

November 14, 2023
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council was held on November 14, 2023. The meeting opened at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes of the October 24, 2023 Council meeting were approved with changes.

PUBLIC COMMENT: No comments.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Library: Council Member Johnny Cooney III stated that in December there will be two vacancies on the library board they will be looking to fill. Stronghold did some repairs on the basement and said they would be back but have not showed up, nor have they sent a bill. Mayor Paul Otten stated that he met with Sanford Moore to go over the Memorandum of Understanding. He stated it is a good document which covers almost everything but, due to disagreements on the library board, it needs to be reworked. Councilmember Cooney stated they are still in this process.

Ordinance: Councilmember Frank Brouillette stated they have not met.

Pool: Councilmember Charley Bennett stated the pool house is shut down for winter. Charley also stated that there will be a bid to put handrails going down the steps. Also, he will be calling Thompson Pools to get a pump, they keep records of all the work they do so it seems fitting to keep using them.

Tree Board: The Public Works Director Bob Schuchard was not present.

Wetlands Rail Trail: Councilmember Ron Teig stated he has nothing for us as he has not been down there in a while. Councilmember Charley Bennett asked about a dog park, separating big dogs from little dogs? Mayor Otten stated that would be nice.

UPDATE ON DECAY ORDINANCE COMPLAINTS: Attorney Brent Brooks stated he did send an email that showed us the Billings Parking Ordinance. Then we will need to reword it and to put all our contact information on it, the sheriff's office information on it. Attorney Brooks stated it is a good idea to keep the sheriff's office in the loop with everything we do regarding the sticker. We do not have anything with campers or trailers yet. Council member Bennett stated he visited with Sheriff Misner, and he said he would make the stickers for a 10-day notice. Member Frank stated they will be printing them at the sheriff's office, and they will be orange. Council member Charley Bennett also stated he noticed people in the community are cleaning up more.

Mayor Otten stated that AMCS was not going to take our water/sewer samples to Billings. Ben Hall stated that the insurance was too much for him to handle. Attorney Brooks states he did get a call from Ben Hall, and an email, saying he wanted to revise and finalize his agreement. Ben really needs the MMIA liability insurance, which is the most important, but it sounds like he is still interested. Mayor Otten stated that he will talk to Public Works director Bob Schuchard when he can.

Attorney Brent Brooks stated he had an idea about the 10-day stickers. Attorney Brooks stated that he visited with Tina Hoger, a code enforcement manager in Billings, and that she was willing to come

to Harlowton and answer any questions we might have about the process they use. And that she seemed eager to help. Mayor Otten asked if the codes would be too much for Harlowton, and Brooks stated that they might be, but that is why we would pick and choose what would be best for our community. Mayor Otten then asked Council member Frank if we needed to amend that ordinance. To which Frank replied that what we have always talked about with that ordinance is that it should not matter because Montana code took care of it. Why have an ordinance when Montana already has one? There is no need for that. If we had some sort of ordinance, it would be to add to the Montana code.

Attorney Brent Brooks recommended that the Council could email him with that they believe is the most important code enforcement issues for Harlowton and then I can discuss them with Mrs. Hoger. Mayor Otten said let us keep it simple.

Council member Charley Bennett stated that most of the people would be willing to clean up their area if they had someone to help them.

UPDATE ON PREVIOUSLY DISCUSSED ITEMS:

1. Councilmembers Frank Brouillette to discuss campers and trailers. He stated he agreed with Mayor Otten that we should keep it simple, that people have approached him concerned about campers, snow and even having a hard time getting out of their driveways. We definitely need to do something, but not control people at the same time. We need to allow people to use their campers in the nicer weather, people should be able to put campers on their property. But when people are putting them on the streets, it is creating an issue, mostly in the winter months. We should write something up where they can use their campers but at the same time there should be a window. It needs to move. During winter months, they just cannot park in the streets. People that it is a hardship for, the city has property to park on. That would clean up the streets. Attorney Brooks shared more ideas with the Council and asked them to please email him with any questions or ideas.
2. Councilmember Frank then had something he wanted to discuss on the agenda. Chairperson Brouillette started out saying as council members the first thing we need to do is to show up for meetings where we make decisions. We have made a lot of decisions in the six years I have been here, and since day one I have taken this job very seriously and so it feels like a slap in the face to hear that we have done nothing. Councilmember Bennett stated he said they have not done 'much' or 'very little.' Councilmember Brouillette then said all the decisions that we make in council meetings are especially important, but the other part of our job is to talk to our constituents, finding out what people are concerned about, and actually listening to the people. There have been plenty of things he has disagreed with, but the majority of his constituents wanted it, so he voted that way whether he agreed with it or not. That is what he tries to bring as a Council person. Brouillette stated, I care, I have common sense and I am doing the best I can, and I can say that for a lot of us. He thinks we are doing our jobs. Councilmember Bennett rebutted with he thinks when we go home, we should have homework to work on, things that we must get done. Councilmember Cooney stated that he has in fact went and knocked on people's doors and visited them about their vehicles and they did move them. Councilmember Frank said he did that also. And that it seems like there are a lot of instances that it feels like we are not being treated like colleagues, some council members just keep coming

after different Councilmembers. It seems like some council members are coming across like they are coming after someone.

A discussion then ensued between councilmembers about duties, and staying in their lane when it pertains to wards and there should not be micromanaging. It was also discussed about posting derogatory statements about city council and city workers on Facebook and discussion took place about city council member's behavior while in public.

Council member Frank then proposed a motion to have two meeting days per quarter that council members can miss, not counting sick days, before there is a decrease in annual pay. Councilmember Cooney motioned it, Ron Teig second the motion. Five councilmembers were in favor with Councilmember Bennett opposing.

3. Councilmember Allison Jones informed us that the banners were ordered, the Chamber voted to split the cost with the City. The chamber will send an invoice once things are taken care of. Right now, it is around \$1100.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Council member Cooney introduced us to Jeff Eagleton. Jeff Eagleton gave us an introduction to the Musselshell Valley Development Cooperative. In a nutshell, we are forming a community funded and community-controlled for-profit cooperative with the objective of community revitalization. The goal of the Musselshell Valley Development Cooperative is to rehabilitate the existing infrastructures in the community to offer more opportunity for residents to rent/own homes, utilize the vacant commercial spaces, and offer more shares spaces outside of parks. The mission is to build the potential of the Musselshell Valley through community collaboration, investment, and development. Some of the core values are action, community control and improving the socioeconomic restraints within this and surrounding communities. Jeff Eagleton informed us that there will be a community meeting to introduce the co-op to the community and to start collecting subscriptions. The meeting will be on Wednesday, November 29, at the Kiwana's Building at 7 p.m. Mr. Eagleton stated that he would really appreciate everyone's support. Discussion then ensued about MVDC. DOCUMENT INCLUDED IN MINUTES.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT: Bob Schuchard was unable to attend.

REPORT OF THE CLERK-TREASURER:

City Clerk-Treasurer Debbie Johnson asked that the treasurer and the city deputy get a phone stipend, since we use our cell phones a lot for city business, and the council seems to respond better to text messages. Council member Frank asked how much she was asking to which she replied twenty a month. Councilmember Brouillette stated he thinks it is a good idea, and asked if anyone opposed, which no one did. Clerk-treasurer Debbie also stated since the new water bill has been implemented, there have been some angry, disgruntled people in the office. We have been asking for a panic button. Deputy Clerk Sarah Williams spoke with Sheriff's Administrative Assistant Jalene Brouillette whom stated the man who installs them was in an accident and we will not know when he will be available again, but she will stay in contact with us. In the meantime, we will get quotes on video cameras, and

a panic button to present at the next meeting. Council member Frank said from now on we will need to call the police immediately so we can get it documented. Council member Ron Teig stated that we are government officials and anytime someone comes in here and threatens us it is a serious issue.

Attorney Report: Attorney Brooks stated that our ordinances are kind of a mess, that we indeed do need someone to come in and help us get those on the right track. It is no one's fault, it will be painfully expensive up front, but it will make life so much easier for us when we want to look things up. Council member Brouillette stated that he agrees, and that it will cost us more eventually if we do not get it fixed.

MAYORS REPORT: Mayor Paul Otten let everyone know that Traci Sears from Montana DNRC was here, she gave us the new flood plain maps, and a few books on flood plane insurance. We have a few things we need to do on the west end well house, electrical. Mayor Otten then asked the council to please consider it to possibly recent our park reservation policy. If a big group comes to town and wants the whole thing. We have 100 to 250 people coming to town so it might be a good idea to let them reserve it. Offer reservations to a group who can fill up the whole park. Clerk Treasurer Johnson mentioned there are only twenty hook-ups for electricity so they would not all be able to use electric outlets anyway. Councilmember Jones asked if that means we will make an exception for the Rodeo when they want two electrical spots for the announcers? Mayor Otten said we will discuss it on next agenda.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING:

1. Discuss reservations at Chief Joseph Park
 - a. Motion, Discussion or Action

CLAIMS:

Frank Brouillette made a motion to accept the claims. Kathleen Schreiber seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 P.M.

Council Members Present: Charley Bennett, Johnny Cooney III, Frank Brouillette, Kathleen Schreiber, Allison Jones, Ron Teig

Council Members Absent: None

City Office: Mayor Paul Otten, City Clerk-Treasurer Debbie Johnson, Deputy Clerk Sarah Williams, Public Works Director Bob Schuchard not present, City Attorney Brent Brooks, Officer Guy Crinchfield

Public Present: Jeff Eagleton, Roger Kitts, John Billadeau, Lindsey Saramek



Paul Otten, Mayor



Sarah Williams, Deputy Clerk