CITY OF ELLENSBURG
Minutes of Council Retreat, Special Session

Date of Meeting
February 22, 2019

Time of Meeting
11:30 a.m.

Place of Meeting
City Council chambers
501 N Anderson St., Ellensburg

Councilmembers Present: Goodloe, Klauss, Lillquist, Miller, Morgan, Engel, and Mayor Tabb

Others present were City Manager Akers, Asst. City Manager/City Attorney Weiner, Power and Gas Manager Stanavich, Assistant Utilities Director Larsen, Public Works & Utilities Director Lyyski, Finance Director Pascoe, Community Development Director Sackett, and Deputy Clerk Davison. City Engineer Mayo and City Economic Development Manager Honeycutt arrived later.

Also present were Martin Chaw and Sergey Tarasov from FCS Group, and Andrew Lyons from HopeSource.

Mayor Tabb summarized the agenda and Public Works & Utilities Director Lyyski provided background for the current low-income utility rates. Martin Chaw presented regarding FCS group’s findings on the low income utility discount program (LID). He detailed the current benefits provided by other jurisdictions.

Councilmember Lillquist proposed processing LID applications bi-annually as a way to improve efficiency.

Councilmember Miller inquired as to the income standards being applied to our current applications and if they could be improved. Mr. Chaw commented that one of the proposed improvements would be to simplify the income standard requirement.

Councilmember Miller queried as to what percentage the student population would affect the household income figures. Power and Gas Manager Stanavich responded to inquiries as to the current dollar amount being paid into the LID on average per utility customer.

Mr. Chaw offered that removing the age and disability requirements, and making the discount consistent across all utilities would simplify the program and allow greater participation.

Sergey Tarasov detailed the rate impact of including additional participants.

Council discussed the involvement of the commercial utility customers in the LID.

Mr. Lyons was questioned as to the allocation of the funds from federal sources for customers applying through HopeSource.
Councilmember Engel asked if there were proposed methods for increasing participation in the LID, outside of opening up the parameters.

Councilmember Morgan solicited Mr. Chaw and staff for comparisons with cities with universities.

Council focused on simplifying the income requirement to 125% FPL and processing the LID applications biannually.

Council asked for an adjustment to the monthly bill comparison graph to show a discount across all utilities and what that impact would be to the bill of the average utility customer.

Energy conservation programs were discussed with Mr. Lyons.

Councilmember Engel suggested including low income benefits when franchise agreements come up for renewal.

Councilmember Miller asked for marketing outreach suggestions/improvements to better serve existing groups.

Councilmember Engel moved towards broadening the categories. Question was posed as to what the financial impact will be with the adjusted rate scale and across all rate classes.

Staff was asked to analyze the impact of a flat discount versus the existing subsidy.

City Manager Akers detailed current budget concerns and revenue implications.

Council provided direction towards moving the income requirement to 125% FPL and to process the LID applications biannually at present, while revisiting other matters by August, 2019.

Council moved for a 10 minute break at 1:52pm.

Council reconvened at 2:11pm.

Community Development Director Sackett provided an overview of parking requirements for similar communities as outlined in the council packet.

Councilmember Morgan commented on the need for parking requirements for upstairs tenants. Councilmember Lillquist responded and offered review should be on a case by case basis.
Council identified the downtown CC zone and infill residential as primary areas of concern, and discussed options for parking requirement reductions. Council desires to encourage residential growth in the CC zone and conceptualized possible incentives.

Mayor Tabb requested information from Community Development about the ramifications of incentives.

Councilmember Morgan expressed concern about the removal of parking requirements encouraging rentals instead of properties being owner occupied.

Council indicated the City should move towards relaxing requirements over eliminating them entirely, and it was suggested communicating with developers about the effects of parking requirements on their potential projects.

Community Development Director Sackett listed potential subjects for staff review, including touching base with other cities regarding their parking requirements, expanding 2 hour zones to 24 hour zones, a possible waiver from the parking requirement, and including flexibility in the current code to allow for case by case analysis of building projects.

Council retreat concluded at 3:57 pm.

ATTEST:  

Mayor

Deputy City Clerk