

**CITY OF PROSSER, WASHINGTON
601 7TH STREET
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 2008**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Warden called the Work Session of the Prosser City Council to order at 7:02 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council Members Becken, Chambers, Everett, Rainer, Taylor, and Troemel were present. Council Member Poteet had requested an excused absence.

WALNUT TREES / THOUSAND CANKERS DISEASE

Gwen Hoheisel of the Washington State University Extension Office informed the Council of the newly reported Walnut Twig Beetle infestation and related Thousand Cankers Disease of Walnut trees in Prosser. This is the first reported outbreak in the State of Washington. Trees are killed within three years after initial symptoms are noted. There is no known cure at this time. Experts recommend removing the damaged trees and chipping all wood products. Ms. Hoheisel stressed the need for public education on this aggressive problem.

Public Works Director L.J. Da Corsi said there were 84 Walnut trees on City property and six were already identified as dead.

Mayor Warden encouraged State and County participation to address this situation.

FISCAL YEAR 2009 BUDGET DISCUSSIONS

a) Water Fund

City Attorney Howard Saxton provided an overview of irrigation options and rules as the Council had previously expressed a desire to “break even” on the annual cost of providing and maintaining the irrigation system within the City limits. Mr. Saxton explained the billing agreement with the Sunnyside Valley Irrigation District (SVID) and presented options for the Council to consider. It was noted there were several categories of irrigation users and any rate changes must have a direct relationship between the fee charged and the service provided. Those customers who have irrigation rights, but do not have irrigation water, could not be expected to pay for equipment, maintenance or capital improvements.

Ted Pooler of Huijbregtse Louman & Associates (HLA) provided a handout entitled, “Water Rate Analysis.” Mr. Pooler and Mr. Da Corsi had discussed revisions to the proposed 2009 Water System Capital Improvements. Mr. Da Corsi felt it was most important to complete the meter upgrade in 2009, for better utilization of staff time. Mr. Pooler explained utility tax considerations for water, sewer and irrigation. The Council also discussed rate charges for water, sewer and irrigation.

Mr. Pooler noted the Sewer Fund may require a 6 percent rate increase in 2010 or a 3 percent rate increase in both 2009 and 2010. Council Member Rainer asked when the last rate increase occurred. Mr. Pooler said a rate decrease happened in 2005 or 2006.

Council Member Taylor expressed his interest in developing a method to cover irrigation costs. Mr. Taylor asked if a 2.5 percent water rate increase, along with a 2 percent utility tax increase for both water and sewer would be advantageous at this time. Mr. Pooler said he would like to study that approach.

Council Member Everett liked the idea of a 3 percent sewer rate increase for both 2009 and 2010 better than a 6 percent increase in a single year.

b) General Fund

City Administrator Charlie Bush informed the Council the \$20 vehicle tab fee could be implemented at the council level. Any amount over \$20 required a vote of the people. It was estimated a \$20 tab fee would raise approximately \$100,000 each year. That revenue would be dedicated to the Street Fund for such items as chip seal and road repairs.

Council Member Becken wanted the issue placed before the voters. City Administrator Bush said this would be an excellent question to include in the upcoming community survey. Council Member Everett said this was a good way to fund street improvements.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the City Council at this time, the Work Session of the Prosser City Council was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Mayor Paul Warden

Attest:

City Clerk Sherry Biggs