

## MINUTES

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING  
OF  
JULY 25, 2014  
5:30 P.M.

THE DALLES CITY HALL  
313 COURT STREET  
THE DALLES, OREGON

**PRESIDING:** Mayor Steve Lawrence

**COUNCIL PRESENT:** Bill Dick, Carolyn Wood, Tim McGlothlin, Linda Miller

**COUNCIL ABSENT:** Dan Spatz

**STAFF PRESENT:** City Manager Nolan Young, City Attorney Gene Parker, City Clerk Julie Krueger, Public Works Director Dave Anderson, Administrative Intern Rich Wachter, Finance Director Kate Mast, Airport Manager Chuck Covert, Police Captain Ed Goodman, Engineer Dale McCabe, Wastewater Division Manager Steve Byers, Water Distribution Manager Ray Johnson, Water Treatment Manager Larry McCollum

### CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Lawrence called the meeting to order at 12:05 p.m.

### ROLL CALL

Roll call was conducted by City Clerk Krueger; Councilor Spatz absent.

### DISCUSSION REGARDING CITY'S SAFETY PROGRAMS AND WORKER'S COMPENSATION PROGRAMS

Mayor Lawrence said this meeting had been set up to review the City's safety programs as a result of concerns about worker's compensation premium increases. He provided a copy of the SAIF policy performance history report, noting the experience modification and premiums had been increasing substantially over the past several years. He asked what the expected 2014-15 premium would be based on current information.

Mike Courtney, the City's worker's compensation agent, said the premiums could increase by \$40,000 to \$50,000 in the next fiscal year, based on current information. He said the average experience modification number was 1, but the City's recent modification numbers were well above that number. Courtney said the combination of a higher experience modification and severity of SAIF claims were both factors for the high premiums.

Luke Betts, Senior Safety Management Consultant for SAIF, said he had been working with the Public Works Department on some programs and quarterly training. He said they were currently working on ergonomics and supervisory training and assessment. Betts said SAIF underwriting would consider the training when they develop rates.

Mayor Lawrence asked what would happen if SAIF cancelled the policy. Courtney said SAIF discontinued service, the City would go into a high risk pool, which would result in much higher premiums. He said the National Council of Compensation Insurance operated the risk pool and would assign the city to a servicing company. Courtney said in addition to the higher premiums, an additional modifier would be added and that would increase the premiums even higher. He said the City would need to improve their safety performance over a period of time in order to bring the experience modifier back to a more average rating.

Councilor Miller asked if there was a cap on the number of loss time days before an employee would go on long term disability. Courtney said there was no cap, but that eventually, settlements were made. He said when an employee received a settlement, there was still a liability to the City as they could come back with related issues in the future and re-open a claim.

Mayor Lawrence asked if SAIF was comfortable with the programs in place at this time. Mr. Betts said the Action Plan was being worked on and when completed, SAIF may recommend an additional program. He said trends would be considered and whether incidents were less frequent and less severe. Betts said the City had a long history of loss and that a culture of change was needed for long term improvement. He said this was an issue that needed to start with the leadership personnel.

Mayor Lawrence suggested staff consider more frequent and substantial safety meetings be implemented. He said the Safety Committee should be reviewing accident and incident reports to offer suggestions on how to prevent accidents. City Manager Young said the City did use incident forms.

Mr. Courtney pointed out that many of the accidents were preventable, but that the programs put in place over this year should help turn things around.

Mr. Betts reviewed the SAIF quarterly program review with the Council, including number of injuries and time loss, compared to industry averages, time loss days, cost of injuries and injuries by department and month.

There was a discussion regarding development of incentive programs and recognition for no accidents and injuries. Mr. Betts said it was better to implement an incentive program that would recognize employees doing something good, rather than to focus on a program that would only talk about time loss. He said that could have a negative impact in which employees didn't report accidents because they didn't want to impact other employees who may receive an incentive for no time loss accidents.

Councilor Miller said she disagreed because her place of employment had a large sign that had the number of days with no accidents and the employees took great pride in it, which made them work more safely and to have more concern for each other.

Mayor Lawrence compared the City's experience modification to Wasco County as similar entities and said the County's modification was at a 1. Courtney said the County had established a good safety record through a culture of safety.

Public Works Director Anderson said they were working hard to improve their safety record and taking an approach that all accidents were preventable. He said all accident reports were investigated immediately, identifying what caused an accident, why it happened and how to prevent it in the future. In response to a question, Anderson said each division had safety discussion at their morning muster. He said traffic control plans were developed before crews went out to work on projects and all vehicles were now equipped with lift gates.

Mayor Lawrence said the City had recently been issued two OSHA violations. He asked what the City's response was to the violations. Anderson said proper procedures had been developed and related to staff.

Police Captain Goodman said approximately half of the Police Department injuries occurred due to contact with suspects, which could not be avoided. He said he reviewed all accident and incident reports for the Police Department.

In response to a question regarding vehicle inspections, Anderson said the Public Works vehicles had daily CDL inspection and quarterly facility inspections. He said the Department also performed annual evaluations on the fleet.

Mayor Lawrence said the City needed to implement a formal plan to get the experience modification lowered on a consistent basis.

City Manager Young noted that the City had a higher number of field workers, compared to Wasco County, which had an impact on the rates.

Mike Courtney said that was partially true, but the real problems with rates was the tier level and experience modification numbers.

The City Council asked to have Safety Committee minutes forwarded to them for review and a quarterly report from the City Manager on safety programs.

Councilor Dick said he believed the employees needed to have a safety culture to be proud of and said he agreed with Councilor Miller that signs with the number of days accident free, was a morale booster, not a detriment.

Mr. Betts said the sign alone would not work, that the most important key was to develop a culture of safety, starting with the City's leadership.

Mayor Lawrence asked that the City-wide Safety Committee review incident and accident reports and to review programs on a regular basis. City Manager Young said the departmental safety committees reviewed the details by site location.

Councilor McGlothlin said he had looked at the SAIF website and they had many free brochures on safety that could be placed in employee break rooms and that the Columbia Gorge Community College offered safety training. Public Works Director Anderson said staff did attend the classes at the college when appropriate.

#### ADJOURNMENT

Being no further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 1:48 p.m.

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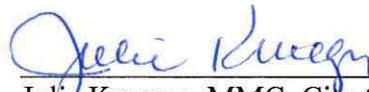
Submitted by/  
Julie Krueger, MMC  
City Clerk

SIGNED:



Stephen E. Lawrence, Mayor

ATTEST:



Julie Krueger, MMC, City Clerk