City of Langley
Special Council Meeting December 18, 2012

Councilman Seligson called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM. Present were Council Members Seligson, Allen, Neff, Allderdice, and Jim Sundberg. Also present were City Attorney Mike Kenyon and Clerk-Treasurer Debbie Mahler. Mayor Kwarsick was out of town. Councilman Seligson led the flag salute. The special meeting was called to discuss the Mayor’s office. Mayor Kwarsick plead guilty to a gross misdemeanor of falsifying a report while he was city planner.

Rene Neff reported that Mayor Kwarsick was charged with and plead guilty to a gross misdemeanor. The prosecutor asked for no jail time and a fine of $2,500. The judge imposed the fine and added a fifteen day jail sentence. Attorney Mike Kenyon reported that if there is a felony conviction, elected office must be forfeited. There is no statute that says that about a gross misdemeanor. Larry Kwarsick is still Mayor and will remain Mayor unless he resigns or a court removes him from office, which has not happened at this time. Attorney Kenyon also explained that if Larry were to forfeit office, the Council would appoint a Mayor until the next municipal election in November 2013.

Rene Neff explained that no harm was done or money received; the alleged falsification was a final decision on the implementation and monitoring of the wetland mitigation plan on his stepdaughter’s property. The original document was written by former planner Fred Evander and when asked he noticed a few things had been added. It was not a permit; the house on the property had already been permitted and built a few years before this took place. It was a report about the ongoing wetland mitigation that needed to be performed.

Steve Blackburn stated that the wetland mitigation is a minor issue on this property. The wetlands are a very small portion of this property. Carol Curly said she felt the issue was blown out of proportion; Larry loves this city and does everything he can for Langley. Ed Able stated that he worked in the Monroe prison with sexual offenders and found them good people to work with. He feels what needs to be dealt with is the loss of public trust.

Aaron Simpson asked the Council members opinions about Larry staying Mayor. Bruce Allen stated that four council members went to court to support Larry and three spoke on his behalf. Rene Neff read a statement about her feelings on the matter. Jim Sundberg stated that attending court was a very humbling and sobering experience dealing with a real cross section of Island County. Jim was supportive of a lesser fine and did not expect a jail sentence. He respects Larry’s intelligent and feels he can work with him productively. Robin Adams stated that we need better conflict of interest and ethics policies. Leanne Finlay said she feels the city needs to just give Larry a chance to explain the real circumstances, put the matter behind us and move on.
Kathleen Waters-Reihl has felt that for the first time in years she did not need to be at every Council meeting because things have run so smoothly since Larry took office.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Debbie L. Mahler, Director of Finance/City Clerk