

April 26, 2022
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council was held on April 26, 2022. The meeting opened at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council member Frank Brouillette asked if Susan Beley's question regarding the Auditor had been addressed. City Clerk- Treasurer Lara Brisco stated that she had spoken with the Auditor and was told that City Court did not need to be audited yearly. Lara let the Auditor, Sharon Tripp, know that Judge Egebakken would be retiring this year. Sharon stated that she would be in touch. Minutes of the April 12, 2022 Council minutes were approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENT: none

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1) Biegels Bar had been demolished and the lot was backfilled with dirt. Justin Johnson had come by to look at the damages to the exterior wall of City Hall. Justin stated that the cracks were minor and that a bead of silicone would keep the water out. He did not believe that the cracks would get worse. He did state that the larger crack at the front of the wall towards Central Ave might need mud to fill it in. Discussion took place amongst the Council regarding the best way to handle the repairs.

Mayor Paul Otten asked that the Council start to brainstorm ideas for the vacant lot and come back to the next meeting with their ideas. Frank stated that there should be a condition in the sale that required the buyer to put a business on the lot. He stated that there were enough parks. Paul stated that City Attorney Karen Hammel would need to be consulted regarding stipulations in the sales contract.

Council member Charley Bennett stated that building a food bank on the lot would be beneficial to the community. Discussion took place regarding how to make this work. Lara stated that the City needed revenue and should not give the land away.

Community member Rob Elwood was present for the meeting. He stated that he was interested in purchasing the land when it became available. He gave examples of downtown Denver, Colorado and ways that the community had rebuilt the area, focusing on specific businesses. Rob stated that the City of Harlowton needs more businesses and revenue.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council member Jack Runner gave his report on the library. The Library policy manual review was almost complete. It was a task that was required every five to seven years. That Library is looking into becoming members of the Montana State Shared Catalog.

Ordinance Committee Chair Frank Brouillette gave a report. The committee is currently reviewing Title 11 of the ordinance book. Karen would need to also review and give feedback. Abandoned vehicles were also discussed at the meeting.

Council member Charley Bennett gave a report on the pool. The water had been taken out of the pool and the bottom was being cleared of mud. When the weather warms up, Thompson Pool would be back to put in the chemical machine and check the heaters. The wading pool is going to

be removed. Charley had been looking into a special material called *Trust Core*, which is a durable and affordable wall covering for the interior of the pool house. He is waiting for a quote. Recently the Bair Family had given another \$40,000 to the pool. Thirty thousand was matching last year's challenge grant and an additional \$10,000 was given for this year with no obligation for match.

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard stated that there was nothing new to report. He was waiting for the trees to arrive.

Council member Ron Teig gave a report on the Wetland Rail Trail. The scrap iron pile was added to. Bob was in the process of beginning the land farm pile.

NEW BUSINESS

1) The first reading of the revised Decay Ordinance 2022-02 was completed. The Council would vote on the ordinance at the May 10th meeting.

2) Purchasing an on-call phone and month to month phone plan for the Public Works Department was discussed. There were issues with employees having lack of service to their personal cell phones when they were on-call and calls being forwarded to Bob when Bob was not on call. This specific phone number would be given to the Sheriff's Department to call on weekends. It would also be used when Bob was not working and Jeff was in charge. Lara stated that the phone would cost \$150 and the plan would be \$35 a month. Paul stated that the *Straight Talk* plan, available at Walmart, was good because it pulled cell service from all surrounding cell phone towers. Lara also stated that it would save money in the long run because Bob would not be called when he was not on call. Discussion took place amongst the Council regarding concerns with reception and the *Straight Talk* plan. It was suggested that Lara do more research on the plan and alternative month to month plans and report to the Council at the May 10th meeting.

3) Bob had been looking into purchasing a dump truck for the Public Works Department. Lara had been filling out paperwork for financing the truck. The financing company was requesting minutes recording Council approval to move forward with the financing application. Frank made a motion to continue the process of getting financed for a dump truck. Council member Allison Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

4) Discussion took place regarding the 2022 transfer station fees. Lara stated that she had reached out to Republic Services to see what rates they would be increasing on the City. The person on the phone stated that they are assessed month to month but could not give an actual percentage of what the increase would be. Discussion took place regarding what it would take to just break even with the transfer station. Lara presented a document for the Council to approve regarding new rates for 2022. Frank made a motion to pass the rates list for 2022. Jack second in the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

5) Discussion took place regarding issues with censorship on private group Facebook pages and concerns with how the City's social media image was affected by this. Lara stated that she posted information on the City's Facebook page but the most interaction was received on Harlowton Connections and Wheatland Connections. There was concern because on Wheatland Connections the administrators often deleted comments. Lara was concerned because this could be perceived as a violation of the public's First Amendment right if they believed Lara was the one deleting the comments. She wanted it to be recorded that the City was not the one deleting these comments off the posts. Lara was requesting permission to no longer post on Harlowton and Wheatland Connections on behalf of the City. Frank stated that he thought the way she was doing things was

fine and to continue posting on Wheatland and Harlowton Connections and just disabling comments.

6) The Council reviewed a document regarding the schedule for this year's "Clean up Days". Prices for the cleanup days were calculated as 1/3 of what regular rates were. The cleanup days would be scheduled for Friday May 20th and Saturday May 21st. The council approved.

7) Lara presented the Council with the expenditures report for April 2022. Lara stated that she already gave these reports to the head of the Library and Public Works Department to review monthly. The Auditor had requested that she presented the Council with these documents monthly. Lara believed Kathie had done so quarterly. Lara reviewed the report with the Council and explained that although there were some negative object codes, overall it was looking good. She recently went through and made sure to correct any incorrectly coded claims. Lara discussed the Fire Suppression accounting code being in the negative because currently 32 people were on the City Volunteer Firefighters payroll. This also caused insurance to be negative because of workers comp on these people. Discussion took place regarding whether the County was responsible for the workers comp on these volunteer firefighters. Lara stated that she had looked into it at the beginning of working for the City but was never able to get a straight answer.

Lara also stated that her 3-year average projection for insurance rates had been incorrect when she budgeted for the year. The rates had actually increased a lot instead.

Allison questioned why the grand total balance was negative. Lara stated that this report included fund 5213 and fund 5311, the Water and Sewer upgrade projects. Just as Kathie had done, Lara did not budget for these funds and instead did budget amendments at the end of the year. This was because it was not clear how much the City would receive until they received it. Lara stated that if she had left these funds out of the report, it would not be nearly close to negative. Discussion took place regarding whether to do these report reviews monthly or quarterly. Lara stated she preferred quarterly.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Bob made a report. The park water had been turned back on and repairs were being made. The wash station was fixed. There would be a meeting next Thursday regarding the UV building.

REPORT OF THE CLERK-TREASURER

City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco gave her report. The lifeguard applicants had been interviewed and offered positions. In total, 7 kids were offered positions in addition to three returning lifeguards. Lara was hopeful for this pool season because it was a combination of younger and older kids as well as kids who had previously volunteered at the pool and had some experience. There would be a three-day training the first weekend of June.

The ARPA report had been submitted to the federal government.

Lara would be attending the Clerk's institute in Bozeman next week. She was very excited because she had not been able to attend the last two years due to COVID.

MAYORS REPORT

Mayor Paul Otten Gave a report. EMS stone was requesting the property previously known as Peters Inc be annexed into the City's water. Karen would need to be consulted regarding the process of doing so. A Certificate of Survey was needed but the only one on record was old.

Paul had a meeting with the Denver concept planning firm regarding what it would take to put water and sewer at the Roundhouse as well as the cost of maintaining. Paul felt that this meeting

was very premature, as the City had not even finished the abatement of the soil. Discussion took place regarding the realistic approach to this project. Paul felt that the floodplain issue needed to be addressed before any other plans could be made.

Discussion took place regarding the requested land donation to the hospital. Paul stated that he was having a hard time tracking down the document needed. The document is supposedly in the Courthouse vault. Ian Reed and Jeff Sell had recently seen it while looking for something else. Paul stated that he would reach out to Ian for assistance in tracking the document.

A representative for Senator Tester had come out to discuss concerns the City had with the housing availability and options for growth. She had put the City in touch with her coworker who specializes in floodplain issues. The coworker, Caitlin, would be coming to next week's commissioners meeting on May 4th to discuss options. She would be bringing along the affordable housing Rep with her as well.

Paul had reached out to Senator Daines' office. They stated that they would not be able to attend the meeting but would send information.

The DMV would be moving to the Courthouse again at the beginning of June. They had decided to do so because of complaints regarding driving back and forth from the Library to the County Treasurer's office to pay fees. The City had issues with the Department of Transportation regarding their lack of increased payments when they started coming four times a month. They had previously been paying \$100 to come once a month and continue to only pay \$100 a month when they began coming four times a month.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be May 10, 2022 at 7:00pm.

Charlie would like the Council to review the options of ordering tablets for Council meetings and possibly a TV in City Hall for zoom and PowerPoint. The City would use ARPA funds for these purchases.

CLAIMS

Frank made a motion to pass the claims from April 11, 2022 to April 22, 2022. Ron seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20pm.

Council Members Present: Ron Teig, Allison Jones, Charley Bennett, Jack Runner, Kathleen Schreiber, Frank Brouillette

Council Members Absent: none

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

Public Present: Rob Elwood

Paul Otten, Mayor

Lara Brisco, Clerk-Treasurer