

ORIGINAL

Councilmembers

Position No.

1. Tod Gunther
2. Barbara Ford, Deputy Mayor
3. Michelle Gehring
4. Dave Harman
5. Nicola McDonald
6. Josh Penner
7. Scott Drennen



Orting City Council

Special Meeting Summary

Orting Multi-Purpose Center
202 Washington Ave. S, Orting, WA
May 17, 2017, 6pm.

Mayor Joachim Pestinger

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER, PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & ROLL CALL

Mayor Pestinger called the meeting to order at 6:00p.m. at the Multipurpose Center. Councilmember Gunther led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Councilmembers Present: Councilmembers Tod Gunther, Nicola McDonald, Josh Penner, Michelle Gehring, Dave Harman, and Deputy Mayor Ford
Excused: Councilmember Scott Drennen.

Staff Present: Mark Bethune, City Administrator, Jane Montgomery, City Clerk.

2. WASHINGTON SOLDIERS HOME- PROGRAMS UPDATE

Gary Condra, Deputy Director of Washington State Department of Veterans and who currently oversees the Washington Soldiers home in Orting, and Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, Director, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs were present at the meeting. Mr. Condra briefed on his background, levels of care at the Soldiers Home, partnerships, and the lack of housing for female veterans. Also present was Ray Switzer and John Lee of the nonprofit Westcare. Mary Forbes, Heidi Audette, and Donald Lachman, were also present and are representatives of the Department of Veterans affairs. After a briefing regarding the Roosevelt Barracks and the Betsy Ross project, City Council Members, the Mayor, City staff and Orting citizens asked questions about the Betsy Ross Housing Project and other homeless veterans programs at the Soldiers Home. WestCare has entered into a partnership and lease agreement for the Betsy Ross Building, to provide housing and supportive services for 12 homeless women veterans. The building has been fully renovated and is ready to receive women now. John Lee and Ray Switzer described similar programs like the one being proposed at the Soldiers Home that they have been successfully running for years. Some of the things that were provided to Veterans in those programs were:

- Income support;
- Medical support and care;
- Housing;
- Employment;
- Training;
- Education;
- Jobs.

Discussion and questions followed concerning:

- Admission criteria;
- Security;
- Background checks;
- Medical care;
- Transportation;
- Employment;
- Causative factors for success at the Pt Orchard location;
- Access to benefits;
- Barriers to isolation;
- Reasons for homelessness;
- Relapsing of Veterans enrolled ;
- Drug testing;
- Reunification with family members.

The Mayor and Councilmembers stated that one of their main concerns and the community's was the security of the city. Discussion followed.

The following assurances were given to the Council:

- "yes" to random drug tests by the County Health Department;
- They will work to find homeless women veterans in the City of Orting;
- Prior similar projects have been a success;
- They work hard to overcome barriers to isolation of the veterans;
- Veterans will have access to VA benefits;
- They will conduct background checks;
- They will still fund the project even if the County does not grant the \$750,000 they have asked for.

Individuals who have committed the following crimes are not eligible for admittance:

- Those who have committed sex crimes;
- Registered Sex offenders;
- Recent violent crimes;
- Crimes of Arson.

Veteran's officials invited those present and any community members to take a tour of the Betsy Ross building. John Lee, a Senior Vice President of WestCare and former Director of the State Department of Veterans Affairs, stated for the record "I am so confident that the program will work and be a success that if it does not work I will shut it down". He said, "Give us a year".

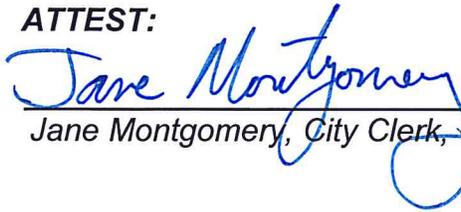
Councilmember Gunther and Alfie Alvarado-Ramos spoke about the changing face of homelessness and the stigma attached to homeless people.

There was consensus from the Council that the City would sponsor a community meeting at the end of June.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pestinger adjourned the meeting at 7:20pm.

ATTEST:


Jane Montgomery, City Clerk, CMC


Joachim Pestinger, Mayor

Next Regular Meeting: May 31, 2017