

Observer Report of the Puyallup City Council Meeting – February 9, 2016
by Mary Kohli

This was the first meeting that I have attended since the two new council members have been on the council and a new mayor and deputy mayor were determined. The relationships between the council members seem to have improved. I thought they were respectful of each other and the audience. Attendance was low with probably a 50/50 split between city staff members and the public. Seven citizens spoke during the comment session. Most of them I had heard speak before to the Council. One individual, who is a “champion” of open records, was very critical of one council member. I did not understand all that he was saying, but he felt she was “anti-transparency.” He left the meeting early, before that council member was able to speak to the situation. Other council members defended her noting that she had testified before a state legislative committee considering a bill related to open records. Another citizen spoke to me after the meeting, knowing that I was from the League, saying that the council was not looking at the details of the bill. I will try to find out about the bill and if the League has a stand on it.

Another major issue of the meeting was “System Development Charges.” A presentation was made by the City Manager. There was general feeling that these charges need to be increased (connection fees for new developments including private homes and businesses). The burden should not be put on existing tax payers. However, there was also a concern that new developments not be scared away from the city. This will be further studied by staff and the council.

The City Manager spoke of the need to clean up and revise the current “council rules.” Input was given by council members.

The meeting was adjourned after about two hours to Executive Session. I did not stay for the final adjournment.

Meeting evaluation: Questions on the Observer sheet regarding standards were positive. One council member needed to speak up (soft voice). The meeting was televised on Channel 22. Background information on the meeting is on their website. All council members were present.