

CITY OF POCA TELLO, IDAHO
CITY COUNCIL TOWN HALL MEETING
FEBRUARY 18, 2020

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1: Mayor Blad called the Town Hall meeting was called to order at 6:02
ROLL CALL p.m. Council members Roger Bray, Rick Cheatum, Linda Leeuwrik,
Claudia Ortega and Chris Stevens were present. Council member Heidi
Adamson arrived at 6:08 p.m. The meeting was held in the Council Chambers at City Hall, 911 North 7th
Avenue.

Mayor Blad welcomed attendees to the meeting and announced the meeting was being held to hear
comments from the public regarding Pocatello City government and related topics. Mr. Blad announced he
must leave the meeting for a commitment at approximately 7:00 p.m. at which time Council President
Adamson will facilitate the meeting.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 2: Council discussed pending property tax bills in the 2020 Idaho
PENDING PROPERTY Legislature at this time.
TAX LEGISLATION

Mayor Blad noted there are handouts regarding pending legislation available for the attendees. He reviewed
a map showing tax exempt properties in Pocatello and how the tax exempt properties affect the City's tax
revenue.

The following comments were expressed during Agenda Item No. 2.

Audience - What can the City do to help property owners to have lower taxes?

Ms. Stevens would like to see a comprehensive analysis of the property tax structure. She shared her
concerns with the current tax format for cities.

Ms. Leeuwrik shared her concerns with a tax burden shift from the state that are placed upon cities.
Sharing of tax revenues between cities should be re-evaluated.

Mayor Blad explained if HB409 is approved it will freeze property taxes. This includes new growth. If the
new growth is not counted, additional revenue to pay for services in connection to the added growth will
not be received.

Mr. Bray mentioned sales tax collected is supposed to fund schools and this is not happening. Almost
every school district has a levy and that increases your property tax bill. Mr. Bray shared his concerns with
tax equations and feels not all of the districts are being considered.

Audience - Supplemental levy could be curtailed by the new K-12 program being discussed by the
legislature. How do other areas deal with these topics?

HB408 sales tax revenue sharing. Revision of the sales tax revenue sharing for cities will have a negative
effect on cities.

Mr. Cheatum explained individuals serving on the State Taxation Committee are mainly from Western
Idaho and they are correcting issues in their area.

Mrs. Ortega is concerned that property taxes are increasing. She would like the state of Idaho to change the
way property taxes are figured. She encouraged individuals to call, write and email their state legislators.

Ms. Stevens encouraged individuals to insert a part of their message in the title of their email to legislators. This will help legislators to identify their message when scrolling topics.

Audience - Mentioned the 3rd reading for HB409 is February 20. Members in the audience mentioned the western part of Idaho has the problem. Pulling in other areas of the state that are not having a problem is a concern.

Mr. Cheatum mentioned a taskforce is being formed to try and create a permanent solution for the problem. He noted this is a statewide problem and needs to be addressed as a whole.

Mr. Bray agreed there is a problem and it will take a collective effort to create a solution.

Ms. Leeuwrik shared it was mentioned HB409 was meant to force cities to address the property tax issue.

Ms. Stevens agreed the problem brought up by HB409 is not a new problem. Communities can come together and make steps toward correcting the problem.

Mrs. Ortega feels they should be focused on the things that city government can control. Continue to look at the City budget closely and identify each expense.

Ms. Leeuwrik encouraged community members to be involved in the City's budget process. She noted this is approximately a 6-month process and all department expenditures are thoroughly presented and considered before a budget is passed.

Mayor Blad announced if individuals are not able to attend the budget meetings, they can watch it on the internet.

Audience - Comments from the public included concerns that the whole property tax structure needs to be corrected. It is a bigger problem than local government. Questions about water rights and use of the City's water followed.

It was mentioned the building of trails are funded through other entities and not the City. The pond at the Bannock County Wellness Complex was donated by Portneuf Health Foundation and is owned by Bannock County. The wetland project at Zoo Idaho was through grants and donations. The City owns quite a few water rights and water is diverted to fill the pond at Zoo Idaho.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 3: Council received comments from the public regarding Pocatello City GENERAL DISCUSSION government and related topics at this time.

Audience – Request for Energy Task Force update and budget amount toward the program going forward.

Mayor Blad explained he has not been able to work on the Energy Task Force. This topic will be looked at in future discussions.

Audience - East Fork of Mink Creek and Nordic Center area related to beaver populations were discussed. Citizen group has been monitoring the population for a while and they feel beavers help protect the City's watershed. Believes the presence of beaver in the Mink Creek area should be an option for the City to consider.

Mr. Bray mentioned East Fork of Mink Creek has received support from the City for water conservation. He noted that this is one of the major water sources for the City.

Audience - West Bench of City Creek area. Proposal to extend the area to the north was shared.

Mr. Bray gave a brief history of the City Creek area. Land for development and other needs will need to be researched before the City would be involved in the proposal.

General discussion regarding the area followed. Possible funding for the property to be purchased were discussed. It was suggested a group be created to look at the area to be utilized as a recreation area. Have individuals that are supportive and opposed to the project serve on the committee.

Audience – Concerns with large parcels of land being purchased which may cause zero access for individuals followed. Concerns with recycling programs and ending the “at large” program in Pocatello was shared.

Mr. Bray mentioned the City has faced the same roadblocks regarding recycling materials as other cities. However, staff found a glass recycling vendor to help reduce materials going into the landfill.

Curbside recycling is available to all Pocatello residents at no cost. Recycling of yard waste is also available at a minimal cost. It was noted most plastics are no longer accepted.

Ms. Leeuwrik explained this is an international problem and not just locally. When China stopped accepting plastic it became a large expense to dispose of materials. The costs to process materials has risen. However, glass recycling has been successful and all of the product is being utilized.

Mayor Blad left the meeting at this time. (7:13 p.m.) He turned the Chair of the meeting to Council President Adamson.

Tom Kirkman, Deputy Public Work Director, gave an update on the City’s recycling program. He explained the City has been very proactive in the recycling of products.

Mrs. Ortega encouraged citizens to be responsible regarding recycling products.

Audience - High levy rate for Pocatello was discussed. Growing the denominator to try and keep property taxes down needs to be researched. What can be done to lower the levy rate to be more competitive for businesses?

Audience - Council was encouraged to look at bear essentials when considering the budget. Look at limiting the services provided for a few years to bring businesses into the community.

Ms. Adamson mentioned citizen input to identify where budget cuts should be made is welcome. It is difficult for City Council to make the decision to cut because individuals have different needs. She explained an entire City department was cut a few years ago and this was difficult. It was noted that divisions of Public Works were combined into one department in 2019 and this resulted in a cost savings.

Ms. Leeuwrik added Council is already looking at cost savings through eliminating duplicate services as they go through the annual budget process. She explained one of the things businesses look for when considering a community are amenities such as parks and trails. Ms. Leeuwrik feels these are an important part of the community.

Mr. Bray feels it is a responsibility of Council to make decisions regarding the budgeting process. Council cut out a department when the revenues were decreasing. Mr. Bray noted that it is difficult to identify what the majority will be happy with.

Ms. Stevens feels the Council's job and City employee's job is to determine what the community needs vs. wants. Ms. Stevens added that the current process is not the only process and a different process may be more effective.

Audience - During the upcoming budget process the Council was asked to research combining services with City of Chubbuck to cut costs. Discussion regarding opportunities to make public comments during each step of the budget process was held.

Council President Adamson mentioned that staff will contact Chubbuck representatives to see if they are interested in combining services. She clarified that written comments from the public are collected during the entire budget process. However, oral comments at the public hearing prior to passing the budget is usually the only open forum that is held.

Audience - Parks and Recreation facilities are important for families. The parks provide a very low cost form of entertainment/activity.

Council President Adamson shared that based upon nationwide statistics, Pocatello's recovery costs to manage our parks are very good in comparison to other cities of similar size.

Methods to track the accuracy of the actual savings of combining departments were discussed.

Mrs. Ortega noted the City has systems in place for every department and she would like information to evaluate how they are utilizing funds.

It was explained the breakdown will be presented during the City's annual budget process.

Audience - Areas around Pocatello were chosen by Council members to evaluate last year and members of the audience are interested in the outcome. Council members were encouraged to look at the northwest side of Old Town. Concerns regarding multiple people living in the same residence and also safety issues were shared.

Mr. Cheatum announced there is an App called "Pocatello Connect" and gave a brief description of how to use it. He suggested that citizens use the App to report concerns.

Audience - It was suggested the City Council budget for two (2) more Code Enforcement officers to help enforce City Code violations.

AGENDA ITEM NO. 4: Council President Adamson thanked everyone for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 7:58 p.m.
ADJOURNED

TOWN HALL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 18, 2020

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APPROVED:

BRIAN C. BLAD, MAYOR

PREPARED BY AND ATTEST:

RUTH NEWSOM, CITY CLERK