

**City of Kittitas
Council Meeting Minutes
December 10, 2019**

COUNCIL MEETING

Mayor Camarata led those assembled in the Flag Salute. Mayor Camarata called the regular Council Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. December 10, 2019. Councilmembers present: Rich Coleman, Holly Beard, Peter Schuetz, Richard Hink Jr. and Lou Whitford. Staff present: Debbie Lee – Clerk/Treasurer, Lori Chaffee – Utility Billing Clerk, Aaron Nelson – Police, Ben Chavez – Police, Chris Taylor – Chief of Police, and Kurin Simplot – Public Works.

**APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES FOR THE REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING DATED
NOVEMBER 26th, 2019**

MOTION: Councilmember Hink made a motion to approve the regular Council Meeting minutes dated November 26th, 2019; second by Councilmember Beard.
Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

ADDITIONS TO AND/OR APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Camarata wanted to add under New Business D. Engineer Selection First Avenue Project.

MOTION: Councilmember Beard made a motion to approve the agenda as amended; second by Councilmember Whitford.
Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

PUBLIC APPEARANCE COMMENTS

- Business Owner Justin Kooy asked Council when the Planning Commission was going to meet regarding the zoning code in Gateway Commercial. Justin stated that Council was going to advise the Planning Commission on the zoning issues that needed to be addressed.
- Councilmember Beard and Mayor Camarata stated that they will look into this issue and get with Michelle to set up a meeting with the Planning Commission.

REPORT OF OFFICERS AND SPECIAL GUESTS

A. Budget Report

- No Comment

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B. Treasurer's Report

- No Comment

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. MOU Wage for Police Officer and Patrol Sergeant

- Mayor Camarata stated that the MOU was sent to the City Attorney and she made changes to this MOU in red. This was a draft version. The other MOU included in the Council Packet was approved by the Union and the Police Department. Mayor Camarata checked with the City Attorney and this is the one they suggested.
- Councilmember Hink stated that Council can keep discussing this issue but feels that it is best to be addressed during the renegotiation of the union contract that expires in December of 2020.

MOTION: Councilmember Hink made a motion to table this MOU until negotiations are opened up sometime in 2020.

- Officer Nelson stated that this MOU is specifically for Officer Chavez 3/10 Fund this would make the step/pay increase more incremental to the 5 year scale that was implemented in an earlier MOU to entice a lateral officer with 5 years' experience. The officer with 5 years' experience makes \$30.00 per hour when a new officer starts much lower and for the first four years makes small changes and then at 5 years the wage increases to \$30.00. This increase affects the 3/10th fund only. The general fund is not affected by this and the 3/10th fund can support this increase. When the original MOU was accepted they did not adjust the step increases accordingly.
- Mayor Camarata stated that he feels it would be the best practice to wait until negotiations are opened up for the entire contract and not just looking at one department of the City.
- Councilmember Beard stated she felt this MOU needed to be dealt with now to retain officers.
- Chief Taylor stated that the police officers that would be affected by this MOU agreed that they would not open their wage rate during the first two years of the new contract and the wages would only be subject to a cost of living increase. Chief Taylor also stated that this would help retain good officers and service to the community.
- Councilmember Hink is concerned that Council needs to look at this as a whole and the

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best time would be during negotiations with all departments, that it would be an unfair practice to increase police wages and no other departments.

- Chief Taylor informed Council that this would affect only one employee and it does not affect the general fund.
- Officer Nelson stated that the police agreed to not increase their wages in the next contract for two years they would only ask for a COLA. The second part to this MOU is a Sergeant position this would enable Officer Nelson to train reserves and do the reporting that is required. The Sergeant position would also do paperwork, purging the records room and public records requests etc.
- Officer Nelson stated that no officer is currently planning on leaving the department. That if this MOU is not agreed upon that police may ask for more at negotiation time. Officer Nelson stated that if a Sergeant position was approved it would alleviate the need to call the County or City of Ellensburg. Kittitas Police department had to call the County a couple weeks ago. Officer Nelson and Chavez had a situation where they were both injured and needed a supervisor to make sure that the L&I paperwork was filled out correctly and all policies were followed properly. Chief Taylor was out of town and if a sergeant position was created this would have alleviated that issue.
- Chief Taylor informed Council that if a sergeant position was created Officer Nelson could take care of the administrative aspect of police work. Chief Taylor stated that the wage scale should have been adjusted when it was increased to entice a lateral officer to the City of Kittitas. The City of Kittitas has a lot of time and money invested in Officer Chavez and it would be a shame to lose him to another department.
- Councilmember Coleman said that there is a time and place for voting from the heart and other times voting for practical reasons and this would be a dereliction of duty and misfeasance.
- Councilmember Beard stated that this vote would be a responsible decision made by the Council. Councilmember Beard also thanked Officer Chavez for his work and dedication to the City and that it would be a loss to the City if he chose to go elsewhere.
- Councilmember Schuetz wondered if it was possible for all City employees to sign a notice stating they do not care that one department opens up the union contract, Councilmember Schuetz said that would maybe help with his decision.
- Officer Nelson stated that the attorney included language in the MOU that the Police Department would give up a wage increase the first two years of the new contract.
- Police Chief Taylor informed Council that the City has lost good police officers to other

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departments due to the pay not be comparable. Officer Whetstine came down from Alaska to only work 10 months and then go on to work at CWU. Lower wages make it hard to maintain the police department. And with state required training it makes it hard for smaller cities to attract lateral officers.

- Officer Nelson is qualified to write grants and had recently acquired a \$1400 grant for ballistic vests for the three officers.
- Chief Taylor stated that the only way to provide forward motion is for Council to accept the MOU.
- Officer Nelson stated that each department bargains their own department and that the police are giving up the right to a pay increase in the new contract other than a COLA.
- Mayor Camarata stated he needs to make his vote as to what would be best for the City and how the citizens would vote.
- Citizens Bob Shuda asked how many times this issue need to be tabled? This should be an easy decision. Bob Shuda stated that the Councilmember's and Mayor who voted no must have something against the City.
- Councilmember Hink stated he has dealt with unions in the past and any union member that doesn't come forward now; the union will use this for other employees and negotiations leverage.
- Councilmember Whitford stated as the past Mayor she did not have the ability to re-structure from past practices and the City has not always ran efficiently but now with the staff the City has, employees can be trained to run the departments the way they should be ran.

MOTION: Councilmember Hink made a motion to table the MOU Police Wages until the negotiations are opened near the end of the current contract which is December 2020; second by Councilmember Coleman.

Motion Carried: 3 yes (Coleman, Hink, Camarata) 2 no (Beard & Whitford). Councilmember Schuetz abstained from voting. Mayor Camarata broke the tie vote.

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NEW BUSINESS

A. Public Hearing Ordinance 19-019 2020 Final Budget

- Mayor Camarata opened the Public Hearing at 7:30 p.m. and closed the Public Hearing at 7:31 p.m. with no public comment.

Motion: Councilmember Hink made a motion to approve Ordinance 19-019 2020 Final Budget; second by Councilmember Coleman.

Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

B. 19-017 Ordinance “Rates & Charges”

- This increase is to cover some of the costs for the Water Main Replacement Project.

MOTION: Councilmember Beard made a motion to approve Ordinance 19-017; second by Councilmember Coleman.

Motion Carried; 5 yes 0 no.

C. 19-018 Ordinance Water Reserve Surcharge

- This Ordinance is for the Water Line Replacement Project and to be compliant with the USDA loan requirements.

MOTION: Councilmember Coleman made a motion to adopt Ordinance 19-018 Water Reserve Surcharge; second by Councilmember Schuetz.

Motion Carried; 5 yes 0 no.

D. Engineer Selection First Avenue Project

- Three applications were received for this project. Mayor Camarata and Kurin Simplot with Public Works conducted a telephone interview and performed a grading process for the selection of an Engineer for the First Avenue Project.

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- Gray & Osborne was the Engineer who received the top score, and they have done projects for the City of Kittitas in the past and are familiar with the City.

MOTION: Councilmember Beard made a motion to approve Gray & Osborne as the Engineers for the First Avenue Project; second by Councilmember Hink.
Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

PAYMENT APPROVALS

A. December 10, Payables via EFT \$21,322.64

MOTION: Councilmember Coleman made a motion to approve December 10th, 2019 Payables; second by Councilmember Hink.
Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

B. November Bank EFT's \$5,283.31

MOTION: Councilmember Coleman made a motion to approve November Bank EFT's; second by Councilmember Hink.
Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

C. November Payroll/December Mid-Month Draws \$49,039.37

MOTION: Councilmember Hink made a motion to approve November Payroll/December Mid-Month Draws; second by Councilmember Coleman.
Motion Carried: 5 yes 0 no.

MAYOR'S REPORT

- Mayor Camarata stated that the Council meeting for December 24th will be canceled.
- Christmas in Kittitas went smoothly and a nice time was had by all. Mayor Camarata wanted to thank everyone who was involved in making this event happen.
- Former Mayor Cort sent an email to Council and the City Attorney informing them that she tripped on the uneven stairs at the library. Her hands were full and she had the handrail in her other hand, and missed the step. Pat Cort stated that this should come as a warning that the steps need to be fixed. This item is in the budget for 2020 to repair the steps. Discussion was had about placing a

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sign on the steps that say “Steps are uneven use caution when using”.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

- Councilmember Hink discussed the chlorine leak at the water tower last Friday. He stated Rich Elliot with KVFR would donate the SCBA’s for the treatment plant operators and fit them for the employees.
- Mayor Camarata stated there was a small leak at the water tower chlorine room, the valve broke and the alarms went off, all agencies responded Kittitas County Sherriff, Washington State Patrol and KVFR. Department of Ecology was called out to fix the issue as they are trained in this field. Mayor Camarata stated that the chlorine system was shut down and the clinoid was repaired.
- Councilmember Hink stated that insurance should cover the bill from the Department of Ecology.
- Councilmember Whitford stated she was disappointed in Council’s vote to not open the wage MOU for the police department. She feels this shows lack of character in Council and that the Mayor and Councilmembers who voted no are not supportive of the staff.
- Bob Shuda stated that this was a slap in the face to the officers.
- Councilmember Beard felt the same disappointment.
- Councilmember Schuetz stated that other employees belong to the union and he guarantees this would open other issues with the other employees. He also stated that Council has to make the right decisions for the citizens.
- Councilmember Hink felt the motion to wait on voting the MOU in place would be best. That negotiations need to be done when the current contract is close to expiring in December of 2020.
- All of Council thanked Kurin for doing a good job with Main Street lights; cleaning up around City Hall, they stated that he is doing a good job for only one person.
- Kurin wanted to thank Haley who did her senior project with a cleanup day and Ron Harris for trimming the trees.

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MOTION: No Motion was made to adjourn.

ADJOURN: 7:35 p.m.

Attest:

Mayor John Camarata

Debbie Lee Clerk/Treasurer