

CITY OF GEARHART
Worksession of the City Council
Tuesday, December 12, 2023
6:30 pm On-site and Virtual/Telephonic

A worksession of the Gearhart City Council was held Tuesday, December 12, 2023. Council members, City staff, and the public were able to attend on-site, virtually, or by dialing in on a telephone. There were some technical issues with the online audio.

Present were Mayor Kerry Smith, Councilor Reita Fackerell, Councilor Dana Gould, Councilor Preston Devereaux, Councilor Sharon Kloepfer, City Administrator Chad Sweet, Executive Assistant Krysti Ficker, and City Treasurer Justine Hill. A quorum of the Council was present.

Mayor Smith called the worksession of the City Council to order at 6:30 pm.

Treasurer Hill explained that Mayor Smith had received a newsletter from the Oregon Mayors Association that had a reminder that all elected officials are required to report suspected child abuse, which makes them mandatory reporters in the State of Oregon. This requirement for elected officials was established by HB 3071 that passed during the 2021 legislative session. Because mandatory reporters are required to complete a 30 minute training video, the training was scheduled to be completed at a worksession to ensure compliance. Treasurer Hill mentioned that the supporting documents distributed at the worksession are resources that can be reviewed. Councilors received a “Keep Oregon’s Children Safe” card; “What You Can Do About Child Abuse” handbook; and “Chapter 30: Abuse Reporting”). After some technical issues, the video from Oregon Department of Human Services was viewed. After the video, Administrator Sweet offered to answer any questions. Councilor Gould mentioned that although the video did not cover elder abuse, mandatory reporters are also required to report it (*reference Oregon Municipal Handbook - Chapter 30: Abuse Reporting*).

Administrator Sweet introduced the second topic of potentially establishing citywide sign designs. He noted that there are many signs out in the community and that many need to be replaced. He said that the City does not have a specific sign policy for itself. He briefly talked about the zoning ordinance, which has some sign requirements. He briefly went over Section 6.020(5)A&B, which specifically addresses park zoned spaces. As the City looks to create and replace signage, he feels it would be beneficial for City staff to have specific parameters on how the City of Gearhart public signs should look. He also referenced the Oregon Court of Appeals opinion that effectively ends recreational immunity for improved trails, which jeopardizes protection for public landowners of improved trails from lawsuits. Because of the increased liability, he feels the City may be required to put signage on trails and public spaces that notifies users that the property is only for recreational purposes, which would assist in protecting the City from liability claims.

There was continued discussion on the number of parks in Gearhart; a comment on paving the Ridge Path; defining entity boundaries on beach access trails; placement of wood chips on the Ridge Path; City liability based on a recent court decision; requirement of bilingual signage; and the use of the current City logo.

Administrator Sweet showed two signs that are currently in production for the tennis/pickleball court area. Councilor Fackerell had a question on specific language, which was clarified and revised. These particular sign designs were agreeable to the Council. It was discussed that these types of signs should be done immediately if they are needed and can be replaced when and if a City sign policy is implemented. Councilor Kloefer did note that there is a financial cost to replacing already existing signage.

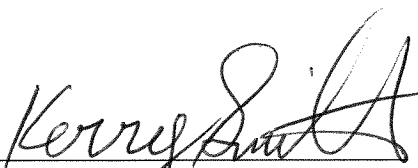
Councilor Gould agrees in consistent signage; however, questioned the Councilors' role in doing the research, investigation process, and the policy creation. She thought it may be more appropriate for a Planning Commission process. There was continued discussion on the role of the Planning Commission; appropriate projects assigned to them; a potential design review committee that focuses on aesthetics; community involvement; potential parks committee; managing sign "pollution;" creation of a parks committee; volunteerism; potential of incorporating local artists; new police department patch logo; mitigating liability with effective signage; practicality of aligning with universal symbols in signage; and the short/long term signage goals. Councilor Devereaux reiterated that the City should have consistent signage. Overall, there was agreement that exploring the option of utilizing the Planning Commission and/or potentially establishing a special committee to create a sign policy for City Council's review was favorable. Councilor Devereaux cautioned that volunteer groups can often avoid or neglect their commitment. There was continued discussion on finding vested people; assigning a point person; approaching with a asking, not demanding attitude; and discussing options during a town hall meeting.

Administrator Sweet volunteered, with the Mayor's agreement, to draft a letter to the Planning Commission to inquire about their opinion on establishing the process for a City sign policy.

Mayor Smith reminded Councilors that they should respond to the Doodle poll email regarding availability for a January Town Hall meeting.

Mayor Smith adjourned the worksession meeting at 8:02 pm.


Chad Sweet, City Administrator


Mayor Kerry Smith