

HALSEY CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Central Linn Elementary School

280 West 2nd Street – Cafeteria

Halsey, OR 97348

7:00 P.M.

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

The City Council meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m.

The City Administrator took Roll Call.

Present: Mayor Marjean Cline, Council President Wade Doerfler, Councilor Eric Harless, Councilor Joan Mercier, Councilor Eldon Albertson, and Councilor Kathy Parker. Councilor Cynthia Choat was absent.

Also in attendance were Andrew Beaudet, Woody Edwards, Julie Smith, Gary Vanderstelt, Angela Hansen, Terry McCoy, Susan Schwendeman, and Assistant City Recorder Karla Caudell.

Delegation

Mayor Cline asked Susan Schwendeman to initiate a discussion on the proposed afternoon dismissal program at the Central Linn Elementary School. Schwendeman stated there was talk of some safety concerns last year as buses, trucks, cars, and children are all out in front of the building at the same time during dismissal. Schwendeman read from one of the documents that were distributed to the governing body prior to the meeting referencing an email from an elementary school teacher on January 15, 2009 that triggered the efforts to step up discussions regarding safety. On February 20, 2009 Schwendeman noted there was a meeting held to gather input from others regarding dismissal and suggestions such as leaving the bus apron open only to busses, setting up a cue for parents to pick up their children, and have walkers leave on the side street were all topics of discussion. Schwendeman then read several issues, as well as the responses, from a concerned citizen regarding the after school program that had been implemented. The citizen suggested keeping cars moving if their child, or children, were not visible for pickup, however Schwendeman responded they felt that would only create more congestion and they were trying to stay away from any extreme measures. The citizen also suggested routing the busses either back out the entrance they came in or at American Drive. Schwendeman responded that in talking to ODOT they said it is not considered best practice to turn the busses around and they also consider American Drive an extension of Highway 99. Schwendeman commented the Elementary School has a serious parking problem and they will address that issue once the dismissal is worked out. Schwendeman stated that the ODOT Region Traffic Coordinator, the ODOT Safe Routes to Schools Division, and the ODE Transportation Department would be out to observe the dismissal situation on April 15, 2009. Councilor Mercier asked for confirmation that the Elementary School has K through 6th grade and asked if they were dismissed all at once with Schwendeman responding affirmatively to both. Councilor Mercier asked why there wasn't a staggered release and questioned why the busses are not loaded first. Principal Angela Hansen commented that she spoke with Schwendeman regarding this concern over a year ago and she personally observed the dismissal program in one of the Albany schools. Hansen commented that staggering the release of children was looked at but the problem is that many parents come early and it was determined due to the congestion that process would not be any safer or faster. Schwendeman added that the busses are used for high school students as well therefore staggering is not feasible. Mayor Cline commented that although she appreciated what was being done with the program she would have appreciated it if the school would have worked with the City prior to implementing any changes. Mayor Cline stated there are no parking signs on one side of C Street and the Sheriff's Department could be contacted to enforce that area if necessary. Schwendeman apologized for not contacting the City earlier but their initial thoughts were not to bother anyone. Mayor Cline stated that

one of the concerns was the number of cars backed up on 3rd Street. Schwendeman responded that the problem did not seem to be the congestion but what some of the parents had referred to as “cheaters” that were creating some of those issues. Mayor Cline asked how parents were notified of the changes with Schwendeman responding that notices were sent with kids to take home, emails were sent, and discussions were held with the PTC. Hansen added that on two separate weeks an article was placed in a weekly news document that is distributed as well. Hansen also apologized for not notifying the City of the proposed changes in the dismissal at the Elementary School. Councilor Mercier asked if the front lawn area was part of the school property and if it could be paved to help solve some of the parking concerns. Hansen responded they had looked into that but they would need to get help with the paving and learned that the National Guard provides assistance in this area but are five years out before a project at the School could be considered. Councilor Mercier asked if they could be contacted again and perhaps moved up on the priority list due to the safety concerns. Hansen agreed that was something that could be looked into. Mayor Cline asked if any consideration had been given to having the buses exit to American Drive; noting that that street is a County road and not an “extension” of the State Highway 99 as indicated earlier by Schwendeman. Mayor Cline added that the truck traffic mentioned earlier with over-length loads turn right toward the freeway and not left onto American Drive. Schwendeman commented that creating an exit to American Drive would be cost prohibitive for the School District. Council President Doerfler asked if it was feasible for some parents to park in the back parking lot with Schwendeman responding that some cars do park there. Mayor Cline asked if cars parked in the cue block this lot with the response being negative. Mayor Cline expressed a concern that means should be implemented to prevent any kind of private vehicle between Highway 99 and the parking lot during the dismissal period. Mayor Cline stated it seemed the primary concerns were to provide an access for the busses to leave the parking lot and determine a safe way for parents to pick up their children thus asking how many cars are involved in an average day for this process. Schwendeman responded approximately 20 cars. Councilor Mercier asked what percentage of students were bus riders with Schwendeman responding about 80%. Councilor Harless commented when implementing change there are always those who are happy and those that get upset but normally it just takes some time to work the kinks out of any new program. Mayor Cline commented that she has a concern for the crossing at Highway 99 noting that it is three lanes wide and many do not notice the crosswalk. An earlier discussion regarding safety guards suggested even 6th graders are trained to perform this function, however Mayor Cline commented this area warranted an adult volunteer. Hansen explained the training program briefly and asked if a high school student would be acceptable in this area with Mayor Cline responding affirmatively if those students were part of the training program. Julie Smith spoke to the fact that the number of cars picking up students each day is not consistent. Mayor Cline asked what happens to the kids that could be picked up by car with Smith responding they take the bus. Mayor Cline asked about the fluctuation with Gary Vanderstelt responding that changes occur during certain times such as holidays and times when parents have appointments that must be met. Councilor Mercier commented that weather could play a part as well. Hansen stated it comes down to the safety of the children versus the concerns of the parents. Hansen noted they knew they would have stumbling blocks but felt that the last couple of days the process had worked well. Hansen commented it was important to let parents know that they were being heard and their concerns addressed. Vanderstelt commented he thought things were going smoother over the past few days as well. Mayor Cline appreciated the fact that it appeared to be working better but was concerned about traffic in the first block from Highway 99 to C Street. Mayor Cline asked Karla Caudell to explain the pickup program at the school where her children attend in Eugene. Caudell explained the program is strictly enforced and even involves closing the street in front of the school for a short period of time. Caudell explained that the school went to the City however the City basically allowed them to do what they wanted. Smith then stated a few of her concerns. Smith noted that as a parent she did not feel that “cheaters” were an issue but more a problem of the cars backing up waiting to get in the cue. Smith commented that parents on 3rd Street cannot get out because there are cars waiting to get in the cue however she also noted things were running smoother the last couple of days. Mayor Cline asked how many cars are allowed in the cue at any one time with Smith responding five

or six. Schwendeman stated the School has tightened up the cue as some parents sit and visit in this area. Smith noted that on the Tuesday of the 2nd week a parent parked on the street and ultimately there were three cars lined up in the street heading west. Schwendeman acknowledged that the first two weeks were clumsy but it is a much smoother operation now. Mayor Cline expressed a concern that parents are allowed to park on C Street heading east between 3rd and 4th Streets however Schwendeman responded that parents must park and get out of their cars to get their children when parked in this area. Smith then expressed a concern regarding the parking lot being blocked off on Highway 99 and heard of one person who was not aware that barricades were in place and slowed down and almost was rear ended on the Highway. Vanderstelt commented there are one way signs designating the entrance in and out of the parking lot however they are not adhered to on many occasions. Mayor Cline asked if anyone has talked to the Sheriff's Department about helping enforce the crosswalk at Highway 99 with Hansen responding the children are being led to this crosswalk. Councilor Mercier asked how many busses are involved with Vanderstelt responding ten. Vanderstelt added the process has stopped children from going to cars in the parking lot. Vanderstelt noted the bus drivers have radios telling them when to go so things are working better. Councilor Mercier noted the radios are nice however the public does not hear that communication. Mayor Cline again expressed a concern for the traffic in the first block of C Street however Smith expressed a concern that the south side of C Street between 3rd and 4th seems to be more dangerous. Schwendeman noted that especially on nicer days there are a group of people that gather to visit and they did not want to lose that aspect for those parents. Councilor Mercier was concerned that they were taking away from the safety issue if the parents were allowed to continue to socialize near the dismissal area. Smith responded that she would be very upset if that aspect were taken away. Mayor Cline asked Smith why she doesn't use the cue with Smith responding it depends on the weather. Council President Doerfler was pleased they were finding success with the dismissal program and asked if there was anything the City could do for them. Smith stated there should be signs in the cue area stating the driver must remain in their vehicle at all times. Schwendeman asked if the School would have to absorb this cost or would the responsibility belong to the City. Mayor Cline responded there would need to be a discussion between the School and the City and enforcement would need to come from the School or by the Sheriff's Department. Mayor Cline reiterated the two primary issues are easy egress for the busses and keeping the children and the cars separate for loading them safely. Mayor Cline commented she still does not like to see people parking on the south side of C Street and Councilor Parker supported parking between 3rd and 4th street and not in the first block of C Street. After continued discussion Schwendeman asked if the City was alright with letting the process continue as implemented with the consensus of the Council in agreement. Mayor Cline asked to be notified of any changes and again Schwendeman apologized for not initially including the City and would be certain to communicate better in the future. Mayor Cline stated she would be available on April 15, 2009 when the other entities were in the City and Council President Doerfler and Councilor Mercier said they could be present as well if needed.

Adjournment

Councilor Parker made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:50 p.m. Councilor Mercier 2nd and the motion carried unanimously.

Marjean Cline, Mayor

Judy Cleeton, City Administrator