Thomas responded, on:

- Environmental stewardship
- Approach to diversity, equity and inclusion
- Examples of implementation of cost savings
- Use of metrics to measure successes
- View of and thoughts on strengthening boards and commissions
- Disaster preparedness
- Top priorities for the City

Councilmember Guzak questioned the proposed salary relative to other cities. Mayor Redmon replied the salary was proposed in steps, starting at Step 1, and was based on averages of comparable cities compiled from AWC salary surveys.

Public Comment:

Julien LaRue, in writing, shared an editorial on the previous mayor's process in hiring staff.

John Kartak did not support replacing Steve Schuller as City Administrator.

Morgan Davis supported the appointment and suggested changing the title to Deputy Mayor.

Public Comment Closed.

Councilmember Ray shared Council President Merrill's comments on the mayor's responsibility in managing City staff, as set by the previous administration, and Council's authority to block appointments. He supported the appointment. Councilmember Ray concurred, and stated Ms. Thomas's resume spoke for itself.

MOTION by Guzak, second by Burke to CONFIRM Heather Thomas to the proposed appointment of the City Administrator position, and AUTHORIZE the Mayor to execute the Employment Contract between the City and Ms. Thomas as the City Administrator.

Councilmembers Burke, Kuleta, and Flynn all remarked on Ms. Thomas's impressive resume and looked forward to working with her. Councilmember Neals agreed, and conveyed encouraging a sense of inclusion and contributing to Snohomish's evolution.

VOTE ON MOTION: Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

6. **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

- a. Law Enforcement Annual Report

Chief Palmer presented the Snohomish Police Department's 2021 Annual Report after sharing a brief background of the law enforcement contract. He remarked seeing a return to "normal," and nothing but progress for 2022. He explained a focus to bring a sense of calm to the Department and the City, and feels they have accomplished that and want to continue to do so.

Chief Palmer shared a slideshow outlining some key points:

- City's contract with SCSO for law enforcement services was renewed in 2021.
- Currently staffed at 19. The School Resource Officer was moved to the School District and was no longer part of the City's contract.
- Staffing was adequate to balance cost effectiveness versus what was experienced in the City.
- Snohomish was unique in the County with its bar district on First Street and numerous special events.
- Additional services provided by the SCSO, such as public disclosure, evidence, animal control, K9, major crimes, and training.
- Addressing changes directed by recent legislation.
- Community outreach and connection, within pandemic restrictions.
- Number of calls related to behavior health crises and social worker.

Chief Palmer highlighted the Department's 35% reduction in declined cases by the Prosecutor's Office, citing attention to detail and adequate staffing to allow focus on finishing work and completing thorough investigations.

Councilmember Ray inquired on Department representation on the Public Safety Commission, and efforts to expand Neighborhood Watch. Chief Palmer remarked on discussing staffing with the Mayor, and a willingness to assist with Neighborhood Watch programs, but not manage them.

Councilmember Burke asked about officer training and certifications. Chief Palmer described new and on-going trainings, including those mandated by I-940, such as de-escalation, crisis intervention, first aid, firearm refresher courses, defensive tactics, and compliance holds.

Councilmember Guzak questioned new laws regarding weapons at mass gatherings. Chief Palmer replied new legislation would prohibit or restrict open carry at government functions, and he could gather and provide more information.

Public Comment:

Alice Armstrong commented on vandalism in City parks.

Morgan Davis suggested improvements to the Snohomish Police Department building.

Tabitha Baty questioned increased assaults.

M. Richardson commented on the Crisis Assistance Helping Out On The Streets (CAHOOTS) model used in Oregon.

Public Comment Closed.

Councilmember Guzak requested information on vandalism. Chief Palmer briefly touched on incidents of vandalism, and recommended utilizing tools such as security systems with alarms and video to help deter activity, but also to capture identifying

information.

Councilmember Burke inquired on the use of CAHOOTS. Chief Palmer remarked the program was a great model, but overall more robust than what the City needed. The SCSO provided similar services to the Police Department through its Office of Neighborhoods and other resources.

b. 4th Quarter/Year-end Financial Report

Mr. James presented a financial report for the 4th quarter, ending December 31, 2021. He shared year-to-date General Fund revenues and expenses, with comparisons to 2020. Law enforcement services were the largest expense, making up over 41% of overall General Fund expenses, which declined from 2020. He then shared sales tax revenues year-to-date, and reviewed other funds and investment portfolios.

Councilmember Neals questioned opportunities to discuss staffing impacts to the budget. Mr. James responded the preliminary budget calendar was being developed and would incorporate time for discussion, perhaps a town hall format to solicit public input. He requested Council feedback on what they would like to see in the process. The process would help create a financial roadmap for the City, identify priorities, and highlight needs for staff positions such as the Public Works Director and in community engagement.

Public Comment:

Morgan Davis inquired on the percentage of ARPA funds provided to citizens.

Public Comment Closed.

c. Utility Discount Analysis and Review

Mr. James presented information relating to the City's utility discounts, showing senior and disabled person discount rates compared to neighboring cities. Snohomish was by far the highest at 75%, for owners and renters. Only PUD and Lake Stevens Sewer District offered a low income discount rate. Staff offered no recommendation on changes, as discounts were already very generous. The City had increased the discount from 50% to 75% in 2008.

Public Comment:

Morgan Davis remarked discounts did not include apartments.

Public Comment Closed.

Mayor Redmon asked, and Mr. James confirmed, that discounts were available to renters.

7. **OTHER BUSINESS/INFORMATION ITEMS:**

Councilmember Ray asked if the Council was interested in discussing the future of the gazebo. She suggested utilizing the Park Board to review options and advise Council on, for

instance, replacement or repair, and ADA compliance. She understood the City received an offer for repair work, but felt a larger discussion was needed. Councilmember Burke concurred, stating she has heard mixed messages and would appreciate cohesion before moving forward.

Council and staff discussed:

- Involvement and roles of Design Review Board or Park and Recreation Board, or both.
- The gazebo was in the City's right-of-way and was not a designated park.
- The work offered was to repair and refresh the existing structure in hopes of preventing further deterioration, not to change its footprint.
- Repair work could go forward while conversations were had on future work, such as ADA accessibility.
- Design Review Board did not approve the proposed roof material; cedar shakes should be used.
- Location by the shoreline and restrictions that could have on work.
- Retention of the trees closest to the gazebo, which had been proposed to be removed.
- Repairs would include replacing the stairs and railing to meet code, otherwise the structure would look the same.

At 8:53, **MOTION** by Neals, second by Guzak to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

Council continued to discuss their concerns, timelines, and scope of the proposed project. Staff requested Council direction on replying to the volunteer contractor on accepting the generous offer, respecting their time and efforts.

Councilmember Burke cautioned that as these types of projects come up, the Council or their advisory Boards should be provided opportunities for input before too much time or energy is put into it.

Councilmember Ray recommended proceeding with the repairs but only if the trees are retained. Council concurred. Councilmember Burke requested the gazebo be added to a future meeting agenda so the topic would stay visible.

Councilmember Guzak remarked on the possibility of moving the City Shop to the City-owned parcel east of Highway 2, which was zoned industrial. She requested Council authorize staff to explore the possibilities and costs for that, as well as the potential to turn the riverfront site into a park.

Councilmember Kuleta shared Council President Merrill's suggestion to review this significant project in relation to upcoming talks on Council goals. Council discussed the relationship of the project to the budget, and whether a feasibility study would be beneficial to better determine actual costs. Councilmember Neals requested staff provide a cost estimate for the feasibility study as a first step. Mayor Redmon remarked she would work with staff.

Councilmember Guzak reported the County recently hired a realtor to assess the value of the former County shop site, which she did not feel the City would be able to afford.

At 9:17 p.m., **MOTION** by Flynn, second by Ray to extend the meeting until 10 p.m. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

8. COUNCILMEMBER COMMENTS/LIAISON REPORTS

Councilmember Flynn continued to make good connections and would report further at the next meeting.

Councilmember Neals researched topics related to climate change and would present ideas to Council at the next meeting.

Councilmember Kuleta wished to share the Council’s and business community’s appreciation to City staff for their work to keep the garbage collected; areas look much better than they did a year ago.

9. COUNCIL PRESIDENT’S ITEMS/REPORTS: None

10. CITY ADMINISTRATOR’S COMMENTS: None

11. MAYOR’S COMMENTS: None

12. RECESS to EXECUTIVE SESSION at 9:21 p.m. until 9:35 p.m. to discuss potential litigation pursuant to RCW 42.30.110(1)(i), with possible action to follow, and allowing time for Councilmembers to switch remote meeting logins.

13. RECONVENE regular meeting. The regular meeting reconvened at 9:35 p.m.

MOTION by Kuleta, second by Guzak to approve the settlement and release agreement with Steve Schuller as discussed during Executive Session. Motion passed unanimously (6-0).

14. ADJOURN. There being no objection, the meeting adjourned at 9:36 p.m.

APPROVED this 5th day of April, 2022.

CITY OF SNOHOMISH

ATTEST:

Linda Redmon, Mayor

Brandi Whitson, City Clerk