

League of Women Voters of Tacoma – Pierce County Observer Corps

Pierce County Council

September 18, 2018

Lydia Zepeda reporting

Started at 3:08pm ended at 5:48pm

Members present: Connie Ladenburg, Douglas Richardson, Dan Roach, Pam Roach, Rick Talbert (left around 5pm), Derek Young

Members absent: Jim McCune

Others present: county executive, director of finance, finance staff, members of the public.

Summary:

This focus of this council meeting was the release of the 2019 budget by the finance department. <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/5908/2019-Budget> The budget will be discussed and components approved over the next couple months, those interested should attend the budget meetings and provide comment.

The council filled positions in the Veterans Advisory Board, the Aging and Disabilities Resources Board and the Human Services Citizens' Advisory Board. It should be noted that there are still many vacancies in the Aging and Disabilities Resources Board

<https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/2176/Aging-Disability-Resources-Advisory-Boar> and the Human Services Citizens' Advisory Board

<https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/30012/CAB-Application-12-30-13?bidId=>

The council proclaimed September 24-30 Diaper Need Awareness Week.

They voted to limit speed to 20mph in school zones when school signs are flashing and reduce speeds by no more than 10mph of posted speeds in construction zones.

They approved all-terrain vehicles on specific roads in the county starting in 2019.

They approved an additional \$20,000 for a total of \$56,000 to cover losses at the Pierce County fair; \$400,000 for hangar rooves at Thun field; and \$1.2 million to purchase the downtown TAPCO building.

They approved an advisory committee to develop strategic goals for spending the expected total of \$123 million by 2035 from the capital sales tax on Sound Transit 3 earmarked for education.

They authorized the sale of properties confiscated for failure to pay property taxes by private negotiation without calls for bids, for as little as \$1,800 (the amount of unpaid taxes).

They authorized evaluation of a number of zoning changes in the county during 2019.

Voting was nearly unanimous as usual with only one dissenting vote by Derek Young on the purchase of the downtown TAPCO building for \$1.2.

Not one person stepped forward to speak at the citizen's forum, though there were public comments on specific agenda items.

Detailed Meeting Content:

Consent agenda: reappointment of Curtis Atkinson and James Gooch to the Veterans Advisory Board; reappointment of Nathan Zink to the Human Services Citizens' Advisory Board; Appointment of Christine Cuffe to the Aging and Disability Resources Advisory Board; and approval of the Pierce County Board of Equalization's request to convene to act on taxpayer petitions that exceed the code of the Washington Board.

Passed 6-0.

Note: there are five vacancies on the Human Services Citizens' Advisory Board and an unnamed number of vacancies on the Aging and Disability Resources Advisory Board.

2019 Pierce County Proposed Budget

The proposed budget was released to the public at the start of this meeting:

<https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/5908/2019-Budget>

It is a requirement that a proposed budget be delivered at least 100 days before the start of the new budget cycle. Over the next few months, the council will be engaged in budget retreats at which the public will have the opportunity to comment on the budget.

County Executive Bruce Dammeier presented the proposed budget. His presentation and questions by the council lasted about an hour. He highlighted that Pierce County had the highest job growth of any county in the nation in the past year and attributed it to the Family Wage Credit program, a program that gives tax credits to businesses to relocate to Pierce County. He neglected to mention that in addition to being paid to move here, businesses may find the lower minimum wage in Pierce County attractive.

Dammeier indicated that the budget priorities were promoting business and public safety. He stated that the sheriff's department is underfunded and this was reiterated later by councilman Derek Young. Dammeier mentioned affordable housing and stated that this could be dealt with by waiving code requirements for low income housing. He also mentioned waiving permit requirements and drainage reviews as a way of promoting agriculture. To increase government efficiency, he proposed: more competitive salaries, equity and diversity; alignment of human services with priorities because he said overhead costs were too high; investments in existing county buildings to make them last; increased use of websites and IT so that the public could look things up themselves and staff would not need to answer phones; and improvement of customer service by having greater transparency and measurable results. He cited Open Pierce County with more than 80 measurements reported to the public. He mentioned the sale of surplus land owned by the County as a strategy to increase economic growth, construction jobs, the tax base, and provide much needed funds for maintenance of county buildings.

Among the things that needed to be worked on, he highlighted the ending fund balance on p. 50, stating that it was important to exceed the reserve policy goal now, because he expected the economy to "flatten" and this would make it difficult to achieve the reserve mandates by 2022. He also mentioned that Pierce County has one of the highest suicide rates in the country, particularly youth and veterans, as well as among the highest murder rates and addiction rates in the country.

Proclamation-Diaper Need Awareness Week – September 24-30, 2018

To council voted 6-0 to proclaim September 24-30, 2018 Diaper Need Awareness Week.

Proposal 2018-58 Speed Zones- Schools and Construction Sites

Limits speed in school zones to 20mph when school sign is flashing. Limits reduction of posted speed to 10mph in construction zones.

Passed 6-0

Proposal 2018-59 Wheeled All-Terrain Vehicle Routes

Permits ATVs on certain county roads and streets, including portions of SR165.

Passed 5-0 (Talbert left)

Proposal 2018-63s Budget Supplemental/Capital Facilities Plan Amendment

Authorizes an additional \$20,000 to cover losses at the Pierce County Fair; this is in addition to the \$36,000 already allocated. It is estimate the Pierce County Fair will lose \$56,000 this year.

Authorizes \$400,000 to renovate rooves of hangars at Thun field.

Authorizes purchase of the TAPCO building across from the City-County building on S Tacoma Avenue for \$1.2 million. The purpose of the purchase was stated as being one of the last pieces of land on the block so that the County would own the entire block so that it could sell the block to a developer. The specific site in the short term may be used to stage construction for maintenance of the City County building. Derek Young stated he would vote no because he was concerned about the process: the property and the price were identified before asking the Council rather than discussing in executive session, further he is concerned that the County is trying to liquidate property to generate revenues and questioned why the County needed to do a developer's job by assembling all the properties on a block for development.

Passed 4-1.

Proposal R2018-102 Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account

To establish a stakeholder group to recommend a strategic plan for expenditures of funds from the Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account from capital sales taxes on Sound Transit 3. Pierce County is expected to get a total of \$123 million by 2035 which is supposed to be used for education. The funding stream will be irregular and most funding will come at the end of the period. Hence the stakeholder group is made up of representatives of schools, colleges, parks, County Health Department, and libraries. Councilwoman Roach spoke against having an advisory group but stepped out the room before the final vote.

Passed 4-0.

Proposal 2018-104 Tax Title Land – Authority to Dispose

Authorizes the sale of properties confiscated for failure to pay property taxes by private negotiation without calls for bids, for as little as \$1,800 (the amount of unpaid taxes).

Passes 4-0

Proposal R2018-108s Initiation of Comprehensive Plan Amendments

This authorizes environmental review and evaluation of a number of zoning changes in the county during 2019. The individual changes will be voted on once the reviews are completed. While this proposal only authorizes study of proposed changes, it drew the most audience comment, with many residents of Gig Harbor who were concerned about proposed zoning

changes in Gig Harbor that they felt would affect their property values and a proposed tree canopy requirement of 75%.

Citizen Forum

As usual, no one stepped forward to discuss other matters.