

Harlowton City Council Minutes
September 22, 2020
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council, held September 22, 2020 opened at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the September 8, 2020 council meeting were approved as written. Minutes of the September 8, 2020 Public Hearing were also approved as written.

There was a motion by Council member Jack Runner to approve the resolution amendment for Resolution 2020-16 as well as the amendment to the name of Resolution 2020-17 to change to Resolution 2020-18. The motion was seconded by Council member Jim Kalitowski. The resolution amendments were passed unanimously by the council.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no Public Comment

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mayor Paul Otten updated the council on Biegel's Bar ownership transfer. There has been no new communication with Steve Olsen since the last Council update on September 8, 2020. Paul stated that if there is no response from Olsen regarding ownership transfer options before the deadline at the end of October 2020, the City will have to pursue legal action against Olsen for the damages caused by the fire on Olsen's property to the City Hall building.

Paul reported that there is no new information to report regarding Tucker Town Sewer District.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Jack gave a report about the library to the Council. Four hundred and forty four "browsers" (library patrons) came through the library in the month of August. Forty two computers users were counted, 537 adult books were checked out and 256 children's books were checked out. Jack stated that it was a very good turnout for the month.

Council member Rob Elwood reported that the ordinance committee did not meet this week.

Council member Ron Teig reported that there had been no new information regarding the Wetlands Rail Trail but that Jason Seyler with DEQ would be coming down soon for a meeting regarding the Preliminary Project Concept Planning.

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard gave a statement regarding the Tree Board. He stated that a few trees have died but that they were not under warrantee.

Council member Charley Bennett gave a statement on the Pool. He stated that the pool is currently in the process of being winterized and that the skimmers were out. Thompson Pool Company would be coming out on September 30, 2020 to further winterize the pool.

NEW BUSINESS

1) Paul stated that a Fair Market Assessment for the Cream of the West property was done. Frank asked if we have to put the sale of the land out to the public to bid on. Paul replied yes because the land is owned by the City. Paul stated that we have to put it in the newspaper but that we would need to make sure the sale of the land stayed "under control". They Council was concerned that

someone could out bid Cream of the West and then try to sell the land back to them at a higher price.

2) The Resolution 2020-16 regarding City Worker's Wages and Salaries was presented to the council for approval. Community member and City employee Susan Beley was in attendance of the meeting and asked why her and fellow city employee Richard Egebakken have not been given raises. City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco stated that what she had been told by previous City Clerk-Treasurer Kathie Newland is that it was because they were not under contract. Susan replied that that was not true at that she and Richard are under contract. Susan stated that they were supposed to be appointed each year and that their contracts were supposed to be reviewed and renewed each year. Ron asked if maybe the renewal should happen every other year. Ron made a motion to pass Resolution 2020-16 and Charley seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

3) Resolution 2020-19 was presented to the Council for approval. The Resolution would "abandon" E Ave after the intersection with 1st St SE. Discussion ensued about why the street was created the way it was. It was discussed that one day someone might like to buy the land on the other side of the intersection. Ron motioned for the resolution to be passed. Jack seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4) A discussion took place regarding whether or not to make A Ave a "one way" street. Community members and A Ave residents Mr. and Mrs. Swickard were present for the discussion. Mrs. Swickard asked why this was coming up. Council member Rob Elwood stated that it was his idea. He stated that since the road repaving had occurred that there had been an increase in traffic on A Ave. Rob believes that it would be safer to make A Ave a one way, with parking on both sides. Rob mentioned that in winter with snow clearing it would be easier. He also stated that he believed it would be safer at the end of the street to turn onto the highway. Mrs. Swickard stated that she believed that it was different on the side of A Ave where the Courthouse is because of visibility but did not believe this to be so on the other side (in question). Mr. Swickard mentioned that there must be an ordinance for sight lines at street corners created. Mrs. Swickard asked if this was currently a problem. Council member Frank responded that he did not believe so. Community member Susan Beley stated that this issue comes up every so often with whether or not to make A Ave a one way across the entire length. She also stated that parking on one side of the street only has also come up in the past. Frank asked Mrs. Swickard what she didn't like about the idea of making it a one way. Mrs. Swickard stated that it would increase traffic on Central Ave. Also, she stated that as far as it being a problem when snow is being removed, it wasn't in the past because during snow removal, you cannot park on the street anyway. Mr. Swickard stated that people on A Ave with driveways should be using them to decrease the number of cars parked on the road. He also mentioned that RV parking should be short term and limited. A discussion ensued between the council and community members about the level of congestion on the street and is it really any more than any other street in town. The council decided that further investigation is needed. The council members of the ward that includes A Ave, Charley Bennett and Rob Elwood, would do a survey of the homeowners on A Ave to gather more information. Rob Elwood also mentioned investigating the ordinances of RV parking in the City.

5) LIEAP Program Accessibility and Utilization

Rob Elwood and City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco stated to the council what the LIEAP program is and how it works. Rob stated that he would like to increase the amount available to qualifying residents from \$25 a month to \$50 a month. Rob also stated that he would like to encourage people who have special circumstance to apply by writing a letter to the Council stating their case for a

need for assistance. The Council discussed ways to better advertise the program to the community. Some of these ideas include flyers posted at local food banks and the Medicaid office. The Council discussed concerns with Landlords possibly abusing the program by charging the tenant the regular rate and keeping the discount for themselves. Rob made a motion to increase the qualifying amount from \$25 a month to \$50 a month as well as letter submissions for consideration of special circumstances. Frank seconded the motion. The Council passed the motion unanimously.

6) Pool Manager Discussion

Council member Charley Bennett stated that Pool Manager Jesi McKeever put down worked hours on 8/21/2020 but did not work that day. Charley also stated that Jesi put that she worked 6 hours on 8/22/2020 but only worked 2 hours that day. Jim Kalitowski suggested that a time card machine be installed at the Pool to prevent this situation in the future. Jesi was present at the council meeting and distributed copies of emails and letter from fellow co-workers as well as community members commending her on her work at the pool. Charley asked that an independent investigation of the situation be done by the County Sheriff's department. Charley also stated that Jesi did not come down to the pool at the time of closure to winterize it. Discussion ensued. Jim requested that Charley's request be filled and Frank seconded it. Charley will be seeking out the help of the Sheriff's office regarding the situation.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard reported to the Council that the water project at A Ave by the corner of the Post Office had begun. D Ave would be next.

The department is still working on clearing the trees from the 8/25/2020 storm.

A utility trailer had been purchased for chlorine transport.

Bob also mentioned that in order to make A Ave a "One way", as previously mentioned by the Council, it would be approximately \$3,000 for signage.

Bob stated that the backflow preventer required by the State had been installed and that the pool had been winterized.

MAYOR REPORT

Paul informed the council that the Waste Water Project bid had been awarded to Dick Anderson Construction. All bids had been over the Engineer's estimate and Dick Anderson Construction was the least over bid at \$383,000 over bid. Paul stated that a loan had been secured with Rural Development for the difference in costs. Paul stated that the project would start in Fall 2020 and a majority of the project would be completed starting in the Spring of 2021.

Paul asked Council if anyone had considered becoming the representative at the Snowy Mountain Development meetings in Lewistown. Council member Ron Teig volunteered.

Paul stated that a COVID-19 outbreak had occurred on the Martinsdale Colony. Bob discussed how this could badly affect the community if the Public Works Department employees ever had to be quarantined because of COVID-19 exposure. A need for a contingency plan was discussed.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be October 13, 2020 at 7:00pm.

CLAIMS

Frank motioned for the claims from September 4, 2020 through September 18, 2020 be approved for payment. Rob seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously by council.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20pm.

Council Members Present: Charley Bennett, Rob Elwood (via phone), Jim Kalitowski, Jack Runner, Ron Teig, Frank Brouillette

Employees Present: Bob Schuchard

Paul Otten, Mayor

Lara Brisco, Clerk-Treasurer