



CITY OF **BIG BEAR LAKE** *California*

Regular Meeting Minutes – October 18, 2021

A Regular Meeting of the City Council of the City of Big Bear Lake was called to order by Mayor Herrick at 6:00 p.m., Monday, October 18, 2021, at the Civic Center, 39707 Big Bear Boulevard, Big Bear Lake, California.

OPEN SESSION

Flag Salute: Flag Salute led by Councilmember Melnick

Invocation: Invocation delivered by Pastor Tom Owens of Big Bear Foursquare Church

Councilmembers Present: Mayor Rick Herrick
Mayor Pro Tem Randall Putz
Councilmember Alan Lee
Councilmember Perri Melnick
Councilmember Bynette Mote

Others Present: Frank A. Rush, Jr., City Manager
Erica Stephenson, City Clerk
Stephen P. Deitsch, City Attorney

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS

Patrice Duncan, Sugarloaf resident, addressed Council regarding Councilmember Lee's perceived negative behavior towards his colleagues, City staff and community residents, and urged him to reflect on his recent conduct and start taking a different approach.

Kimberlee Kidd, Big Bear Lake resident, believes that it is imperative to actively include all residents in the Community Comprehensive Planning process; said its time for the City to pursue better participation strategies for Council meetings so that they can become more inclusive and accessible to all residents.

Matthew Vecchio, Big Bear Lake resident, introduced himself as a member of the Economic Development Advisory Committee and said he is looking forward to serving on this committee as he believes economic development is an important factor that should be addressed in the community.

Sue Hart, Big Bear Lake resident, expressed her disappointment in Code Compliances' response to complaints about a vacation rental near her home; said it's about time the City start enforcing the ordinances they adopt and take more punitive action for repeat offenders.

Matt Scriven, Big Beare Lake resident, shared his concerns regarding a potential conflict of interest for Councilmember Lee due to his perceived involvement with the political action committee, Big Bear Lake Together; said Councilmember Lee should recuse himself from discussions related to the pending lawsuit between the City and the Grocery Outlet.

1. DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

1.1 REPLENISH BIG BEAR PROJECT

City Council will receive a presentation from project proponents and engage in discussion about the proposed Replenish Big Bear project, and will consider supporting this effort politically and financially.

The Replenish Big Bear project would treat domestic wastewater to a standard that exceeds drinking water standards, and approximately 650 million gallons of highly treated water would be retained in the Big Bear Valley rather than continuing the current practice of discharging wastewater off the mountain to Lucerne Valley. Retained water would be used to recharge local aquifers, Shay Pond, and Big Bear Lake, and the project would help to ensure adequate water supply in the Big Bear Valley in the future during drought periods. In addition to increasing local water supply, the project could also raise lake levels by up to 4 ½ feet during future drought periods. The total estimated cost of the project is approximately \$56 million, and the total cost would be shared among many partners, including the Federal government, State government, the Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency (BBARWA), the Big Bear Lake Department of Water and Power (DWP), the Big Bear Municipal Water District (MWD), the Big Bear City Community Services District (CSD), and - if supported by the City Council - the City of Big Bear Lake. If the project receives sufficient support from the various partners, the project could be operational by late 2025.

City Council will provide direction to the City Manager regarding this project, and may take other related action as appropriate.

Frank A. Rush, Jr., City Manager, introduced David Lawrence, General Manager of the Big Bear Area Regional Wastewater Agency (BBARWA), Mike Stephenson, General Manager of the Big Bear Municipal Water District (MWD), and Reggie Lamson, General Manager of the Big Bear Lake Department of Water and Power (DWP), all of whom discussed the project in detail and outlined the history and the scope of the project, reviewed the proposed water treatment process and the goals of the project in relation to water sustainability and replenishment; discussed the cost estimate and potential funding opportunities; outlined the benefits that the project will have on the environment, the local economy and for the community as a whole; briefly reviewed the estimated completion timeline and the next steps the various partnering agencies can take to garner further support and funding; and answered a myriad of Council's questions.

Mayor Herrick indicated that he has had involvement with this project for approximately 15 years and noted that the estimated cost continues to increase significantly throughout the years and reminded everyone that delaying this project will attribute to increased construction costs.

Councilmember Melnick disclosed that she lives in close proximity to the lake and asked City Attorney Stephen Deitsch if she has a perceived conflict of interest which could preclude her from the item's discussion. Stephen Deitsch assured Council and the public that Councilmember Melnick does not have a conflict of interest, and that she may participate in the item's discussions. Councilmember Lee raised additional questions regarding potential conflicts of interest in relation to the Replenish Big Bear Project.

Mayor Pro Tem Putz sought clarification on the efficiency of the water treatment process and asked how much of the treated wastewater will be used to replenish the local water supply; questioned the cost of purchasing and importing water from another source off of the mountain.

Councilmember Melnick stated that this is an important project for water sustainability in the valley, and questioned the presenters as to what they thought someone's reasoning would be if they were opposed of the project.

Councilmember Mote asked what the estimated cost of the project will ultimately be if construction is delayed any further; questioned the expected life span for this project and asked what foreseeable maintenance requirements are included in the project's estimated cost of annual operation and maintenance.

Councilmember Lee expressed he is not comfortable with providing direction to the City Manager in regards to the project based on the current information presented; had questions and provided comments related to potential project funding sources; indicated he would like to see a breakdown of project funding sources that better display equity and fairness; asked that the estimated cost of the project include inflation.

Following further discussion, Mayor Herrick indicated that there appears to be a consensus for support of the Replenish Big Bear project.

Frank A. Rush, Jr., City Manager, indicated that a Memorandum of Understanding will be brought forth to Council at a future meeting for formal consideration.

1.2 COMMUNITY COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING PROCESS

City Council will receive a presentation from City staff and engage in discussion regarding the initiation of a new community comprehensive planning process for the City of Big Bear Lake.

The initial planning effort would determine the overall community vision, and would serve as the starting point for formal updates to the City's General Plan, which has not been updated in more than 20 years. With our community somewhat conflicted on our identity and future, this comprehensive planning effort is intended to develop community consensus and enable the City to proceed in accordance with our community's vision.

Susan O'Strander, Director of Community Development, reviewed the purpose of the General Plan and the adoption of the current General Plan along with its' guiding principles; discussed the different approaches that can be taken to update the General Plan including the advantages and disadvantages of each option, however, she recommended that an active and robust community visioning process be initiated regardless of the approved approach; asked for direction on the composition of the General Plan Advisory Committee; and illustrated seven (7) key questions that should be considered prior to moving forward with the General Plan update.

Council and staff engaged in a discussion regarding the timeline and initiation of the community visioning process and the roles, responsibilities and composition of the General Plan Advisory Committee.

Jim Eakin, Big Bear City resident, said that hiring a consultant and involving the residents is very important in respect to the General Plan update; believes a comprehensive review of the City's zoning map is in order.

Following further discussion, Mayor Herrick indicated that there appears to be a Council consensus for issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) or a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for community

visioning consultant services, for actively engaging the public in an effort to solicit as much public input as possible, expanding the membership of the General Plan Advisory Committee and also including a Native American representative and potentially forming a separate advisory committee comprised of members who live outside the City limits.

Frank A. Rush, Jr., City Manager, indicated that a Community Visioning Consultant RFP or RFQ will be prepared and included on a future Agenda for formal Council consideration, in addition to an item establishing the General Plan Advisory Committee.

2. COMMENTS, ANNOUNCEMENTS & ADDITIONAL CITY BUSINESS

2.1 GENERAL COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Mayor Herrick discussed his attendance at the City's Workforce Housing event and his recent communications with Assemblymember Thurston "Smitty" Smith and Senator Rosilicie Ochoa Bogh; stated that Assemblymember Smith, Senator Ochoa Bogh, and Congressman Obernolte have all expressed interest in the Replenish Big Bear Project; also indicated that California's latest draft District maps have the potential to change the City's Congressional and Assembly Districts.

Councilmember Mote shared upcoming community events including: the DOVES Starry Starry Night virtual auction, Breakthrough Task Force's "All Trick, No Treat", Lions Club's community pumpkin patch, Alpine Zoo's "Boo At The Zoo", Sothern California Mountains Foundation and Big Bear Trails "Treats and Trails", and Halloween in the Village; indicated her attendance at the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority's annual meeting and conference and the City's Workforce Housing event.

Councilmember Lee shared his attendance at a public safety and law enforcement conference in which he was the keynote speaker; discussed the Mountain Transit's "Fill the Bus" event; highlighted his recent Big Bear Community Unity Event and shared details regarding an upcoming Alzheimer's Association fundraising event on October 28 at the Big Bear Bar & Grill in which he is hosting in collaboration with Big Bear Hospice, Big Bear Lake Business Council, Mountain Health Resource Center and the Federation of Public Service Employees; discussed his recent communications with residents (some of which were vacation rental owners/operators) and representatives from AirBnB and VRBO regarding the pending citizen-led initiative and a recent meeting he had with Big Bear Lake Together; he also stated that Big Bear Lake Together has no relationship with the organization that is engaged in City litigation; requested that the meeting be adjourned in the memory of Gen. Colin Powell.

Mayor Pro Tem Putz thanked Councilmember Mote for attending the California Joint Powers Insurance Authority meeting and conference as the City's alternate delegate; provided highlights of the latest Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) meeting he attended.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Council at this Open Session, Mayor Herrick adjourned the meeting at 8:36 p.m. in honor of the former U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell.


Erica Stephenson, City Clerk