



Special Meeting
May 11, 2015

Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Nehring called the Special Meeting to order at 5:39 p.m.

Roll Call

Chief Administrative Officer Hirashima gave the roll call. The following staff and councilmembers were in attendance.

Mayor: Jon Nehring

Council: Steve Muller, Kamille Norton, Michael Stevens, Rob Toyer, Jeff Vaughan

Absent: Jeff Seibert and Donna Wright

Also Present: Chief Administrative Officer Gloria Hirashima, Finance Director Sandy Langdon, City Attorney Jon Walker

Councilmember Toyer announced he would be abstaining from the discussion since he is a Chamber board member.

Marysville Tulalip Chamber Contract Discussion

Will Ibershof, Marysville Tulalip Chamber Chair
Jessica Stickles, Marysville Tulalip Chamber President/CEO

Ms. Stickles reviewed the long-term strategic plan which outlines the Chamber's goals for this and future years.

1. Become the information gateway for the community – The Chamber will have the links, information, working calendars in one location.
2. Showcase members – give out advertising for members
3. Improve communications with members and community – weekly newsletter, online information

4. Implement sustainable membership growth model – 15% growth each year. She is working with the Membership Development Coordinator on hitting those targets. This will also be part of the scholarship program.
5. Use an online contact management system
6. Re-energize Chamber emissary committee – these are ambassadors that talk to businesses that are or are not members.
7. Activate a lead generation system for members – i.e. - have a star members award for members that are constantly bringing in new members
8. Offer business and executive round tables and forums – providing education
9. Offer meaningful education programs – tailoring education programs
10. Be visible – be at events, out and about
11. Honor members and community leaders – Business Person of the Year, Student Entrepreneur of the Year
12. Build solid relationships – Building bridges is one of the main reasons she was hired.

She then reviewed the outline for the proposed membership grant scholarship program. This would be a one-year program from June to June. Small businesses who have 1-2 employees or are owner-run and operated on a daily basis would be eligible. She liked the Council's feedback about having the buy-in requirement. The Chamber is recommending a flat \$100 fee for businesses. She stated that membership cost is \$280 plus a \$50 administrative fee. The \$100 would be taken off of that. The grant would cover the difference and would allow the Chamber to help 43 businesses. She discussed the requirements and the application process. The reason this is focused on small businesses is in order to focus on downtown.

Next, Ms. Stickles reviewed a sheet about what the Chamber does for its members including: lobbying, attracting business to the community, tourism events, business assistance, education, and networking.

She then discussed the resume of the Communications Program Intern that the Chamber would like to hire. This person is willing to do full time hours in the summer at the \$20 base pay rate which would use up half the grant. The Chamber would then hire another intern in the fall to continue the work at the same rate on a part-time basis which would use the other half of the grant funding.

Finally, Ms. Stickles discussed the direction the Chamber wants to go with its website. Chamber Master is the current vendor who offers the custom layout for \$10,000. There is a potential that it could cost more, but the Chamber is prepared to cover additional costs if there are any. Councilmember Vaughan asked how this might help with SEO (Search Engine Optimization). Ms. Stickles commented that having a responsive website will help with the SEO, and this website would be responsive. The vendor also has a team that would work with the Chamber as part of the package to improve SEO. Councilmember Vaughan asked what types of searches the Chamber hopes to see improvement in. Ms. Stickles said they want to focus on the information within the membership directory for the purposes of business relocation.

Councilmember Muller referred to the intern position and asked how the rate was established. He thought that interns usually worked for just the experience. \$20/hour seems high to him. Ms. Stickles said when she looked at job posting sites, and the majority of them were paying \$36,000 for a year of work with an intern. She decided on \$20,000 for the full year (part-time) which allowed the Chamber to get quite a few applications. Mayor Nehring commented that was much more than the City would pay for an intern. Councilmember Muller commented that broadcasting interns start at \$10-13/hour for major organizations. Mr. Ibershof commented on the value of this position which would free up Jessica and would increase memberships and partnerships. Councilmember Muller asked if James, the Membership Coordinator, is paid a base rate plus a salary. Ms. Stickles affirmed that he is, and added that he is exceeding his goals.

Mr. Ibershof distributed a copy of the Chamber's draft budget. Ms. Stickles commented that she was very conservative in creating the budget. General questions and answers followed.

Mayor Nehring asked about creative ideas for generating more sustainable income for the Chamber. Ms. Stickles explained that the Chamber has applied for several Wal-Mart grants which are available to non-profits. The carnival will probably bring in about \$10,000 in profit. A mother-daughter event is underway right now. They will possibly be introducing a gala as well. Mayor Nehring asked if there are any health or dental benefits available to Chamber members. Ms. Stickles explained that the new member packet has information about health benefits available through a group discount plan with Affiliated Associations of America.

Mayor Nehring asked about the partnership with the Economic Alliance. Ms. Stickles reviewed that partnership. Economic Alliance tends to focus more on large businesses so they're working with the CEO's and managers helping them with business development and managing employees. The Chamber will focus more on the small to mid-sized businesses and giving them networking and education opportunities. Mr. Ibershof added that they will also be doing some lobbying work in Olympia on the initiatives for small business.

Councilmember Muller asked if there is a national chamber site in addition to the local website. Ms. Stickles stated that the Chamber is affiliated with the US Chamber of Commerce and also with the WCCE (Washington Chamber of Commerce Executives). Both of those sites link to the Marysville Tulalip Chamber. Councilmember Muller asked about leveraging that to the greatest benefit for the City. Ms. Stickles replied that this will be an ongoing conversation the Chamber will be having with the Council and the community because marketing the community is one of the Chambers's goals. She reviewed how the local part of this process currently works with referring prospects to the City. Mr. Ibershof added that part of the reason for improving the website is to constantly grow, develop, and create an attraction component.

Councilmember Vaughan asked how well aligned the Chamber is with things the City is trying to do in terms of economic development. Ms. Stickles replied that for the most part it aligns because the Chamber is encouraging growth and development. She added

that she has discussed some of the tourism promotion ideas she's had with different department directors. For example, today she offered to help Jim Ballew write a grant for the tour of lights to help develop that tourism attraction.

Councilmember Muller asked how the Chamber is looking at having their request financed. Ms. Stickles stated that their preference is a lump sum because all the parts of the projects are waiting for a go.

Council recessed from 6:23-6:27 p.m.

Councilmember Vaughan commented on the value of having a policy discussion about whether or not the Council even desires to continue subsidizing the Chamber. If so, is the list of projects they have presented acceptable?

Councilmember Toyer asked about the City's role in small business development. CAO Hirashima commented that this is where the Chamber can really play a role in the City. Every month the City sends the Chamber a list of applications and existing licenses so they can make contact with all the businesses that are licensed in Marysville.

Councilmember Toyer asked about the Chamber's value to the City. There was discussion about the Chamber's recent issues and current transition period. CAO Hirashima commented on the value of the Chamber for smaller businesses in the community.

Councilmember Toyer said he would rather see the Chamber limit scholarships to Marysville businesses. There appeared to be consensus on this. Several Councilmembers expressed concern about the cost of the intern position. There was general support of the website improvements.

There was discussion about the positive image aspect of a large community having a vibrant chamber. Councilmember Norton commented on the importance of the Chamber understanding what the City's economic development goal and strategy is so they can align what they're doing with what the City is trying to do. CAO Hirashima noted that Ms. Stickles seems to making an attempt to do this, and added that she is still relatively new in her position. Mayor Nehring discussed the challenges the Chamber is facing with the change in administration. He commented that there are ways to approach this without being forever tied to subsidizing the Chamber. He doesn't think the Chamber's intention is for that to be the case either. It's in their best interest to become self-sufficient.

Councilmember Stevens spoke to the importance of supporting the Chamber after the Council had strongly encouraged them to change. Councilmember Muller suggested giving them the money in two chunks. Councilmember Toyer commented that the City has failed to provide specific direction to the Chamber. There was discussion about how interns typically are volunteers and are not expected to get paid much, if at all.

There was consensus to put this item on the agenda for May 26 to decide if the Council wants to support the Chamber. If they decide to support the Chamber they can then discuss the details. If a workshop is needed after that the Council can schedule one.

DRAFT

Adjournment

Seeing no further business Mayor Nehring adjourned the special meeting at 6:48 p.m.

Approved this _____ day of _____, 2015.

Mayor
Jon Nehring

April O'Brien
Deputy City Clerk