

**PHILOMATH CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MEETING
MINUTES
September 9, 2020**

1. ROLL CALL

A special meeting of the City Council of the City of Philomath was called to order by Mayor Eric Niemann on September 9, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. Due to the Oregon Governor’s Executive Order 20-12 requiring social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held via video conferencing technology with the meeting live-streamed to the public on the Facebook application.

Present:

Mayor Eric Niemann
Council President David Low
Councilor Ruth Causey
Councilor Doug Edmonds
Councilor Chas Jones
Councilor Matt Lehman

Absent:

Councilor Matthew Thomas

Staff Present:

City Manager Chris Workman
City Recorder Ruth Post

Staff Absent:

Finance Director Joan Swanson
Chief of Police Ken Rueben
City Attorney Jim Brewer
Public Works Director Kevin Fear

Wildfire Update: Mayor Niemann provided a recap of Governor Brown’s conference call this afternoon to address the major fires burning across multiple locations throughout Oregon. He commented on local efforts for evacuees displaced into Benton County, available resources and information sharing. He noted that the Governor has requested a federal disaster declaration. He described outreach extended to the Siletz Tribal leadership.

Mr. Workman reviewed information sharing that staff has been performing via social media and the website and the preparations that the Frolic and Rodeo Association is making to provide assistance if needed.

Councilor Jones noted offerings of local space for camping or livestock that are posted on social media. Mr. Workman encouraged directing those offers to Benton County Emergency Management for coordination.

2. NEW BUSINESS

1. Benton County Cultural Coalition (BCCC) grant letter of intent – Mayor Niemann reviewed the grants offered by the BCCC and the letter of interest that is to be reviewed by the Council. He described the potential uses of a grant to bring a traveling exhibit from Oregon Black Pioneers to Philomath in January 2021. He reviewed additional public comments that were received from Anissa Teslow and Jessica Andrade regarding the potential uses and timing of the exhibits. He noted discussions from the Inclusivity Ad Hoc Committee regarding the need for education, including the history of racism in Oregon.

Councilor Edmonds commented on the on-line presentation available from the Coos Bay Library regarding the lynching of Alonzo Tucker, the only known recorded lynching of a Black person in Oregon.

1 Councilor Low reviewed concerns about the application, including the amount of the grant
2 being requested and why the Council was receiving the information at this late date. He
3 described using a process of reviewing action items from the Inclusivity Ad Hoc Committee
4 and incorporating them into the Strategic Plan. He stated concerns including the cost of the
5 book described and suggested a partnership with the library might be better. He encouraged
6 a Strategic Plan event centered on Ruben Shipley at Mt. Union Cemetery, recommended
7 delaying the exhibit until a more appropriate non-pandemic time, and questioned when the
8 City engaged in a sister city status with Coos Bay, Oregon.

9
10 Councilor Causey indicated her support for the exhibit but had concerns about the status of
11 the timing with the pandemic. She indicated her concerns about purchasing the book, which
12 she had checked out from the library, and supported Councilor Low's suggestion the library
13 should make a decision about whether to purchase an additional copy. She described the
14 difficult content of the book and the challenges in reading it.

15
16 Councilor Lehman confirmed the current status of the Benton County Historical Museum as
17 being open and felt that it would be an appropriate location for an exhibit. He stated support
18 for the Oregon Black Pioneers exhibit. He stated the need to balance the momentum on
19 inclusivity moving forward with the issues of the pandemic.

20
21 Mayor Niemann noted the current exhibit on display at the Museum is on Japanese
22 internment in World War II and the process of applying for the grant.

23
24 Councilor Edmonds stated support for the exhibit as an educational opportunity at the
25 Museum but questioned the reference to a sister city status with Coos Bay as something he
26 had not heard of before. He recommended further review of any relationship with Coos Bay.
27 Mayor Niemann noted that the sister city reference was only a word choice and it came
28 about through Philomath and Coos Bay each having significant historical events related to
29 Oregon Black history.

30
31 Councilor Jones thanked Mayor Niemann for bringing the grant forward and suggested
32 bringing the ask amount into line with the BCCC's typical award amount. He suggested the
33 Inclusivity Committee could further flesh out the grant specifics if the letter of interest results
34 in a full grant application invitation. He supported the timing of an exhibit in January and
35 February if the pandemic conditions allow for it. He noted that the grant wouldn't prohibit
36 additional inclusivity activities in the near term.

37
38 Councilor Causey noted the current prioritization of activities that the Inclusivity Committee
39 is processing through, including speakers. She supported a diversity collection in the library.

40
41 **MOTION:** Councilor Low moved, Councilor Edmonds second, that the City Council submit a
42 letter of interest for a \$1,300 grant to the Benton County Cultural Coalition for the purpose of
43 advancing cultural awareness of racism in the community and direct the Inclusivity Ad Hoc
44 Committee to review and recommend uses for the grant funds and present them at the
45 October City Council meeting.

46
47 There was discussion about the value of identifying the intended use in the letter of intent.
48 Mayor Niemann noted the exhibit is \$500 per month and a presentation by a member of the
49 Oregon History Society would be approximately \$150. Councilor Lehman suggested a grant

1 for \$1,300 to rent the exhibit for two months and funds for marketing materials. Councilor
2 Jones suggested the exhibit rental and a speaker in January 2021 with marketing materials
3 would meet the \$1,300 grant amount and recommended the Inclusivity Committee review
4 and make the submission. There was further discussion about the use of the Committee in
5 the process and in development of future opportunities.

6
7 Councilor Low and Councilor Edmonds withdrew their motion.

8
9 **MOTION:** Councilor Causey moved, Councilor Edmonds second, that the City Council
10 pursue a grant from the Benton County Cultural Coalition for \$1,300 to host the Oregon
11 Black Pioneers exhibit at the Benton County Historical Museum.

12
13 There was discussion about the inclusion in the motion of a \$150 honorarium for a speaker.
14 The motion was revised by friendly amendment.

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16 **REVISED MOTION:** Councilor Causey moved, Councilor Edmonds second, that the City
17 Council pursue a grant from the Benton County Cultural Coalition for \$1,300 to host the
18 Oregon Black Pioneers exhibit at the Benton County Historical Museum and for a \$150
19 honorarium for a speaker. Motion APPROVED 6-0 (Yes: Causey, Edmonds, Jones,
20 Lehman, Low and Niemann; No: None).

21
22 Mayor Niemann reminded the Council that Friday is 9/11, Patriots Day.

23
24 **3. ADJOURNMENT**

25 Seeing no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m. by Mayor Eric
26 Niemann.

27 Eric Niemann, Mayor

Ruth Post, MMC, City Recorder