

December 3, 2009

CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Brunz called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m., with the Pledge of Allegiance. Council members present: Aslett, Bensen, Doyle, Edmundson, Loving, Montgomery and Valentine. Staff present: Acero, Ackermann, Blair, Blanford, Boston, A. Bradshaw, J. Bradshaw, Brown, Burwash, Cuellar, Donnelly, Floyd, Guirl, Hansen, Hofkamp, Hooker, Johnstone, Kinney, Kramer, Martin, Rabenstein, Sheahan, Small, Stafford, Staheli, Thomas, Thramer, Tingley, VanSickle, and VanWieringen

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

FINAL PUBLIC HEARING TO CONSIDER THE 2010 PRELIMINARY BUDGET.

Mayor Brunz opened the public hearing.

Finance Director Thramer reviewed the 2010 budget schedule. He noted that the final budget must be approved prior to December 31, 2009. He highlighted revenue and expenditures contained in the 2010 budget. He stated the budget is based on \$6 million in sales tax revenue (similar to what was received in 2008). He noted that health benefit premiums have nearly tripled in the past 10 years; from \$8,428 to \$22,215. He reviewed the reductions that have been implemented in 2009 or will be implemented in 2010 to reduce expenditures. For non-represented employees this includes a 5% salary reduction, change to less expensive medical plan, employees will pay a portion of the medical insurance premium. In addition two police officer positions have been removed, five full-time positions have been eliminated and two positions will be reduced to half-time. The City has approved an increase to most City fees beginning in 2010. He reviewed details of the personnel savings (compared to 2009). He then reviewed the revised 2010 preliminary budget.

Mayor Brunz reviewed the work to produce a balanced 2010 budget. With input from staff and council members, various expenditures were reduced or removed from the 2010 budget. He noted that his goal was to retain all full-time positions in 2010, but at this date he is not able to do so. Thus, notices were handed out last week to those positions that will be reduced or eliminated. He noted that with reduced staff levels, City services will not be at the same level as in the past.

Public Comments:

Mr. Lindsey Gear, 1953 Walton Drive (Pacific Coast Auto Center), stated he likes the way the City looks when he drives through town, he is proud of Burlington. He is concerned about the loss of the Code Enforcement position.

Ms. Harriett Stargel, Burlington RV Park, spoke in favor of keeping the Code Enforcement/Animal Control position. Code Enforcement has helped many people in the RV Park. She presented a petition signed by 50 people in favor of keeping the Code Enforcement position. She noted that the Code Enforcement Officer keeps animals under control in town.

Ms. Joan Crane (Doggie Come Play), 910 N. Burlington Boulevard, spoke in favor of retaining the Animal Control/Code Enforcement position. She noted that Code Enforcement Officer Blair goes above and beyond her duties. She noted her concern that the police officers who will take over those duties will not have the extensive knowledge required.

Ms. Emily Diaz, Animal Control Officer, Skagit County Sheriff's Office, stated that Code Enforcement Officer Blair has been very helpful in working with her in assisting with large cases. She stated that Animal Control Officers protect animals' lives and public safety. She asked Council to reconsider eliminating the Animal Control position.

Ms. Teresa Steiner, Saving Pets One at a Time (SPOT) spoke in favor of retaining the Animal Control/Code Enforcement Officer. She noted that because Animal Control Officer Blair knows where most dogs live and who their owners are, she can return strays to their owners without incurring costs to the City for impounding.

December 3, 2009

Ms. Marianne Manville-Ailles, 826 E. Orange Avenue, (Planning Commission member) spoke in favor of retaining the Code Enforcement position. She stated it will be a big loss to the City to not have the Code Enforcement officer position. She asked Council to reconsider eliminating the position.

A Washington State Patrol Officer who deals with abandoned vehicles noted that Ms. Blair provides more to the City than just animal control. She is trained and involved with junk and/or abandoned vehicles. With that position gone, the City will have to train a Police Officer to continue these tasks (at a much higher cost to the City).

Mr. Sam Price, 199 Pease Road, questioned who he would call regarding animal complaints, junk cars, etc. He asked who will be responding to code and building violations. He understands times are tough but would hope the City would retain the position. He spoke in favor of hiring a new Fire Chief from the current firefighter ranks.

Mr. Brian Hanson, 713 E. Orange Avenue, (Planning Commission member) noted the Code Enforcement Officer provides a great service to the City.

Mr. Greg Ackerman, 710 W. Blackburn, Mount Vernon, Union Shop Steward Burlington Sewer Department. He noted that union has been talking over the past days and distributed a proposal for the City council to consider. If accepted by the Mayor and Council, a MOU will be presented. He stated that he likes working for the City of Burlington and in the Sewer Department. He cares about those he works with, in the sewer department and other departments as well. He shared concerns about negative rumors he's heard about sewer staff not caring about the City. He clarified that this is not true. He challenged the council and mayor to re-visit the budget. He noted that when there is a crisis, citizens will come together. He thought perhaps there is a way to involve the community to help minimize the pain.

Ms. Robin Blair, 925 Summers Meadows Court, Sedro-Woolley (Code Enforcement Officer), thanked those who spoke in support of her position this evening. She noted she has worked for the City of Burlington for eleven years and started many programs that have saved the City money. She noted there is a need for services provided by her position. She stated she has been trained regarding animal control, zoning control. She asked council to take another look at retaining her position.

Mr. Mark Kramer, 506 South Cherry, stated he does not believe that the police officers will be able to step in and take over animal control, sign control, abandoned vehicles, etc. He noted his past suggestion was to hire a second Code Enforcement rather than another Police Officer. Eliminating the Code Enforcement position will affect the residents and quality of life issues.

Ms. Brittany Carlson, daughter of Code Enforcement Officer Blair, stated that her mother has done a lot of things to help the community above and beyond what she is required to do in her position. She noted that on weekends, she often comes back to work to check on the dogs being held by the City.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

The Mayor and Council members adjourned to executive session at 7:50 p.m. for the purpose of discussing personnel (labor negotiations). **City Attorney Thomas** noted that the executive session should last about 30 minutes. At 8:30 p.m. **City Attorney Thomas** announced that the Executive Session would last about another ten minutes. The Mayor and city council members returned from the executive session at 8:40 p.m.

Mayor Brunz asked if there was anyone else who wanted to speak regarding the preliminary 2010 budget. No one spoke.

A motion was made by **Councilors Loving/Valentine** to close the public hearing. All agreed. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT:

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

CITY HALL

BURLINGTON, WA

December 3, 2009

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m. by **Mayor Brunz**.

Greg Thrumer
Finance Director / City Clerk

Edward J. Brunz
Mayor