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**Work Session Minutes
(Levy Preparation)**

**Monday, May 22, 2017
5:30 p.m., Community Auditorium**

***Minutes are unofficial until approved by Council.
Council approved minutes as presented June 12, 2017.***

1. ROLL CALL:

Council President Johnston called the Work Session to order at 5:32 p.m.

ROLL CALL: COUNCIL PRESENT: Thomas Johnston, Council President; Timothy Rippe; Ronald Thompson; Elena Uhing; Matthew Vandehey; and Mayor Peter Truax (arrived at 5:36 pm). **ABSENT:** Malynda Wenzl, excused.

STAFF PRESENT: Jesse VanderZanden, City Manager; Paul Downey, Administrative Services Director; Rob Foster, Public Works Director (in the audience); Tom Gamble, Parks and Recreation Director (in the audience); Michael Kinkade, Fire Chief (in the audience); J. F. Schutz, Police Chief (in the audience); Colleen Winters, Library Director (in the audience); Brenda Camilli, Human Resources Manager (in the audience); Bev Maughan, Executive Assistant to City Manager (in the audience); Brandi Walstead, Program Coordinator (in the audience); and Anna Ruggles, City Recorder.

2. WORK SESSION: LEVY PREPARATION

Downey and VanderZanden facilitated the work session, noting the purpose of the work session was so Martha DeLong, Campbell DeLong Resources, who is the City's polling consultant, could present the result of the 2017 Levy Voter Survey, which were telephone interviews conducted with 300 highly reliable voters between April 27 and May 9, 2017, to assess the support for a levy rate of \$1.95 and to identify the best ways to communicate the levy's benefit.

DeLong presented a PowerPoint presentation overview of the methodology; research results, including respondent demographics, awareness and perception of core responsibilities, reaction to levy request, reaction to Forest Grove levy facts; and conclusions and recommendations. DeLong reported the survey asked voters if they would vote "Yes" to replace the levy at a rate of \$1.95 per \$1,000 assessed value, an increase of \$0.35 over the current levy, noting projection assumptions indicated that a \$1.95 would not pass (62 percent No/38 percent Yes). After hearing a series of factual statements regarding the key benefits of the levy, "Yes" Voters were significantly more likely to be very confident of their vote. DeLong advised based on the numbers, an increase of \$0.35 is unlikely to be approved in November, 2017, noting about one-quarter are very confident they will support a levy at the \$1.95 rate and about one-third are Fence Sitters. DeLong added while some increase in the rate may be possible, ideally, if the City asked for a 5-year renewal at the current rate of \$1.60, there would be stronger

support based on past survey results. In conclusion of the above-noted presentation, DeLong advised focusing communications on key benefits that are very useful to all voters, i.e., fire responds to over 3,500 calls each year and police officers responded to about 2,200 emergency calls in 2016, as well as the levy would help ensure the City continues to offer a full range of services, i.e., library programs and hours, park maintenance and aquatic center hours; however, while these programs are important, they are not reasons why voters would support the levy.

Council Discussion:

Mayor Truax opened the floor and roundtable discussion ensued as Council discussed the above-noted Levy Voter Survey results at a \$1.95 and current Local Option Levy at \$1.60 that expires June 30, 2018. DeLong responded to various concerns, inquiries and scenarios Council presented pertaining to the survey results, such as demographics of the respondents; quality of services provided by the City; efficient use of taxpayers' dollars; and reaction to increasing the levy \$0.35 over the current rate of \$1.60. DeLong indicated because the City plans to ask voters to approve a new five-year levy in November, 2017, an off-year election, the survey focused on the highly reliable voters, which tend to be homeowners, over 60 years of age, longtime residents, and more than half had college degrees. In response to inquiries pertaining to a "sweet spot" between \$0.35 increase and no increase at all, DeLong hesitantly advised asking not more than \$0.10 or \$0.15 increase, noting that even at the current rate of \$1.60, success will depend on substantial effort to educate voters. DeLong indicated voters are expressing uncertainty about the economy at the national level, noting this tends to make voters concerned about their own financial situations and less likely to vote for an increase. In addition, DeLong advised it is important that elected officials and staff be unified in support of the chosen levy amount and focusing on the key benefits that will be useful to all voters, especially the Fence Sitters, when communicating the message. In conclusion of the above-noted discussion, VanderZanden advised staff would continue working with the consultant on the levy preparation for discussion in a follow-up work session.

Council took no formal action nor made any formal decisions during the work session.

3. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Truax adjourned the work session at 6:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Anna D. Ruggles, CMC, City Recorder