

Harlowton City Council Minutes  
February 23, 2021  
Library Conference Room

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council, held February 23, 2021 opened at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the council meeting on February 9, 2021 were approved with a suggested correction from Council member Jack Runner that the word “boiler” be replaced with “heater” in the Pool Report.

#### PUBLIC COMMENT

Community member Bill Phillips presented his grievances with the utility billing policy currently in place. Bill’s son purchased a house and Bill moved in the week of January 11<sup>th</sup>. He has been billed for the full month of January but believes it should be prorated to the day he moved in. He was concerned that he is being charged from December 26 through January 26. Council member Frank Brouillette looked at the payment stub Bill brought along and explained that it was not for December, only January. The council explained to Bill that because he purchased the house before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month, the City’s policy is that the new owner pays the full month’s bill. Bill was very upset. He explained that he had paid \$51.22 but does not believe he should pay the full amount. After an extended discussion in which Frank attempted to explain to Bill the situation, Bill left.

Discussion ensued within the Council regarding the house Bill lives in and the issue with an unpaid water bill from the previous owner. Discussion ensued regarding whether or not Bill/ Bill’s son would be liable for paying the outstanding charges. Frank suggested it be written off. Council member Allison Jones suggested that the realtor used for the sale, Stevie Jones, be contacted regarding the issue. Council member Charley Bennett stated that it can’t be written off because there have been past issues similar to this one where a buyer paid the difference. Paul stated that he would reach out to Tim Jones regarding the situation with the outstanding bill. Discussion ensued regarding the timeline of the water being turned on at the house.

#### UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1) Mayor Paul Otten updated the council on Biegel’s Bar ownership transfer. The City had received verification from the Post Office that the letter sent to Steve Olson via certified mail had been received and signed for. The next step is for Steve to have the documents signed, notarized and returned to the City. Then the City will file with the County and contact Snowy Mountain Development Corporation about the plans for the property.

2) The Pool Manager Hiring Committee, consisting of Frank Brouillette and Council member Jack Runner gave their recommendation to the Council for Pool Manager. They reported that the Criminal background report on Heather Mysse had come back clear. They stated that they would like to recommend hiring her as Pool Manager for the summer 2021 season. They also presented a list of recommendations going forward for better management. This included an Employee Policy Manual, a Pool Employee Manual and clear guidelines for how the pool should be managed. Council member Jim Kalitowski asked who would be writing the Employee Policy Manual. City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco stated that she was in the process of doing it. The list also included a request that 3 people have the pool chemical certification.

A discussion took place regarding the recent survey posted in the Times-Clarion and how to move forward into the new summer 2021 season. The Council reviewed the list and Paul asked that someone entertain a motion to pass the Pool Hiring Committee’s recommendation of Heather Mysse for Pool Manager. Charley made a motion and Allison seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS

Jack reported that the Library would do a fundraising event on March 11<sup>th</sup>. It would include mail in/drop off donations. A gallery of artwork by Dale Schmeling would be at the library.

Frank stated that the Ordinance committee met prior to the council meeting. The Committee is reviewing older ordinances regarding dog licensing/ vaccinations/ fines as well as fire pits within city limits. The committee also spoke a little bit more about recreational marijuana dispensaries being allowed/not allowed within City limits. The committee finished Chapter 15 of the “Rules and Regulations Governing Utility Services and Streets” book.

Council member Charley Bennett gave his report on the pool. He stated that parts for the pool were still on back order due to the distributions centers being impacted by COVID-19. He also stated that City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco and City Deputy Clerk Deb Davis had been working on the Bair grant application for the pool.

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard stated that he was concerned that the Tree Board might need to be reevaluated because a lot of the members had moved on. Arbor Day events, planting and fundraising and Tree City USA grant money could possibly be in jeopardy if the Tree Board was not clearly established. It was suggested that Ron and Lauri Teig might know the answer as to what is necessary in establishing a board.

Council member Ron Teig was not present at the meeting to give his report on the Wetland Rail Trail progress.

## NEW BUSINESS

1) Paul stated that City Attorney Karen Hammel was overdue for a contract renewal. The current contract expired in July of 2020. Karen also had not billed the City for her services since November of 2019. Frank stated that with a new contract being drawn up it might be a good idea to include assurance that things done for the City by Karen would be done in a timely manner. Paul stated that he would talk to her about these concerns.

## PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard gave a report. He stated that the recent water break by the Elementary school was the worst he had seen in all of his years working for the City. There was 3 ½ feet of frost underground. Nine hours of working with the backhoe had resulted in it breaking. The department rented a jackhammer and worked for ¾ of a day on it with little progress made. The backhoe broke because of -25 degree weather. Do All Construction in Lewistown had come to help. Craig Martin also helped.

Trees had been blowing over lately with the high winds so the P.W.D. had been busy clearing them. P.W.D. employee James Swanson is scheduled to retake his exam with DEQ for water certification.

## MAYOR REPORT

Paul stated that the NLC Warranty Program mentioned at the last meeting had been looked into further. Some other towns in Montana had been reached out to and their email responses were passed around the room for the Council to review. Paul stated that it seemed that most people were not happy with the service and he did not think the City should move forward with endorsing them. Allison stated that homeowners insurances policies usually only covered pipes in the house, not any outside the house. She said she would look further into it.

There would be an upcoming meeting for the FEMA floodplain map development as well as a pre-disaster relief meeting. Paul passed around documents regarding the schedule of these zoom calls. Frank stated that the County Commissioner Jeff Sell would probably attend the FEMA floodplain map meeting.

Paul stated that upcoming elections for December would include Council member Jim Kalitowski, Charley Bennett, Frank Brouillette, Allison Jones and himself. Discussion took place regarding whether or not Allison would need to run since she just replaced Rob Elwood on the Council. Paul stated that he had spoken with Meghan Cameron, the Deputy Clerk and Recorder at the County Courthouse. She stated that Allison must run again at the end of the year. Discussion took place regarding whether her term would end in 2021 or 2023. Paul stated that he would follow up with the County and report back to the Council. Paul also stated that Jim planned on resigning but that it was not official yet. Paul also will follow up about the deadline for submitting paperwork regarding the election.

#### ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be March 9, 2021 at 7:00pm.

A continued discussion will take place regarding the City Attorney contract renewal.

#### CLAIMS

Frank made a motion that the claims from February 8th through February 19<sup>th</sup> be approved. Allison seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously by Council.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15pm.

Council Members Present: Charley Bennett (via phone), Jim Kalitowski, Jack Runner, Frank Brouillette, Allison Jones

Council Members Absent: Ron Teig

City Office: Mayor Paul Otten, City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco, Public Works Director Bob Schuchard

Public Present: Dan Edwards, Times-Clarion reporter, Bill Phillips

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Paul Otten, Mayor

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Lara Brisco, Clerk-Treasurer