

CLARKSTON CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
Special Meeting
February 10, 2017

CALL TO ORDER: The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m. by Mayor Lawrence.

COUNCIL: Beadles, Beauchamp, Kolstad, Pierce; excused Blackmon, Murray, Campbell
STAFF: Storey, Austin, Cooper

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Mayor Lawrence called Executive Session at 1:03pm to discuss Litigation. No action is expected from this session. Estimated to last for 15 minutes. Mayor Lawrence requested a 5 minute extension at 1:16pm. At 1:20pm, meeting was called back to order.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Authorization of Fire Department SAFER Grant Application

Chief Cooper explained that the SAFER Grant would fund 2 firefighters for 3 years. There is a cost share required from the grant. FEMA will supply a percentage of salary for new firefighters at the following level: 1st year – 75%, 2nd year – 75%, 3rd year – 35%. Chief Cooper voiced some concerns: One concern is the SAFER Grant funded positions have to be scheduled to work on fire engine 50% or more of time. The grant allows only for hire of new employees. It cannot be used for current reserves. Anticipated award notification begins May or June. It may be August or September before decision to accept grant would have to be made. The SAFER grant requires a commitment to maintain current staffing levels plus SAFER positions for 3 years.

Councilmember Pierce asked how situation would change in 3 years with funding. It would be limiting our options for Fire Department decision going forward.

Chief Cooper advised that he would not be able to answer the funding question due to variables with business and revenue in the city 3 years from now.

Attorney Richardson had 2 questions. What staffing level would be required from the Grant? Currently there are 12 positions in the Fire Department. There is a ULP complaint filed that already requires 12 funded positions. The SAFER Grant may require staffing at 14 funded positions. Will future fire fighter retirees have to be replaced? Attorney Richardson advised that the City would probably be required to hire replacement fire fighters for any retirees.

Chief Cooper affirmed that retirees would have to be replaced to maintain the staffing levels required by the grant. He mentioned that there is the possibility of a waiver for staffing levels that could be requested.

Councilmember Pierce stated that our hands would be tied for 3 years if the grant funds were accepted. It limits the City's options with Lewiston Fire & Asotin County Fire and becomes causes the City to be inflexible.

Chief Cooper agreed that if SAFER position were not filled, funds would have to be returned. The decision would not have to be made until after the City's decision on current impact to the bargaining group was made.

Councilmember Pierce motioned to approve application, Councilmember Beauchamp seconded.

Councilmember Kolstad said that the grant should not determine if Fire Department is funded. Councilmember Beauchamp said approving the grant application may say a lot to others working on current options for continuation of the Fire Department.

Councilmember Pierce said approving the grant doesn't mean we have to accept the grant.

Councilmember Beauchamp said the last SAFER grant was 100% funded, now it requires a cost sharing by the City.

Councilmember Pierce asked about the amount of savings over 3 years. If the grant application is accepted,

we need to decline if it would be bad business for the City.

Councilmember Beadles stated that declining the grant may cause problem in future grant requests.

Councilmember Pierce said that the SAFER Grant funding would provide a cushion for keeping 12 positions.

Councilmember Kolstad said if the City is going with 12 funded fire fighter positions, the City should make that commitment without reliance on grant funds. This is exactly what happened before with the SAFER grant. To keep from repeating this, we should make the decision without the grant.

Motion failed 1-3; Pierce in favor, Kolstad, Beauchamp, Beadles, opposed.

ADJOURN:

Meeting adjourned at 1:48p.m.

Steve Austin

Monika Lawrence, Mayor