

April 11, 2023
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council was held on April 11, 2023. The meeting opened at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes of the March 28, 2023, Council meeting were approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Kevin Knudson, City Fire Chief, questioned the funding used to pay the Northwestern Energy bill for the new fire hall. It was determined the old fire hall was being paid for from the city's general fund. The new fire hall's utilities are being paid for by the county. Kevin also stated they were looking at a ladder fire truck from Big Timber rather than purchase the one from Iowa. Kevin will keep the city posted on the Big Timber fire truck and the purchase price or if it will be donated.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Library: Councilmember Jack Runner was absent from the meeting however Councilmember Charley Bennett stated they needed larger gutters at the library, and he also checked the slope of the cement coming off the downspout and it seemed to be plenty of slope but would need to increase the size of the cement pad. Charley stated he would get a hold of the Amish to see if they would come to town to implement several cement projects for the city including the cement pad for the library, the pool, and the depot.

Ordinance Committee: Per Councilmember, Frank Brouillette, committee did not meet.

Pool: Charley mentioned the pool renovation looks nice. Ron Fischer got the ceramic tiles to do the showers, the ceiling is almost done, and the plumbing is close to being done. They have ordered two new doors that should be installed soon. Charley also talked to the two new pool managers, Kylie Meeker and Darian Murray, who are anxious to get started by getting the pool ready to open hopefully by the end of May. There is a possible return employee who will perform the cleaning duties of the pool.

Tree Board: Public Works Director, Bob Schuchard, stated nothing new to report.

Wetlands Rail Trail: Councilmember, Ron Teig, absent.

UPDATE ON PAST AGENDA TOPICS:

1. Charley Bennett has been in contact with Stronghold Construction regarding the repair of the basement of the library. Stronghold commented that the outside of the library needs to be fixed prior to fixing the basement cracks.
2. The council voted on resolution 2023-03 STIP (Short Term Investment Pool). Councilmember Allie Jones, via phone, voted to approve the resolution and Councilmember Kathleen Schreiber second the motion. The resolution passed unanimously.

UPDATE ON DECAY ORDINANCE COMPLAINTS:

Councilmember Frank Brouillette reported that the Hayden property cleanup is almost done. Charley presented the council with pictures of trash near his property. He spoke with his neighbor and told him he needed to get a garbage can. He was also given a picture of a pickup bed full of trash located by the high school. Charley also took pictures and video of the loose tin on a building structure on the main street. His concern is it will come down on someone. Public Works Director Bob Schuchard invited a new resident to Harlo to come to City Hall to follow the procedures regarding neighboring property. Our City Attorney, Brent Brooks, is working with the council to determine the best action to enforce the city Decay Ordinance. Attorney Brooks stated there are individual and public nuisance statutes that can be used regarding neighbors but also stated we should enforce our city ordinance. It was also brought up to possibly put stickers on vehicles that have not been moved for at least 10 days. Charley is working with Sheriff Everett Misner on the possibility of getting these vehicles hauled off after 10 days. Brouillette stated our relatively new Decay Ordinance seems to be working well. Our first action is to talk to the resident and if the conversation doesn't work, we follow up with a letter to obtain the required action. The letter gives the resident time to either comply with the Ordinance or the city will need to take further action. Bennett has been in contact with the State Board of Health, and she is willing to come to a council meeting to advise on the steps we can or need to take. The council is also concerned with liability regarding some of the old buildings on the main street and wondering if the decay ordinance could be enforced with these buildings to ensure the safety of the public.

UPDATE ON PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED ITEMS

Charley Bennett spoke with the Library Director, Tina Peterson, regarding the basement repairs. Tina stated Stronghold and Associates said they can patch the basement, but they should fix the outside first. Charley reiterated the need for a larger cement pad for the gutter downspout with a curb to prevent back flow. Charley also mentioned again, the city wants to have the Graves Hotel fire debris cleaned up as soon as possible.

NEW BUSINESS

Attorney Brooks talked about the Burroughs land sale. There are some things still needed including a signed contract, a resolution, a buy-sell agreement, and an MDLT release. The question of easements came up and Brooks stated he would contact the surveyor, Andy Stensrud, to get a copy of the survey with the easements identified.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Discussion was brought up regarding a rate increase for bulk water once we receive the water from CMRWA. The current rate is \$0.10 per gallon however it is obvious that there are people that take water without paying proving the honor system is not working. A coin operated water meter was brought up as well as putting up cameras. City Deputy Clerk, Deshawnda Carver asked about signage at the bulk water tank, so everyone is aware there is a cost and prepayment is the preferred method. Brouillette said we need to at least cover our usage plus a little more for maintenance etc. It was also brought up that people from out of town use the hydrants in Chief Joseph Park to fill water receptacles.

A landfill rate increase was also discussed. Bennett talked with former Mayor, Jeff Sell, about placing a county and city mill levy on the ballot that would cover the cost to have dumpsters in the smaller towns surrounding Harlo. These dumpsters would be managed by Republic Services out of Lewistown. Mayor Paul Otten and Charley have agreed to go to the County Commissioners meeting to discuss sharing some of the expenses for operating the landfill and the pool as they are used by both city and county residents.

Bob brought up the water main break near the hospital and the need for Northwestern Energy to cover all expenses as they have accepted responsibility for the watermain break. Bob also reported the continuation of removing trees and filling potholes. It has been brought to the city's attention that there has been some misuse of the basketball court and skate park as well as blocking streets with traffic cones, some graffiti and increased garbage in some of these areas as well as in Chief Joseph Park. There is concern about liability issues for the city. Charley also mentioned a broken window at the depot. He mentioned the possibility of having to lock the property.

REPORT OF THE CLERK-TREASURER

- City Clerk-Treasurer, Debbie Johnson, reported the lifeguard training will be offered to the two new pool managers, Kylie Meeker and Darian Murray, before the end of May. This class will be offered by Mary Kepler from Lewistown.
- Debbie reported contacting Kelsey Miller with the Montana Weed Control Association and Kelsey is checking for information needed regarding a Noxious Weed Grant for Harlowton.
- Debbie also indicated the closing of Tri-County Federal Credit Union accounts and moving the money to Citizens Bank, so all the city's accounts are in one location.
- The city is working with Attorney Brooks for a contract or MOU agreement with the school for the use of the pool this summer.
- City staff has opted for the Black Mountain Software to be cloud hosted for backups and updates. They have also chosen to initiate direct deposits for payroll and online timecards through the Black Mountain Software.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Otten reported that HB 12 passed the house floor and is headed to the Senate for consideration and vote. This bill put Harlowton back on the list for a Railyard Project Grant. Representative Bergstrom fought for Harlo against serious opposition from Representative Fitzpatrick from Anaconda who specifically asked the House to resist voting on the amended HB. Also discussed was the charge for solid waste on the utility bills to determine if this is a fee and not a tax. It was determined this is a fee and no one should be exempt from paying this portion of their bill.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

No item as this time

CLAIMS

Frank motioned to pass the claims 20040-46, 20048-57, 20060-67, 20069-70 and Kathleen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM

Councilmembers Present: Charley Bennett, Frank Brouillette, Kathleen Schreiber

Councilmembers Absent: Allison Jones, Ron Teig, Jack Runner

City Office: Mayor Paul Otten, City Clerk-Treasurer Debbie Johnson, Public Works Director Bob Schuchard, City Attorney Brent Brooks, City Deputy Clerk Deshawnda Carver

Public Present: Kevin Knudson



Paul Otten, Mayor



Debbie Johnson, Clerk-Treasurer