

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRINIDAD CITY COUNCIL**  
**WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10, 2008**

**I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

- Mayor Lin called the meeting to order at 7:00PM. All council members were in attendance: Bhardwaj, Ratzlaff, Lin, Binnie, Fulkerson.
- City Staff in attendance: City Manager Steve Albright, City Clerk Gabriel Adams, and City Attorney Paul Hagen, Police Chief Ken Thrailkill.

**II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**III. ADJOURNMENT TO CLOSED SESSION** - *No closed session scheduled for this meeting*

**IV. RECONVENE TO OPEN SESSION**

**V. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Motion (Ratzlaff/Bhardwaj) to add the emergency agenda item related to accounting services.*

**Passed unanimously.**

*Motion (Bhardwaj/Ratzlaff) to approve the agenda as amended. **Passed unanimously.***

**VI. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**August 13, 2008 cc**

*Motion (Fulkerson/Bhardwaj) to approve the minutes as corrected. **Passed unanimously.***

**VII. COMMISSIONERS REPORTS**

Binnie - Parks and Recreation, Streets

**Public Works:** TPW will be using Prop1B money to replace all street signs in town this fall.

Bhardwaj – Health & Human Services, Planning

**Planning:** Update on the August Planning Commission meeting.

Lin – Water, Town Hall

**HCAOG:** Met with HCAOG members in Benbow for visioning meeting.

**SWRCB:** Teleconference at Trinidad Rancheria regarding establishment of a Northern Regional ASBS Monitoring Group.

**YUOK TRIBE:** 1) Met with Jill Geist and Tribal representatives regarding the Yurok's intent to establish a marine sanctuary along the Trinidad coast. The concept will be presented to the Board of Supervisors on September 23. 2) Met with the Tribal Chairperson and legal counsel regarding the Tsurai land transfer. No decisions were made, just discussed the needs and concerns of each party involved.

Fulkerson – Public Safety - Nothing to report.

Ratzlaff – Finance – Nothing to report.

**VIII. STAFF REPORTS**

City Manager - Albright: \$5 Million in ASBS grant applications were submitted today.

City Attorney – Hagen: Nothing to report.

Police Chief – Thrailkill – Nothing to report.

City Clerk – Adams: The recording system has been modified by local sound technician Mo Hollis, and should be recording at premium levels for playback. Also, there will be a free e-waste event at the Trinidad Harbor on Thursday, September 18.

## IX. ITEMS FROM THE FLOOR

*(Three (3) minute limit per Speaker unless Council approves request for extended time.)*

*There were no items from the floor.*

## X. CONSENT AGENDA

1. Staff Activities Report through June, 2008
2. Financial Status Report through May, 2008
3. Town Hall Improvements
4. Agreement to Proceed with Annual Audit
5. Award Contract to Low Bidder for Sebring Property Emergency Drainage Project
6. Resolution 2008-22 Authorizing Implementation of a Proposition 50 Grant

*Motion (Fulkerson/Binnie) to approve the consent agenda as submitted. **Passed unanimously.***

## XI. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Authorization to proceed with the selection of a new accounting firm.  
City Manager Albright explained that the City has contracted with Deborah K. Brooks, CPA since 2003. The firm has provided accounts payable services, financial reporting services, financial records management, payroll services, and interaction/data during the preparation of the annual audit by an independent audit firm.

The City Manager was informed on Tuesday that the firm will be dissolving, effective October 31, 2008. Ms. Brooks and her staff will work with Trinidad during the transition to a new firm for providing CPA and bookkeeping services, but it is necessary to move very quickly in selecting a new firm.

There are a number of different local firms and individuals who would be qualified to provide the required services. It is unknown which firms would be interested in contracting with Trinidad, and it is also unknown how the change will affect the approved budget for outside financial services.

*Motion (Ratzlaff/Fulkerson) to authorize the City Manager to interview multiple financial services firms with the goal of bringing a contract recommendation to the City Council at its next regular meeting. **Passed unanimously.***

2. General Plan Update Presentation  
City Manager Albright explained that the existing City of Trinidad General Plan was first adopted and has been in use since 1980. There have been amendments to the General Plan over the years, and a major update to the Plan was undertaken in the past ten years but never finalized and adopted.

Current work on a revised General Plan began last year, and significant work has been done on the Plan update by the planning staff and the Planning Commission members. The mandated elements (chapters) of the General Plan are Land Use, Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, Noise, Safety, and Housing. The Housing Element is not being updated at this time.

Funding for the Land Use, Open Space, and Conservation Elements has been obtained through a State Prop 50 grant because of their direct relationship to water quality issues. A CEQA document is not being done because a General Plan is exempt from that requirement in the Coastal Development Zone. When completed, the General Plan must also be reviewed and accepted by the California Coastal Commission.

Mike Morgan, Chairman of the Planning Commission, explained that there were a number of ways to go about introducing the plan to the Council, and that it was his mission to get the ball rolling in that direction. The Council could either a) wait for the PC to complete the whole document and then review it, or b) digest it in small segments. Morgan expressed that since the update is long overdue, he wanted to see it complete as quickly as possible.

Council comments included:

**Lin:** The first thing we need is a General Plan overview by the Planning staff.

**Fulkerson:** I'd like to wait and see the draft plan in its entirety – in a useful, readable, and integrated format.

**Bhardwaj:** The most important thing to me is that the plan is as useful 5-10 years from now as it is today. I've looked over some of the draft documents and noticed there are some areas that need clarification.

Staff comment included:

**CM Albright:** The plan would be much easier to review in sections, vs. trying to consume the whole thing at once. I will work with the City Planner to craft a presentation format that will be productive to the Council as well as the public.

**City Attorney Hagen:**

I agree with Albright. Looking at the entire document at once would be overwhelming. However, I would recommend looking at the plan first and provide feedback to staff so they can apply it to the land use and zoning elements. Also, all the authority of the City belongs to the City Council. The Council gives the PC its land use authority. They give you their best work. They're supposed to be the experts. The Council votes it up, down, or makes changes accordingly. The plan itself should be well thought-out and predictable so that people can rely on it for years to come.

*No decision was made. A more detailed presentation will be made at the next meeting.*

3. Creation of a Finance Advisory Committee

City Manager Albright explained that in March 2008, the City Council was presented with an outline of "Standing Committees" that would give individual Council members responsibilities that would replace their historic roles as "commissioners." Although the Council seemed to support the concept of establishing standing committees, they have not yet been formed.

One of the public suggestions related to the "Measure I" 3/4 cent sales tax issue was for the Council to create a special citizen's committee. This committee would track the revenue created by the sales tax and make recommendations to the Council on its use. Of specific concern was the public desire to insure adequate ongoing funding for police and fire protection.

The desire to have a citizen's committee on the sales tax issue is consistent with one of the recommended standing committees. One of those suggested committees was the Administrative Committee, whose responsibility it would be to review and advise the Council on matters related to City Hall, personnel, management functions, and budget issues. It would seem appropriate to add to this responsibility the review of the "Measure I" funds, if the measure passes in November.

Instead of naming the committee the Administrative Committee, it seems appropriate to instead call it the Finance Advisory Committee. If the process is followed as recommended in March 2008, the Council would nominate one of its members as the Chair of the Committee and solicit 5 members.

Public comment included:

**Sam Merryman** – Trinidad

The committee should include various people from outside the City limits.

Council comment included:

**Lin:** An Advisory Committee isn't necessary. Trinidad citizens advise us all the time. A standing committee without an end-goal will not be useful. I would support a task-force, or a more project oriented committee.

**Bhardwaj:** The function of this committee is to establish an additional repository of knowledge among the community. It would be ethical, and would improve the public's perception of the Council and how it handles it's finances – especially in light of the new sales tax measure on the November ballot. People would be more inclined to support it if the Council followed through with their commitments.

**Fulkerson:** I agree with Bhardwaj and Lin, but my concern is that we don't have enough people in town to fill all the volunteer opportunities that need to be filled to keep this town rolling. If there is a committee, it should be small, well-defined, and clean-cut. We should be careful to take time to learn what the committee should do before we create it.

**Binnie:** We published an argument in the November 2008 Election sample ballot that basically says we'll do this. I think we're obligated at this point to establish a sales tax advisory committee.

*No decision was made. The purpose of the committee will be more clearly refined and the proposal will be brought back for discussion at the next meeting.*

4. FY09 Budget Amendment Discussion.

City Manager Albright explained that the City Council adopted a balanced FY09 Budget on June 11, 2008. At that time there remained questions regarding the status of a number of the planned expenditures in the previous year's budget. It was agreed to bring a proposed budget amendment forward in September that would recognize over and under-expenditures in the previous year and determine which of the line items that were not spent fully in FY08 would be carried forward to FY09.

Due to other work requirements and the fact that "posting" and reporting of all expenditures to the last year's budget is not complete, a proposal to the Council to actually amend the FY09 Budget will be delayed to October or November.

However, at the meeting, a presentation on the current status of the FY09 Budget and the potential changes resulting from the currently-posted expenditures of the FY08 Budget will be made. Since posting to the FY08 Budget can be made through August, those final numbers were not yet available when this report was written.

The presentation will focus on four budget issues:

- 1) Changing conditions or other changes that are a result of significant over or under-expenditures made in FY08 that may change the anticipated needs in FY09;
- 2) Changes to the projected revenues that are anticipated to be available to the General Fund in FY09;
- 3) The status of significant budgeted expenditures planned for FY08 that did not occur or only partially occurred; and
- 4) The establishment of "grant budgets" (special revenue funds) as a component of either the General Fund Administration, the General Fund Police Department, the General Fund Fire Department, or the General Fund Public Works Department budgets.

*No decision was made. A budget amendment proposal will be brought to the Council in October for consideration.*

5. Amendments to Rates and Requirements for Renting Town Hall.

City Manager Albright explained that at the last meeting of the City Council, there was an extensive discussion about the policies, rates, and requirements that have been in place for the use and rental of Town Hall. Staff was instructed to take into consideration the discussion and to bring back a revised rental agreement and policies that would be applied to all users of Town Hall.

The current policies have been in effect since the late 1990's, and in the past year there have been a number of incidents that have resulted in some damage to Town Hall. The changes proposed at this time are intended to protect Town Hall as an asset for the residents of the city of Trinidad.

Many variations in the rental rates were examined, but it was finally determined to recommend to the Council a simple rate structure that would be fair to all parties and minimize the number of judgment decisions that have to be made by the City Clerk when accepting a rental application.

Council comment included:

**Fulkerson:** There should be a charge for the use of the Town Hall that's consistent and fair for everyone.

**Lin:** Trinidad community groups and government agencies should be able to enjoy the hall for free. It is, in a sense, a public park. The community should have as much access to it as possible.

**Bhardwaj:** This seems like its more trouble than it's worth. I would rather not charge for the use of the Hall than risk losing the classes offered to the community such as yoga, line-dancing, or tai-chi.

**Binnie:** Should we treat instructors who charge a fee for classes different that those who don't?

Staff comment included:

**CM Albright:** Maybe there wasn't a problem to begin with, but it's clear that we need some general guidelines that give some discretion to the Clerk's office when assessing risk and charging for the use of Town Hall.

**City Clerk Adams:** We've completed the agreement, list of do's and don'ts, and are all in agreement with the content of the application. What the Council has yet to determine is whether or not to charge community groups and instructional classes. The facts are:

- The Town Hall isn't losing money from day-to-day operations.
- It costs the City almost \$7.00/day to heat the Town Hall.
- The City has almost \$45,000 in the Government Building fund from rent payments from Verizon on Trinidad Head. This covers major expenses and upkeep of the building.

*By consensus, the Council directed staff to develop more general categories, principals, and discretion guidelines for the Council to consider at a future meeting.*

## **XII. COUNCIL REQUEST FOR FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

## **XIII. ADJOURNMENT**

- Meeting ended at 9:45pm.

**Submitted by:**

**Approved by:**

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**Gabriel Adams**  
City Clerk

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**Chi-Wei Lin**  
Mayor