

League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce Co.

Observer Report Form

Name of Agency: Puyallup City Council _____ Date: 9/11/18
Observer Reporting: Nancy Dahl _____ Length of Meeting: 4 hrs. 22 min.
Members Present/Absent: Mayor Palmer, D. Mayor Swanson, Council Members Johnson, Jacobsen,
Door, Farris, Kastama _____
Others Present (i.e., media, public) _____

Content (What is being discussed): i.e., Did they approve some **action**? Does anything **relate to League priorities or positions**? If so, **do you recommend** local league action? Was **access** to materials for certain agenda items limited or excluded from you? Was background material available to the public?

Major discussions were as follows:

- 1. First reading of ordinance to update Business License Ordinances to make them consistent with mandatory state model:** The major discussion revolved around how to handle businesses located outside the city and if they should have to have city licenses and pay fees, register only or neither. The council approved on 7 – 0 vote to change the standard for both in city and out of city businesses to requiring licenses and fees for any entity that earns more than \$12,000/year. If the business earns less, they do not need to register or pay fees.
- 2. First Reading of ordinance establishing zoning standards for Homeless Services use:** The ordinance codifies the current council’s response to the year’s long debate in Puyallup around the proper location of Homeless Services inspired by the impact of the New Hope Center that was welcomed by the city to operate in the downtown core in 2007. Because of the vitriol among many members of the community after the center opened and began attracting homeless people to the downtown area and because of the affect this group had on last year’s city council elections, the council’s response has been to over react in creating an ordinance that essentially will not allow any homeless serving development except in area’s zoned industrial north of Valley Ave and separated from the city proper by the river. Changes would apply to all homeless services developed in Puyallup in the future, both drop-in day and night shelters; however, it doesn’t affect New Hope Center as they are grandfathered in as long as they stay in their at their current location. There is currently a long-running moratorium on development of new homeless service centers in Puyallup and the council appears to feel an urgency to complete this zoning ordinance that will keep any new homeless service providers from locating in any area within 1,000 ft of a long list of “sensitive” uses, including homes, parks, senior centers and housing, schools and day care centers before the moratorium expires.

The council after much discussion approved on a 5-2 vote, a highly restrictive plan that limits any new service providers to 18 parcels that are in the industrial area north of Valley Ave where there is no public transportation and existing uses are incompatible with providing homes for people. The council proposed adding language that will invite/encourage Development Agreement proposals for development in other parts of the city. This would allow the council to tightly control any development outside of this highly restricted area, which might limit new homeless services in Puyallup.

The other major flaw in the approved plan is that the tight restrictions allow for no viable parcels for the New Hope center to move to, which they and the city have expressed interest in, as any change to

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their location would result in losing their current grandfathered status resulting in the only options open to them being the industrial property or to go through a costly Development Agreement process with a city governing body that has been confrontational with them since shortly after they opened. The result of this decision is that the anti-homeless rhetoric will continue in Puyallup as the homeless impact on the downtown business core and adjacent residential areas will continue to grow. Mayor Palmer and CMs Door and Farris spoke to the need to find ways to allow for more nuance in the buffer definition beyond using just distance to provide additional siting options, but the majority appears determined.

League members who would like to express their opinions on this issue to the council members should write a letter and email it to all the council members: Dean Johnson, Cynthia Jacobs, Julie Door, Robin Farris, Jim Kastama, John Palmer and Tom Swanson. Their emails can be found [here](#).

***Public Meetings of interest to League** – i.e., *Were there any public meetings announced that you think League members may be interested in attending and/or becoming involved with the issue?*

The next regular council meeting is scheduled for Oct. 2nd and may include the second reading of the above Zoning ordinance on the agenda. You can check [this website](#) for meeting agendas approximately a week in advance of the meeting.

DM Tom Swanson mentioned in his report an upcoming meeting of the Pierce Co. Regional Council that League members may be interested in. The title of the presentation is “Regional Planning 101”. It will be held at the Pioneer Pavilion in Puyallup on September 20th at 6:00 PM. Attendees will hear an overview of regional planning and how it affects municipalities in the county. There will be a packet which attendees can take with them for future reference.

Process & Protocol:

The business license issue was one that members didn’t seem prepared for. Their decisions seemed arbitrary and they acted in ways not recommended by city staff.

The zoning proposal commented on above is a complex issue to present and explain. Several CM’s were very put out about the city staff re-presenting references showing the impact of buffers due to city staff not seeing consensus within the council at the previous meeting. The majority who thought votes were taken all presented long winded “tantrums” expressing their dissatisfaction with city staff for taking the time to present information again that they thought had been decided in previous meetings. In addition, the meeting was much too long at over 4 hours and the lateness of the hour of the final discussion on this issue was impacted by that condition.

Reminders 😊

The purpose of the LWV Observer Corp is:

1. To promote public interest in local government and to be a “presence” to elected officials.
2. To alert the League Board to upcoming agenda items on which we have program positions on which we can speak.
3. To identify areas for future LWV study and action.