

JOINT BINGEN CITY COUNCIL AND WHITE CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MINUTES

May 31, 2017

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Betty J. Barnes and Mayor David Poucher at 6:00 p.m. Bingen City Council members present: Catherine Kiewit, Stephanie Porter, Izzy Schroder, Ryan O'Connor, Laura Mann. White Salmon City Council members present: Tao Berman, Alan Wolf, Jason Sabourin, Kimberly Hoppus, Donna Heimke. Bingen staff present: City Administrator Jan Brending, City Attorney Chris Lanz. White Salmon staff present: City Administrator Pat Munyan, City Clerk-Treasurer Leana Johnson, City Attorney Ken Woodrich.

David Poucher said the purpose of the joint workshop is hear information from staff about the different methods for possibly combining the two cities. He said no public comment will be taken at the workshop. Poucher said both city councils will likely hold public hearings and will take public comment at later dates. He noted that neither city council will be making decisions on the issue at the workshop.

Leana Johnson and Jan Brending presented a summary of the memorandum dated May 22, 2017 to the two city councils outlining the background for the discussion and presenting the different methodologies for combining the two cities including: White Salmon annexing into Bingen, Bingen annexing into White Salmon, and consolidating the two cities into a new city. Information was presented on the different impacts that the methodologies may have. It was noted that the memorandum is provided on each cities' website. Johnson and Brending said they recommend that if the cities decided to move forward that regardless of which method is selected, the decision should be made by a vote of the citizens. They noted, however, that in the annexation process, only the registered voters of the city annexing into the other city get to vote, i.e. if White Salmon is annexing into Bingen then the residents of White Salmon vote. It was noted that in the consolidation process every registered voter in both cities gets to vote on the ballot measure.

Questions and Discussion

Council members and staff discussed impacts on street funding and costs associated with suggested cost savings areas.

Council members asked if the results of the interviews conducted by Leana Johnson for her graduate capstone project could be provided. Johnson said yes.

Council members discussed the reasons for discussing consolidating the two cities and concerns regarding consolidating the two cities. Some council members expressed that a better list is needed for why the two cities should be consolidated.

Some council members expressed concerns with the scenarios which show tax levies decreasing in one or more of the consolidation options. Council members asked if the line charts identifying funding impacts could be combined. Johnson said she could provide that by the next council meetings.

Council members discussed the possibility of sending out a survey in the cities' utility billing and including a summary of the information that has been provided to the two city councils.

Council members and staff discussed the possibility of having a "Community Municipal Corporation" that is similar to a neighborhood or community council. Johnson said the purpose of the "Community Municipal Corporation" is similar to that of a planning commission.

Council members said it is necessary to clearly identify the pros and cons.

Council members expressed concern about absorbing debt. Johnson and Brending noted that neither city currently has general obligation debt, that the current debt held by both cities is associated with water or wastewater projects and is covered by revenue from utilities. It was noted that the two cities' utility rates are not that different.

Council members and staff discussed that the two cities compete for grant and loan funds and that a larger combined city may place it in a better position for those funds.

Council members and staff discussed that there are some differences between the two cities including management styles and city codes. It was noted there may be a concern that the Bingen area might not see its fair share of funding for projects.

Council members and staff discussed the possibility of establishing wards to have better representation on a combined city council. It was noted however, that the area of Bingen could always be under-represented. It was again noted that “Community Municipal Corporations” might help address that issue in that all land use decisions and codes would be addressed by the corporation.

Council members said it will be important to hear from the residents of both cities before moving forward.

Both city councils will discuss the topic at their next council meetings on Tuesday, June 20 for the City of Bingen and Wednesday, June 21 for the City of White Salmon.

The joint workshop adjourned at 8:22 p.m.

Bingen City Clerk

Bingen Mayor

White Salmon City Clerk

White Salmon Mayor