

**CITY OF FIRCREST**  
**SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2009** **COUNCIL CHAMBERS**  
**6:00 P.M.** **FIRCREST CITY HALL, 115 RAMSDELL STREET**

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**CALL TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND ROLL CALL**

Mayor Kathy L. McVay called the special meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Councilmembers Matthew Jolibois, Chris Gruver, Robert Thaden, Mike Weinman, Hans Hechtman and David M. Viafore were present.

**AGENDA MODIFICATIONS**

**Community Center Advisory Committee Report and Discussion on Parks and Recreation**

Recreation Director Grover stated Community Center Advisory Committee (CCAC) members and volunteers would be reviewing their activities for the past year.

**Blake Surina** stated the committee has five active members who have accomplished many things this year. He reviewed and discussed the committee's vision and mission statements and core values:

**Vision Statement**

- The City of Fircrest Park and Recreation Center will be the focal point of the community where all citizens can connect and strengthen ties through quality activities, programs and services promoting a healthy citizenry.

**Mission Statement**

- Blending community needs and available resources to create and develop the highest quality recreation, athletic and social programs for the City of Fircrest.

**Core Values**

- PRIDE: People, Respect, Involvement, Development, Excellence

**Phaedra Miller and Kathy Owens** reviewed Accomplished and Future projects.

**Accomplished Projects**

**Pool Hours and Rates Restructuring**

- Reviewed schedule and made some changes for Swimming lessons, Open Swim, Family Swim and Swim Team
- Slight increase in rates, new 10-visit pool pass and new non-resident season pass

**Pool Survey**

- Questions covered: staffing, quality of pool, swim lessons, suggestions for improvements including a slide, food and a sound system and pool fees

**Community Communication**

- Fircrest Flyer containing community and Recreation Department news
- Distributed in Westside Disposal billings

**Rotary Youth Room Project**

- Accomplished with Rotary funding, donated interior designer services and carpet and youth volunteers who painted

Tot Lot Pavilion Project

- Rotary, Kiwanis and other funding/donation sources will be solicited
- Estimated Pavilion Cost: \$25,000

5K Route and Training Cards

Future Projects

Pool

- Diving Tank Alternatives
- New signage for pool rules and diving tank
- Analysis of pool surveys
- Pool policy manual
- Pool subcommittee
- Staff – Mentoring program (Life guards/swim instructors)

Fun Days

- Fun Days subcommittee
- Parade enhancement

Potential Capital Projects and Cost List

Pro Bono Architectural Services - John Wagner, BLRB Architects

- Collaborations with community for Master Plan for Community Center and Park properties
- BLRB Architects has offered to provide programming and concepts for Community Center, the pool, tennis courts, Electron Way property and Tot Lot
- Visioning design sessions in October and November
- Goal to create marketing piece to seek funding for upgrades
- Form Master Planning committee

Claremont Well Property

- Opening up for resident use
- Picnic area
- Community garden

Electron Property

- Potential uses: community garden, additional parking, sand lot volleyball courts
- Long term determine best use with BLRB Architects design study

Fircrest Heritage Club

- Organize historical City photographs and documents
- Create viewing space at Community Center

Direction

Fill vacancies on CCAC

Active involvement with Council liaison

Work with Council on fund raising to support projects and facility improvements

Discussion included:

- Recognizing improvements that have taken place in Park operations and the Community Center
- Compliments to staff, CCAC members and volunteers for their efforts and enthusiasm

- Pavilion location at Tot Lot and impact on other play equipment areas
- Concern about removing 80-year old cedar tree in Tot Lot for pavilion
- Suggestion for partnership with the City, service organizations and citizens to fund pavilion
- Electron Way property could be involved in Tot Lot plans
- Capital Projects and Cost list
- Bonding for Capital Projects
- Getting residents out to view and support the Fun Days parade
- Updating existing Parks and Recreation Comprehensive Plan
- Zoning considerations
- Communication with Council by the Parks and Recreation Liaison, Recreation Director and CCAC
- Restrictions on Clarmont site because of well and agreement with neighboring property owners
- CCAC supporting the Recreation Director
- CCAC articles in Town Topics and Fircrest Flyer to recruit members
- The heritage of Fircrest and Parks has been volunteers
- A Fircrest Municipal Development Committee has been proposed to tie in design of City projects
- CCAC communication with the City Manager and staff when developing plans and projects

Neil Holden, Westside Disposal and Tony Randall and Danette Felt, CCAC, were also in attendance. Councilmembers thanked the CCAC members for their report and all their work.

### **Proposed Increase of Water Utility Tax**

Interim Public Works Director Larkin stated a recent State Supreme Court decision identifies that General Fund is required to assume costs for fire protection including hydrant maintenance and additional construction costs to provide water facilities of a size sufficient to meet fire flow requirements. He explained an available method to offset those additional costs to General Fund would be to increase the Water Fund utility tax. The net effect of the utility tax increase on the Water Fund would be negligible and would require no increase in water rates.

Larkin explained that fire protection costs are estimated to be \$4,000 in 2009, \$11,360 in 2010 and \$29,000 in 2011. These costs include maintenance charges for 12 hydrants on the Tacoma water system but those charges are still in litigation. The 2010 Preliminary Budget estimates the Water Fund Beginning Fund Balance being \$618,886. Operating revenues are projected to exceed operating expenditures (not including capital) by approximately \$173,070. The recommendation is to increase the Water utility tax from the current 6% to 8%. This would generate approximately \$20,000 in annual revenue to General Fund.

#### **Discussion included:**

- Tacoma hydrant maintenance includes breaking down and checking each hydrant every 3 years
- Suggestion to verify actual hydrant maintenance done by Tacoma
- Clarification that increasing the Water utility tax would not increase rates
- Water utility tax is paid from gross revenues
- Rates could go up due to increased costs
- Fircrest Water Fund has historically paid the fire protection costs
- Request for information on laws relating utility taxes and rates

- Proposal could be brought forward in October for implementation in 2009
- Increases in costs are not just for fire protection maintenance but include "all costs associated with fire protection above that necessary for residential service."

### **Relocation of Backyard Sewer Mains Project**

Larkin stated staff is preparing two State Revolving Fund (SRF) loan applications. The first was for a SRF construction loan for sewer mains in Harvard Avenue, Golden Gate Avenue, Eldorado Avenue, and Del Monte Avenue and the sewer lift station at Princeton and Harvard. This loan application would be for approximately 5.4 million dollars. Design work for this portion of the project must be completed by November 1, 2009 for review by Department of Ecology (DOE) prior to the loan application deadline of December 1, 2009. Design costs would be paid from remaining funds of the Public Works Trust Fund pre-construction loan.

The second loan application would be for a Step 4 SRF loan in the amount of approximately 7.4 million dollars for the design and construction costs of new sewer mains in Summit and Farallone Avenues north of Princeton Street and construction costs for the Alameda Avenue and Buena Vista Avenue sewers. This loan application has to be submitted by December 1, 2009 but design does not have to be complete.

Larkin stated a Notice of Intent Application Form as required by State Construction Stormwater General Permit and a National Environmental Policy Act Environmental Summary has been submitted to DOE.

### Side Sewer Service Relocations

Larkin stated the SRF loan applications include funding for loans to private property owners for the construction for new side sewer services. DOE requires the City own and maintain the side sewer services for the life of the 20-year SRF loan term. Larkin explained that because of the quality of present day materials and construction practices it was his professional opinion that accepting ownership of the side sewer services should not place any significant financial burden on the City. The new side sewer services would have 6-inch mains and should be virtually maintenance free. Ownership and maintenance agreements would be required with the property owners. The proposal was for the private property loans to be for the same interest rate and term of the City's SRF loan.

### Discussion included:

- Property owners would be responsible for side sewer construction but if SRF loan funding was used the City would still own and maintain them
- Opposition to taking on maintenance and ownership of side sewer
- Concern about what could be built or planted on top of the side sewers
- Opposition to obtaining and enforcing easements
- Concern that a minority of rate payers are affected but all rate payers would be responsible for costs of ownership and maintenance of side sewers
- Request for a legal opinion about gifting of funds
- Concern about extended delay of design contract with BHC for Alameda/Buena Vista area
- Concern about potential liability to the City if the Alameda/Buena Vista backyard sewer fails
- Property owners would agree to easements in order to obtain low interest, long term funding

- Concern about what might be flushed into side sewers that would require commercial clean out service
- Request for discussion with Risk Manager and Insurance Company
- At sale of property side sewer loan would have to be paid
- Concerns about issues with shared side sewer lines
- Inquiry who would police easements

Larkin stated an agreement with BHC for the design of the Alameda/Buena Vista sewers would be brought forward at the October 13, 2009 meeting. Side sewer maintenance issues should not be a problem because existing 4-inch lines would be replaced with 6-inch lines and there would be clean outs at every turn.

### **Bonding**

Larkin stated due to a variety of reasons it appeared the City of Fircrest would not be able to obtain a AA rating as required by the one remaining bond insurer. This means bonding would only be available at an interest rate in the 5 to 5.25% range. Viafore questioned if previous bonds had been insured and explained that because of its size Fircrest was not rated.

### **2009 Budget Discussion**

City Manager Brandon stated the 2009 Budget has been discussed at several meetings and study sessions. Current projections are that revenues will be approximately \$85,000 short. A memo sent to Council last week contained recommendations that would save approximately \$25,000 and does allow for a balanced 2010 Budget.

Gruver voiced appreciation for Brandon's memo to Council and stated she had a better understanding of staff's plan for 2009 and 2010 now.

Viafore stated he had been opposed to layoffs and had been willing to use Undesignated Ending Fund Balance to bridge the gap in 2010. There had been discussion about furloughs but now 2.5 Full Time Employee (FTE) positions had been eliminated and the 2009 Budget still had a shortfall. Viafore stated Council has not decided to use Undesignated Ending Fund Balance to balance the 2009 Budget and questioned if Reserves could be used to balance 2009 why they couldn't be used to balance 2010 also. If furloughs had been implemented in September there would have been \$25,000 in savings and the City would have maintained a higher level of service. He voiced concern that Parks and Police were hardest hit and now the City was outsourcing refinishing the gym floor which had always been done by City staff. Viafore inquired if by Council's silence they were accepting use of the Reserves to balance 2009.

Brandon stated the direction he received was not to cut services and his recommendations did not. He explained that deeper cuts would have resulted in reduced services. Brandon explained that closing City buildings for furlough days would have cut services.

Hechtman stated he wanted to maintain services and that there had been ample discussion on the other options. There didn't appear to be another choice except to use Reserves to balance 2009 but the changes made allow staff to bring forward a balanced budget for 2010.

**September 21, 2009**

**Fircrest City Council Special Meeting Minutes – Special 6**

Thaden stated he did not accept what happened, that he felt it was terribly wrong and he was going to fight layoffs that would ruin peoples' lives. He referred to an Association of Washington Cities (AWC) survey that identified other jurisdictions had used different options including reopening their budgets, reducing their scope of services and spending down their Reserves. Only 32% used layoffs.

Thaden suggested Reserves should be used and services could be reduced. He believed in these economic times residents would understand that. The AWC survey indicated that "good fiscal management means putting money in reserves during good times and using it in hard times." Thaden stated these were hard time and with more than three million dollars in Reserves this didn't have to happen. He suggested using enough reserves so people didn't have to lose their jobs. He also questioned how the eliminated positions were selected with senior employees in supervisory positions let go.

Viafore concurred with Thaden's concerns and suggested staff be prepared to justify the decision process that was used at the next meeting on September 22, 2009.

Jolibois stated the memo sent to Council identified how the 27% of the 2009 budget shortfall would be covered but not the remaining 73%. Brandon stated the recommendation was to use Undesignated Ending Fund Balance for the remainder of the short. McVay stated that authority was given when consensus of Council was taken to proceed with the City Manager's recommendations at a previous meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Moved by Thaden, Seconded by Gruver, to adjourn the meeting at 7:43 P.M. Ayes: Jolibois, Gruver, Thaden, McVay, Weinman, Hechtman and Viafore. Noes: None. Motion Carried.**