



Equity Subcommittee Meeting

August 01, 2023

Attendance: Sarah Dixit (Chair), Council Member Betsy Wilkerson (Council Liaison), Councilman Michael Cathcart, Kiana McKenna, Jesus Torrez, Jonathan Alder, Jennifer Morris

Staff: Alex Gibilisco, Erik Poulsen, Mark Carlos, Ginny Ramos, Nicolette Ocheltree, Director Marlene Feist, Kelly Thomas, Shae Blackwell, Nick Federici, Jeff Gunn

Land Acknowledgment

Approving June Minutes

Jesus moved, Councilwoman Wilkerson seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Approving June Special Meeting Minutes (Why race Matters Training)

Jesus moved, Councilwoman Wilkerson seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Approving July Special Meeting Minutes (Parks After Dark Response)

Councilwoman Wilkerson moved, Jesus seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Guest Speaker: Public Works Director Marlene Feist speaks about General Facilities Charges (GFCs)

State Law RCW 35.92.025 governs how the City can charge a General Facility Charge. It is a one-time charge imposed as a condition for a new utility connection.

Future customers have to pay for capacity of existing customers. "Growth-pays-for-growth" policies were first implemented in 2002 but they haven't been updated and has no inflationary index. This presents a problem because Spokane is growing at a rapid pace and rates aren't catching up to growth rates. The City needs more funds for development.

Director Feist is proposing to raise the fees so that the City can:

- Have a Citywide update to the GFCs that represents current costs and anticipated projects over time and helps to keep monthly rates more affordable for everyone.
- Uses a reasonable and rational approach to assign costs.
- Ties GFCs to an inflationary index to avoid having the fees quickly get behind and avoid having to make such major changes in the future.
- Supports certain types of development with a dedicated funding source for GFCs.
- Implements new costs over time to allow our community time to adjust.
- Supports City goals around water conservation.



2023 Decisions around GFCs:

- City Council approved an interim GFC through March 2024.
 - GFCs were increased by 66% -- to represent the inflation on the GFCs that were adopted in 2002.
 - Projects with a building permit or a counter complete application for a building permit at the time of new rates were adopted would fall under the historic rate.
 - Are in place through March 4, 2024.
- Incentives in 2023:
 - ADUs in certain zones are exempt from GFCs until the end of 2024.
 - GFCs are deferred or waived for affordable housing projects.
 - PW & CED have been charged with developing a way to pay for incentives.

Additional Work on GFCs:

- Additionally, Council adopted GFC rates consistent with work to date
 - takes effect on March 4, 2024.
 - Seeking feedback on possible changes prior to that date
- Additional Outreach
 - Required in 2023.
 - Includes the Mayor's GFC Review Committee.
 - As well as presentations to additional groups, including Plan Commission, Equity Subcommittee, Sustainability Action Subcommittee and Housing Action Subcommittee.
 - Work is designed to consider options or changes to the rates that would go into effect in March 2024.

Recording is interrupted from 26:57:00 to 27:38:00

We've had the lowest GFC rate in 20 years, but it also correlated with low building rates. There are more opportunities to provide feedback and suggestions.

Guest Speaker: Councilman Cathcart speaks about his legislative priorities

Councilman Cathcart's biggest priorities include budget and public safety because "we can't pay for our priorities if we can't fix our budget, and our budget is very broken right now."

He is also working on language access for City Services with the Office of Civil Rights and Alex Gibilisco. One of the options he is working on is working with Google for translation services. He also envisions a kiosk at Council Chambers that translates in real time. Another option is that constituents can download an app to help translate in real time. There have been a number of advancements with AI that will also help make translation services more accessible.

The language access legislation is set to be voted on around Labor Day of this year.

A member of the subcommittee asked about reviewing the budget and Councilman Cathcart said that it originates on the Administration side and goes back and forth before Council gets to see it, but he will work with them and Councilwoman Wilkerson as their Council Liaison to help with the budget.



Guest Speaker: Erik Poulsen and Nick Federici speak about Legislative Priorities

Erik Poulsen is the City Council's Director of Intergovernmental Affairs. He served in the State Legislature and back then he says that he was the "face of the Legislature then as a white male." He told the subcommittee that through the years, the Legislature has become more reflective of Washingtonians having more women serving (the most in the Nation) and BIPOC communities represented.

Erik also updated the subcommittee on a few bills that have passed. Before the Legislature did one Equity related bill and called it a day. Now they use an equity lens on more legislation. He mentioned the EPA Regional Administrator's visit and how Councilwoman Wilkerson and former Council President Beggs worked with the Legislature to have them lease the brownfields back to the City for housing availability. He mentioned that there will be a short session starting in January. This short session has a couple of items that are still alive from the last session that concluded.

Erik introduced Nick Federici (Fed-er-E-see) who is the City lobbyist. Nick has worked on a lot of issues including housing and poverty alleviation. He is the City of Spokane's "eyes and ears in Olympia." One issue that the lobbyists have led on is repealing the defunct housing covenant laws that discriminated against BIPOC communities. Another initiative is expanding the Working Families Tax Credit to undocumented residents. Another is language access programs and clinical trials expanding to under-represented populations.

Nick mentioned the police pursuit law that was passed and how some changes were made after it was passed. It may be "revisited over and over again frankly as folks try to find an equitable solution." Most Legislators of Color voted against the bill because of equity issues. This is historic as there are more younger and diverse legislators being elected and they are sharing their lived experiences versus a formerly older, White and male-dominated State Legislature.

Initiatives that the Council has worked with the lobbyists are sound proofing for the Civic Theatre by the new soccer stadium in Downtown Spokane and securing funding for the American Indian Community Center. Those initiatives were primarily led by constituent requests.

If anyone wants to bring up issues for the lobbyists to bring forward, they are encouraged to talk to Alex Gibilisco and Councilwoman Wilkerson, who will then bring it forward to the Legislative Subcommittee which is an internal group in the City of Spokane. Councilwoman Wilkerson brought up an issue that some cities are wrestling with where DACA Recipients who have served in the military are barred from serving as commissioned police officers. Erik said that it is an issue that is in the works of being resolved.

Good of the Order

August 28th from 5 to 6:30pm the subcommittee will have a community day to make the Spokane City Council Meetings more accessible to general members of the public.

Next meeting will be August 5th at 9:30am via Teams and in the Tribal Conference Room at City Hall