



City of Asotin

www.cityofasotin.org

Phone: 509-243-4411

PO Box 517

121 Cleveland Street

Asotin WA 99402

Fax: 509-243-1223

Asotin City Town Hall Meeting June 19th 6:30pm

Mayor Bonfield, Councilmember Appleton, Bly, Loseth, Paris, Police Chief, Monte Renzelman, Fire Chief, Noel Hardin, Clerk/Treasurer, Tiffany Rogers and Deputy Clerk, Tina Davidson, City of Asotin EMS, Amy Paris

Lewiston Morning Tribune, Kerri Sandaine
KLEW TV Arman Araradian

Amanda Renzelman, Elaine Nagle, Ron Crossin, Sherri Ward, Charlotte Tuttle, June Shelman, Penny and George Elliott, Johnny and Terri Heald, Steve Cowdry, Asotin County Commissioner, Chris Seubert, Mike Bailey. There were more in the audience then recorded.

Mayor Bonfield asked the audience if they had any questions and/or comments about the Levy Lid Lift. She stated she is not sure why they call it a Levy Lid Lift when it is a property tax increase.

Penny Elliott asked if the Levy Lid Lift does not pass the proposed cuts for 2019 will happen. She was referencing the handout that was given to the public.

BUDGET CUTS FOR 2019

Reduction in Police Services

- Chief will be available Monday through Friday from 8am-5pm
- No night or weekend coverage. On call at night for serious emergency calls only, no barking dog calls at night

Reduction in Fire Services

- Return to strictly volunteer fire department status, will increase insurance rates, and endangers homes as most fire fighters work outside of city limits

Reduction in Administrative City Services

- City Hall Office hours to be reduced
- Specific times and days to get plots at cemetery and headstone placement.
- Reduce or eliminate park rental (revenue source)
- Fax, copies, questions limited hours
- Correspondence controlling weeds, trees, bushes last priority

Reduction of Streets, Equipment, Maintenance and Operation to City Facilities

- Less maintenance of parks
- Reduced maintenance of streets, potholes and alleyways
- Less time for public works supervisor to apply for grant funding for projects
- Closing park restrooms
- Reduce mowing time from twice weekly to once a week or less

Mayor Bonfield stated yes, if the Levy Lid Lift fails these will be the additional cuts for 2019. Penny Elliott asked Mayor Bonfield if she was still not taking her salary. Mayor Bonfield replied yes, she and another councilmember are not taking their salary.

Charlotte Tuttle asked if the levy passes does the city get any of the 2018 cuts back. Mayor Bonfield said no. Charlotte Tuttle was referencing the handout that was given to the public.

BUDGET CUTS FOR 2018

When the Levy Lid Lift failed it was necessary to make budget cuts. The following cuts were made:

- No wage increases for any staff
- Dependent benefits will no longer be paid by the City
- Reserve position and Evidence Clerk (12 hr. per week) position has been eliminated
- All departments have cut 3% to 40% of their budgets with the General Fund taking the greatest loss for 2018
- Mayor will forego her salary and one council member is donating his/her salary back to the City

Terry Heald asked why there were cuts. Councilmember Bly asked have you really paid attention to where your taxes are going. It is not city taxes that went up, its school, state etc. but not city taxes.

Steve Cowdry asked how we got to this point. Mayor Bonfield stated the prices in gas, salaries, Avista costs all increase and the monies from the state and different programs have decreased. Parts of the SRO funds were from a grant, but the grant has ended. Therefore, the city and the school began to pay for the SRO salary.

Councilmember Bly stated we only receive \$178,000 in property tax and that is split between the General and Street funds. That's not a lot of money.

Ron Crossin asked how many households are paying taxes. Mayor Bonfield stated 489 families are paying property taxes. Ron Crossin asked if Clemens Addition was a part of the city. Mayor Bonfield stated Clemens Addition is not part of the city, however we would like to annex them in.

Sherri Ward asked where the city line is at the East end of town. Mayor Bonfield stated past Riverpointe Addition on the right where the 25 mile an hour sign is.

Councilmember Appleton stated the city has done our part by selling property owned by the city so it could be placed back on the tax rolls.

Councilmember Bly stated a lot of the city land is owned by governmental entities and the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers which is water front property and they don't pay taxes. Mayor Bonfield stated the city does not receive approximately \$55,000 worth of property tax dollars due to the governmental entities.

Mayor Bonfield explained that the Water and Sewer funds are separate. These funds are separate and dictated by the State and cannot shift or cover a shortage in another fund.

A State Audit is required every two years which costs the city \$20,000.00.

\$178,000 that is received by property taxes is set by property values.

Ron Crossin asked what if the city has an excess in funds in water and sewer. Mayor Bonfield stated it pays for the bond payments and infrastructure. Mayor Bonfield explained the City of Asotin received 45% grant funding for the Waste Water Treatment Plant. Most grants only offer 15%. The City was able to come in under budget, and the City received \$35,000 back due to the timeline and was able to put further improvements into the Waste Water Treatment Plant. The city was allowed to use our labor to get the project completed.

The Cemetery Fund is its own fund. It is a trust fund. The City can only use the interest on trust fund, not a lot of interest money, since interest rates are low.

The EMS Fund is used as a pass through to pay for the Ambulance contract and our EMS Personnel supplies.

Steve Cowdry asked about the Asotin Municipal Court revenues vs expenditures. He wants to know if the city is still in the process of bring it up where it should be. Mayor Bonfield stated the startup costs were huge. The City will be receiving \$5,000 in 2019 for Impact Funding. Mayor Bonfield stated the judge has been amazing with the salary and working with the city. Court Clerk, Tina Davidson has been working with outstanding collections owed to the City in the amount of \$15,000. Court Clerk, Tina Davidson has been making payment arrangements and schedules to collect the debt. Councilmember Appleton stated we did not start the court to make money. The court should break even in about four to five years.

Asotin County Commissioner, Chris Seubert, stated the City has approached the county for a contract. He stated he thinks the county could save the city some money by offering an all-encompassing service with savings up to \$75,000 – \$100,000 which would offer two officers a position with the county. This would give the City full services. We would like to sit down and negotiate. Asotin County Commissioner, Chris Seubert stated he wanted to throw that out from the county and get together and talk about it. The City Council said thank you to Asotin County Commissioner, Chris Seubert and stated they will talk soon.

City of Asotin EMS Personnel, Amy Paris asked Mayor Bonfield about the reduction in Fire Service and how does it change in being a volunteer. Mayor Bonfield stated the City would no longer contract with Asotin County Fire District and no longer have Noel Hardin as the Fire Chief. The reason we have the insurance rates we have now is because we have mutual aid with Asotin County. Someone in Asotin would have to resume the position as Fire Chief. Amy Paris stated they are EMT's under Asotin County. Fire Chief, Noel Hardin explained the Fire District provides auto aid. We could use more volunteers now. With the junior program the total number of members is thirteen. People have jobs so they not in town during the day. Asotin County Fire

District shows up. Where the financial part hits is that the residents could see an increase to their insurance rates. You get points for having a career chief working and auto aid. The rate is a seven if you went to the bigger number the less of insurance you have, your insurance rates go up.

Councilmember Paris asked Fire Chief, Noel Hardin to explain the EMS Levy. Fire Chief, Noel Hardin stated the EMS Levy can only be .50 per 1,000 of assessed value. EMS works within that budget. In August voters will see on the ballot the same levy you have been paying for. The vote doesn't raise the dollar amount, it will approve a life time levy. That money pays for the pass through paramedic ambulance service with Lewiston, pays for volunteers training and response, volunteer quick response units, EMS will beat the ambulance to the scene. In more than one case their doing CPR before the ambulance gets there. EMS tax dollars cannot be spent on anything else.

Sherri Ward had a question about the restoration for the Asotin Boat Launch. Is the city putting any money into the Marina? Mayor Bonfield stated all Marina monies are from federal and state grant funding. There are no General Fund tax dollars going into the Marina funding. If the Levy Lid Lift passes and there is reserve money, where will the money go. Fire Chief, Noel Hardin stated from the Fire Departments stand point planning for the future for the Fire Department, the past city councils have not planned for the future of the fire department. Such as the city owned fire truck is past its life time. Therefore, if there is any extra funds the council needs to start preparing to replace a fire engine. The air packs and air masks expire at the end of this month. Fire Chief, Noel Hardin stated he has submitted a \$200,000.00 grant to apply for these air packs and air masks but there is \$10,000.00 of match money that has to come from the City. Also, there will be new equipment that will be needed down the road.

Mayor Bonfield stated the City is not adding any new services, with this Levy Lid Lift. We are not adding any more personnel. Right now we are using a part time person in Public Works to cut back on things.

Sherri Ward stated her taxes went up \$250 due to the school levy and now you're asking me to fund another \$250.00 per year. I can see why people would say no. But this meeting has helped me understand I won't be putting extra money into the boat dock.

Councilmember Appleton stated the City has done a lot of improvements which include the Waste Water Treatment Plant, 2nd Street Stormwater, the vault for Stormwater behind the courthouse, applying for funding through the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) for the streets. The City has paid nothing for those projects. The City is getting ready to do an overlay on 4th Street through the TIB grant funding at no cost to the city. The City has a Public Works Superintend that works really hard with the state. He has been the catalyst. He worked for Poe Asphalt and he knows what he is doing and applies for the grants. He's just not a person who mows the lawn. He does a lot of the work himself.

Mayor Bonfield stated she appreciates people coming to the meeting and asking questions and not just sitting at home and being upset.

Mayor Bonfield stated the City has put in new reservoirs, tied into PUD to get water if we lose our water. At one point and time, the City was informed we didn't have enough water rights therefore, we could no longer build any more houses. PUD helped us with that situation. One water right is \$60,000 and it is really important for the City of Asotin to keep its own water rights.

Councilmember Bly stated a lot is controlled by state and federal rule regulations. They mandate without providing the funding and that has gotten worse and worse. Every time there is new mandate and no money and they are still cutting back.

Councilmember Loeth made a point that we have been aggressive for leadership. We are a rounded out group. We have been resourceful, using Junior Fire Fighters. We have control with jail costs such as maybe jail is not an option then they can do community service such as weed eat, take care of the curb island weeds, etc.. There is a lot of resources that we try to get a hold of.

The Port of Clarkston has helped a lot in getting grants for the city and was successful. We have to keep looking for resources to get people to help out.

Councilmember Bly stated Police Chief, Monte Renzelman is our only policeman right now and he has to cover 24 hours. We have a reserve officer but, you are restricted by law on how many hours a reserve officer can work.

Steve Cowdry stated he has a partial solution. If the City were to annex into the PUD with the water it would offset the levy. He stated he talked to Tim Simpson. If the City were to annex into the PUD, then city residence can run for PUD Office and vote for and be on the PUD Board. Water rates would go down to a third to a half if PUD ran our system. Councilmember Appleton stated the city looked into it previously and the city would have to give up our water rights. Steve Cowdry asked the council to invite Tim Simpson to an open public meeting. Mayor Bonfield stated she would be willing to look at it again. The Council stated they do not want to give up the City of Asotin water rights.

Mayor Bonfield stated the city had already talked about annexing into Asotin County Fire District #1 since they already have jurisdiction around the City of Asotin. It would have to be approved by their board, voted on by the county and city. Councilmember Paris stated it would increase property taxes. Mayor Bonfield stated these are all good suggestions.

Steve Cowdry asked would it be more to pay in fire insurance. Dwayne Paris followed up with what Noel said. The life cycle of the air bottles and masks equipment is expiring by federal law next month. We are still waiting for the grant. We always come in under budget and use the bare minimum. We don't spend money unless we have to. We have to keep up certifications. We use outside resources such as working with Asotin County Fire District and we train with Clearwater Fire District. If we don't get the income, then they won't be able to respond to the calls. We have to pay for the things that have to be replaced.

Noel Hardin stated we are working with a fire budget less than they did 20 years ago. Dwayne Paris stated we have six volunteers responding to over 100 calls a year. This coming Monday we will be pinning five new volunteers. They are eighteen years old and have went to serious calls and shown what they are made of. They conquered the program. The only expenditures were a pair of boots. It is a self-fulfilling program. Thirteen sophomores want to come in this year. Dwayne Paris sent it out to Clarkston High School as well. We have a great working relationship with the surrounding areas.

Councilmember Loseth stated she did not realize the level of the public safety calls. The police are dealing with significant crimes that Police Chief, Monte Renzelman has had to respond to and with quick response time. Police Chief, Monte Renzelman has saved people from the river remarkable of what they have to respond to.

Question was asked about the resurfacing of 2nd Street. Mayor Bonfield stated 2nd Street is sixty feet wide. The state no longer provides funding to resurface roads that are that wide. There will be twenty feet on each side that will be a rolled curb, the rest will be a compacted gravel area. It will have a new base, be recurved to state standards and be black topped like 3rd Street. It will be an extremely expensive process, therefore we can only do a few blocks at a time depending on funding.

Elaine Nagle wants to know if the city can deed back to the homeowners the twenty feet the city is not going to use. The homeowner could beautify it and then pay property tax on that twenty feet. Mayor Bonfield stated there would still have to be a twenty foot easement through the property for utilities. Mayor Bonfield stated that's something that's really good to look at.

Mayor Bonfield explained about the restoration of the Asotin Boat Launch and Marina. Before the Marina silted in there were eleven businesses that brought revenue and sales tax into the City of Asotin. The city has requested the return of the leased United States Army Corp of Engineer property that was signed by the president in 2014 to give the city back our property per the WWRDA bill. This eliminates the lease and the school is now guaranteed to have their ball fields. The city can use the property to lease for businesses. The city cannot sell the property. A professional boating company wants to come and go out of Asotin for their boat tours. The past businesses could not maintain their business because the city doesn't have the traffic like it used to when the Marina was operational. The main purpose of the Asotin Boat Launch and Marina is for Economic Development. Businesses would bring sales tax. The boat docks are only temporary to pull up to. The city conducted a survey and no one wanted to store their boats due to the value of their boats and gear. The city would not be able to provide twenty-four hour security. They also were not interest in the cost to park the boat at the docks. There would not be any fuel sold at the Marina due to EPA rules. However, they would have access to the stores and businesses.

Elaine Nagle stated during the school year the parking lot is full of student's vehicles. It is a dangerous place. There are sporting activities, people are trying to come out of the parking area with their boats, dangerous situation for people who are picking up children. Mayor Bonfield stated the weekends are the majority of when the people are on the river. School days there may be some using it, but don't believe it would be as full as during the weekend. There is always going to be football games but do you want something that can be self sufficient and not to have to ask for more property taxes. Mayor Bonfield wants to hear some good ideas. Elaine Nagle wants to know what's wrong with the boat launch at the other end of town. The Council stated it has fast running water. Elaine Nagle stated it's a gentle current. Police Chief, Monte Renzelman stated that's where the majority of the boat incidents occur. Police Chief, Monte Renzelman stated there is so much more work that would have to go into to using it.

Johnny Heald stated the Levy Lid Lift will generate approximately \$90,000 and can only be used for the General Fund items, Fire, Police, Administration, Parks, Asotin Municipal Court. Mayor Bonfield stated that is correct.

Meeting adjourned at 7:37pm

Mayor Bonfield

Clerk/Treasurer, Tiffany Rogers

Lewiston Morning Tribune June 20, 2018 ASOTIN - Asotin residents asked questions and offered suggestions on how the city can save money during a lively town hall meeting Tuesday night.

A proposed property tax increase and updates to a marina drew more than 20 people to city hall for a discussion about what's at stake if the city can't come up with more revenue for police, fire, parks and administrative services.

Asotin County Commissioner Chris Seubert offered to hire two patrol deputies at the sheriff's office to handle all of the city's police duties. The estimated savings to the city would be in the range of \$75,000 to \$125,000, the commissioner said.

"This is just an olive branch we're throwing out," Seubert said. "(Sheriff) John Hilderbrand supports this, and hopefully we can get together and do some negotiating."

Asotin is down to one full-time police chief and a reserve officer who works a few hours a week. Handing the reins back to the Asotin County Sheriff's Office and hiring the chief as a deputy could help ease the load, Seubert said.

Former Mayor Steve Cowdrey suggested annexing into the Asotin County Public Utility District for the city's water supply, saying it would save residents money on their utility bills that could go toward the property tax increase.

"Our water rates would go down by a third to a half," Cowdrey said. "We would come out ahead if the PUD ran our system."

Councilor Joe Appleton said the council has looked into annexation in the past, but Asotin officials didn't want to give up the city's water rights.

"The council felt we didn't want to give up our water rights for pie in the sky," Appleton said.

Cowdrey encouraged leaders to invite PUD Manager Tim Simpson to a meeting and take another look at the numbers.

Elaine Nagle said Asotin should consider deeding more than 20 feet of city-owned property in front of Second Street residences back to homeowners. The property would go on the tax rolls and could be beautified by residents, she said.

Mayor Vikki Bonfield said the council will discuss all of the ideas as it actively seeks solutions for budget concerns.

After a property tax increase was rejected by voters last year, the city had to make cuts, and leaders hope to have better luck this November, she said.

The council is proposing a \$1.10 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to add about \$89,000 to the general fund. The money would be used for parks, police, fire, city hall operations and municipal court.

Several residents asked why the city is in the hole since their property taxes are continuing to climb.

Officials said most of the money goes to the state, county, school district and other designated areas, and the city of Asotin receives a small portion from the 489 households on the rolls.

Salary increases, state funding reductions and bumps in gas and Avista rates contributed to the shortfall, Bonfield said.

"We only get \$178,000 a year from property taxes and that's split between the general fund and streets," said Councilor Jennifer Bly. "It's not a lot of money."

Appleton said the city recently sold property where a coffee shop is located, as well as a lot near the fairgrounds to get more land on the tax rolls.

Bonfield estimated the city misses out on about \$55,000 a year because so much property in Asotin is owned by the government, including the sites for the school district, Asotin County Courthouse and federally owned shoreline.

When asked about the new municipal court costs, officials said the court is still running a deficit because of start-up costs, but it was never intended to be a moneymaker.

The council expects it to break even in a few years and one of the benefits is having defendants work off community service through town projects, such as painting or weeding, Bly said.

Residents also were interested in how the levy lid lift would affect the city's volunteer fire crew.

The mayor said if the tax proposal gets shot down, the city will no longer be able to contract with the Asotin County Fire District to have Noel Hardin serve as chief in Asotin - and fire insurance costs would go up.

"The reason we have the fire insurance rating we have now is because we have been working with the fire district," Bonfield said. "It would be back to someone out here assuming the position of chief. The killer on this is most people who are volunteer firefighters do not work in Asotin during the day."

Hardin said much of the city's fire equipment needs replaced, especially air bottles that cost \$1,000 each and are about to expire.

"Past councils, not this one, haven't done a good job of planning for the future," Hardin said. "We're at the emergency level with some of this equipment."

Sherri Ward wanted to know why the marina and boat launch were on the agenda if the levy lid lift is strictly for the general fund. She also asked what the city plans to do with the money if the measure passes, since the budget shortfall is projected at \$66,000, rather than \$89,000.

The mayor said the extra money would be put in reserve for emergencies. The marina was included on the list of items up for discussion just to give residents an update, Bonfield said.

"My taxes went up \$250 a year," Ward said. "If I vote yes, my taxes will go up another \$250. I can see why people would say no. But this meeting has helped me understand I won't be putting extra money into the boat dock."

Councilor Lori Loseth said the city has been as resourceful and creative as possible in its handling of finances. Officials are aggressively going after grants and looking at a variety of ways to retain city services.

"I appreciate people coming and asking questions," Bonfield said. "I'd rather you do that than stay home and be mad or talk to the neighbors and get misinformation."

Assessed Value	Annual	Month
\$100,000	\$110	\$9.17
\$150,000	\$165	\$13.75
\$200,000	\$220	\$18.34
\$250,000	\$275	\$22.92
\$300,000	\$330	\$27.50
\$350,000	\$385	\$32.09
\$400,000	\$440	\$36.37

What is a Levy Lid Lift?

Levy Lid Lift is the proper terminology for a property tax increase.

The purpose of the Levy Lid Lift?

The purpose of the Levy Lid Lift is to provide additional property tax to support city services. A Levy Lid Lift (Property Tax Increase); must be presented to and approved by voters.

Is this a new tax?

No, this is not a new tax. The City is requesting that the voters approve a \$1.10 increase in property tax. The current levy is \$2.05. The ballot will indicate that the Levy will be \$3.15. The State requires that you understand the total Levy will be \$3.15, which includes the current levy of \$2.05 and the increase of \$1.10. This increase will add \$1.10 per thousand assessed value.

What does the Levy Lid Lift provide?

It will provide additional funds to retain current services to the citizens of Asotin. The City will NOT be adding any new services. Any services that are outside the current budget will be funded by grants, or State funds that have earmarks (specifically designated projects).

Where can I find more information?

Additional information can be found on the City Website, or by speaking to the City Clerk Treasurer (509-243-4411) or the Mayor (208-791-2704).

BUDGET BREAKDOWN

The following are budget items for the City of Asotin. Water, Sewer, Cemetery and EMS are separate budgets and money from those budgets cannot be used to supplement the General Fund. The City can borrow from the Water or Sewer budget, but must pay the budget back with interest. (State Law)

WATER: (2018) Water Collections \$301,500, Expenditures \$257,155, Debt Service \$50,100 (loans)

SEWER: (2018) Sewer collections \$414,000, Expenditures \$294,005, Debt Service \$118,200 (loans)

CEMETERY: The Asotin Cemetery has a trust fund established in 1954. Interest from this trust can be used for upkeep on the LaFond grave site and other areas of the cemetery. With low interest rates the fund is barely producing any interest.

EMS FUND: The EMS Levy which provides for emergency medical services is \$.50 per \$1,000 assessed value. Although these fees are passed on under a contract to provide these services, the State requires that the \$.50 assessment be identified as a part of the City Levy funds. The \$2.05 that the City currently receives includes \$.50 EMS Levy funds.

GENERAL FUND also known as the CURRENT EXPENSE FUND

Property Tax to the General Fund: \$124,000 plus \$66,000 which is earmarked for Streets. The City also receives revenue from Licenses & Permits. (\$9,500) and miscellaneous revenues (\$20,600) REET Taxes (sale of homes) 25% are earmarked for the Capital Improvement Fund (\$5,400) and 75% to the General Fund (\$13,100)

Money from the General Fund supports the following services per year:

Streets: Repair and maintenance to City streets as well as match money for grants on major street projects.

Parks: Includes mowing, watering, fertilizer, garbage, pest control, repair and maintenance of restrooms and structures.

Fire Department: The fire department budget contracts with ACFD1. Noel Hardin oversees the fire department, provides training and assists with maintaining and purchasing equipment. Having joint exercises and assistance from Asotin County Fire Dist. 1, provides for a better fire rating, which reduces your fire insurance rates. Even though we have a volunteer Fire Department; Fire Fighters are paid on a call out basis. We also have mutual aid.

Police Department: We currently have an SRO, however the grant that paid for the position has run out. It is our intention to write another grant but there are no guarantees. We lost one officer to the County and have had extreme difficulty recruiting officers (both the county and Clarkston are two officers short due to problems recruiting). We currently have the Chief and a Reserve Officer for 24 hour coverage.

Asotin Municipal Court: The Asotin Municipal Court is a State mandated service the Court receives revenue from fines and forfeitures. (\$6,195.91)

BUDGET CUTS FOR 2018

When the Levy Lid Lift failed it was necessary to make budget cuts. The following cuts were made:

- No wage increases for any staff
- Dependent benefits will no longer be paid by the City
- Reserve position and Evidence Clerk (12 hr. per week) position has been eliminated
- All departments have cut 3% to 40% of their budgets with the General Fund taking the greatest loss for 2018
- Mayor will forego her salary and one council member is donating his/her salary back to the City

BUDGET CUTS FOR 2019

Reduction in Police Services

- Chief will be available Monday through Friday from 8am-5pm
- No night or weekend coverage. On call at night for serious emergency calls only, no barking dog calls at night

Reduction in Fire Services

- Return to strictly volunteer fire department status, will increase insurance rates, and endangers homes as most fire fighters work outside of city limits

Reduction in **Administrative City Services**

- City Hall Office hours to be reduced
- Specific times and days to get plots at cemetery and headstone placement.
- Reduce or eliminate park rental (revenue source)
- Fax, copies, questions limited hours
- Correspondence controlling weeds, trees, bushes last priority

Reduction of **Streets, Equipment, Maintenance and Operation to City Facilities**

- Less maintenance of parks
- Reduced maintenance of streets, potholes and alleyways
- Less time for public works supervisor to apply for grant funding for projects
- Closing park restrooms
- Reduce mowing time from twice weekly to once a week or less