

CITY OF GEARHART
Worksession of the City Council
Tuesday, March 19, 2024
6:30 pm On-site and Virtual/Telephonic

A worksession of the Gearhart City Council was held Tuesday, March 19, 2024. Council members, City staff, and the public were able to attend on-site, virtually, or by dialing in on a telephone.

Present were Mayor Kerry Smith, Councilor Preston Devereaux, Councilor Reita Fackerell, Councilor Dana Gould, Councilor Sharon Kloepfer, City Administrator Chad Sweet, Police Chief Josh Gregory, Fire Chief Josh Como, Division Chief of Training & Operations Adrienne Park, 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. He opened the discussion by asking for input on having worksessions before each City Council meeting to better prepare for items on the agenda. He explained that having discussion and clarifying items on the City Council agenda prior to the Council meeting may provide for a more focused, concise meeting when the item is presented for decision making. Mayor Smith explained that the worksessions would start before the Council meetings. Councilor Gould noted that she had made the suggestion because other Cities had found it beneficial. She thinks that it may help Councilors be better prepared and would allow citizens an opportunity to know what direction Councilors may be going before a decision is finalized in the City Council meeting. She just feels like there have been a lot of meetings and this type of system may also benefit staff. Mayor Smith requested Administrator Sweet discuss the idea with staff to see what they think of the concept. Administrator Sweet will talk with staff and thinks it may be a more efficient use of time. Mayor Smith mentioned that this process would not stop the occasional worksession. There was continued discussion and clarification on the process for worksession before City Council meetings. Mayor Smith thought the Council could try through June and reevaluate to see if the process is working for the next fiscal year. Administrator Sweet will work with Attorney Watts on how to notice the meeting. He clarified that worksessions would start at 6:30 pm and City Council meetings at 7:00 pm.

Mayor Smith had heard there were complaints about the last Town Hall meeting being too long. He suggests making them no more than 1 ½ hours and leaving the last 45 minutes for questions and answers. Councilor Devereaux had concerns because the City asked the same questions five or six times just in a different format. He suggests consolidating questions to keep citizens engaged. There was continued discussion. Councilor Fackerell requested clarification on broadening the range of questions instead of just on the public safety building, which Mayor Smith confirmed was the objective during the questions and answers section. Councilor Gould requested clarification on the next Town Hall meeting. She feels that a Town Hall's objectives should be

to present information, ask a series of questions based on the information presented, and gather feedback. She suggests only doing Town Halls when information is available. She thinks a better approach at the next meeting would be to explain that Councilors and staff are gathering new information on the public safety project (e.g., merging with other fire districts) that will be presented when the information is fully vetted. Councilor Devereaux felt he could be ready mid-April to provide information on merging fire districts. Councilor Kloefer feels strongly that information about process and timeline should be shared with the citizens at the next Town Hall. She does not want citizens to get the perception that they are just being ignored. Councilor Gould does not want the perception that she and Administrator Sweet are the only ones driving the project. Councilor Kloefer agrees with Councilor Gould's concerns and suggests that Councilor Devereaux present at the next Town Hall on the process and timeline in regard to investigating the merging of fire districts. Councilor Fackerell felt that citizens may feel more engaged if they could ask targeted questions in advance. There was discussion on using the BLOG as an outreach tool (e.g., inviting questions). Mayor Smith wants to communicate information to the community. He provided clarification on educating the public that was taken out of context on social media. Mayor Smith wants professionals in the field to provide meaningful data to everyone. There was continued discussion on social media; inability to satisfy everyone; and the need to provide educational data. Councilor Kloefer asked input from the Fire staff. Chief Como gave input on Town Halls and agreed that there is still information that needs to be presented. Mayor Smith asked if Chief Gregory had any input. Chief Gregory agrees that having the questions before is beneficial, creates a more efficient meeting, and gives targeted information that the citizens requested. The goal for the April Town Hall is to have a presentation on pros and cons of combining with Seaside Fire. Councilor Devereaux is able to present a summary of the process and timeline at the next Town Hall since there has not been adequate time to gather and prepare a formal presentation. There was continued discussion on potential questions in regard to merging (e.g., police and fire).

Mayor Smith confirmed the Town Hall meeting on Monday (March 25). Councilor Gould requested clarification on the agenda, which Mayor Smith indicated that Councilor Devereaux and/or Councilor Gould would give a brief synopsis of process and timeline for investigating a satellite system. There was discussion on blogging information and/or requests for questions in advance. The April Town Hall was tentatively scheduled for Monday, April 29.

Mayor Smith adjourned the worksession meeting at 7:21 pm.


Chad Sweet, City Administrator


Mayor Kerry Smith