

**COUNCIL** from page 1A

Discussions and deliberations conducted during an executive session cannot by statute be reported in detail, but the agenda released to the public refers to a performance evaluation of the City Manager. No action was taken during the session.

The council's regular meeting began with the announcement of Mayor Henry's appointments to the Florence Planning Commission, Clare Kurth, and to the Florence Urban Renewal Agency, Graham Ross.

After this, the success of the Siuslaw School District's Athletic Department was the subject of a proclamation issued and read into the record.

Henry stated, "Whereas the girls volleyball team made it to the state playoffs, the girls and boys cross country teams and the boys football team won the state championships, and whereas winning three 2021 Oregon School Activ-

ities Association (OSAA) State Championships for our division brought honor to Siuslaw Highschool and the City of Florence and the entire coaching staff, school administration, the school board, team parents, faculty and student body at Siuslaw High School, the City of Florence and the greater Florence area were integral to in guiding the teams to victory through their unwavering support. ... I do hereby recognize and heartily congratulate Siuslaw High School and the 2021 fall athletes on their outstanding achievements."

The first substantive action of the meeting came as councilors revisited the previously considered change to city code related to proposed Ordinance No. 22, Series 2021. This ordinance would amend the Florence City Code by adding Chapter 17 to Title 1 regarding the establishment of a Multiple-Unit Property Tax Exemption (MUPTE) Program.

According to the city

website and the materials presented to councilors, MUPTE is a state-enabled housing incentive program that allows cities of all sizes across Oregon to exempt property taxes on residential improvements of approved multi-unit properties for up to ten years. Although the State of Oregon enables this program, each municipality has the opportunity to shape the program to meet its own goals by controlling the geography of where the exemption is available, application process and fees, program requirements, criteria, and program cap. The intent is to lower operating costs in the early years of a housing development so that it becomes more financially feasible.

In order to adopt MUPTE, the City of Florence must receive resolutions of support from 51% of the taxing rate in Florence. Currently, the City of Florence has received resolutions of support from 60.95% of the taxing rate including: Lane Community College, Siuslaw School District, Port of Siuslaw, Siuslaw Valley Fire and Rescue, Western Lane Ambulance District and Florence Urban Renewal

Agency. As of the Monday meeting, the Siuslaw Library Board had yet to consider the resolution of support but planned to at its Dec. 15 meeting.

The MUPTE Program does not reduce the current taxes on the undeveloped land, but it does delay the receipt of the increased tax revenue from the residential improvements of approved MUPTE developments, exempting the property from being charged property taxes for up to 10 years. The property owner continues to pay taxes on the land and any commercial improvements to the land.

With the exemption program, the tax revenue on the newly constructed dwelling units is collected beginning after 10 years. The exemption can make housing financially feasible, and the city and other Florence taxing districts grows its tax base in the long term.

The council had previously considered Ordinance No. 22, Series 2021, but was constrained from proceeding with a vote on the subject after Councilor Maggie Wisniewski, at the Nov. 29 council meeting, voted "nay" after the re-

quired first reading of the proposed ordinance in a 4-1 vote.

Councilor Bill Meyer, who has supported tax incentives for development, spoke briefly of what he perceived as possible public misunderstanding regarding the ordinance, and its connected resolution.

"I think there is some confusion out there ... I'd like to make it clear. The city with this action is not building any public housing. We aren't building high-end housing, we are not building low-end public housing, we are not building any housing period," Meyer stated. "I would also like to emphasize that there is no tax increase on the part of our citizens with the action of this motion."

Henry agreed with Meyer's observation and clarified the resulting tax situation.

"These taxing authorities are not giving up any income; they will continue to receive the tax revenue on the land's value. The only thing they are giving up is revenue on any construction that would take place in the future," Henry said.

The second reading of Ordinance 22 then occurred, which allowed for the reconsideration of the ordinance which was motioned, seconded and approved on a 4-1 vote, with Wisniewski opposed.

The connected Resolution No. 39 was then also passed 4-1, again with Wisniewski opposed.

Following this, Florence Economic Development Catalyst Sarah Moehrke presented the council with an opportunity to apply for an Economic Development Agency's Travel, Tourism, and Outdoor Recreation Funding Opportunity for

a yet to be determined amount, but not exceed \$800,000, to expand Historic Old Town's Veterans Memorial Park.

Council approved Moerke's request in the form of Resolution No. 41, Series 2021.

Next on the agenda was the performance of Reynolds as city manager, which had been the subject of the executive session.

Since taking the role, Reynolds has received stellar reviews in her evaluations. This review continued in that vein.

Henry went over the specifics of the review process and summarized his discussions with other councilors and Reynolds which were again extremely positive.

"I am extremely proud of our staff and of the direction our city manager has given them. Erin has performed in an exceptional manner. She is a high performance manager and leads by example," Henry said.

The mayor's comments were accepted graciously by Reynolds, who acknowledged the work of the council and her staff. Reynolds has for the third year received the same base salary of \$139,888 and has accepted contributions to her PERS retirement account in lieu of a raise.

That will continue, although with an increase in the city's commitment from 3% to 6% of her salary in 2023. Reynolds will also receive a four year contract starting in January 2022 instead of the yearly contract currently in effect.

Reynolds new contract agreement was approved unanimously.

The consent agenda items approved by the council included Resolution No. 41, Series 2021, to accept a Recreational Trails Program grant in the amount of \$115,000 for construction of Phase 1 of the Siuslaw Estuary Trail.


The acceptance of an engineering professional services proposal from Kennedy Jenks Consultants of \$325,910 for the UV Disinfection System at the Wastewater Treatment Plant and the acceptance of a proposal as submitted by StepUp IT Services, LLC for a Managed Information Technology (IT) Services professional contract in the amount of \$33,319 for the fiscal year ending 2022, and for the amount of \$100,476 per fiscal year thereafter was approved.

In addition, Reynolds spoke of the requirements of Senate Bill 866, which mandate the city to acknowledge the manner and mechanisms which will be employed to continue the operation of the building inspection program. This request was also approved.

Councilors spoke briefly of the work done with committees on which they serve and applauded the work done by the Public Works Department to prepare Old Town and the Bay Street Interpretive Center for the Making Spirits Bright Holiday Festivities.

The next City Council meeting is scheduled for Jan. 11, 2022.

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