

January 10, 2023
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council was held on January 10, 2023. The meeting opened at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council reviewed minutes from closed sessions on December 12, 2022.

Minutes from closed session #1 were approved as written.

Minutes from closed session #2 minutes were approved as written with the correction of the word "Erroll" to "arrow".

The minutes of the December 12, 2022 Council meeting were approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENT: Council member Charley Bennett asked if the City was required to share minutes with the Times-Clarion. Council member Allison Jones stated that it was the law to share with the public. Mayor Paul Otten stated that the minutes being posted were not the approved minutes. Council member Frank Brouillette stated that if anything was posted that was incorrect, a letter to the editor could be sent for clarification. Allison asked if the minutes could be posted on the City's website. City Clerk-Treasurer Lara Brisco stated that it was an option. City Court Judge Sheila Crow was present for the meeting. She stated that the City could post the minutes on the City's Facebook page. Frank stated that it would be without commenting available. Frank asked Charley what the issue was. Charley stated that the audit report had been posted in the newspaper but that other places such as the County and School Board did not have audits and minutes posted in the newspaper. Deputy Clerk Alanna Berg stated that the required audit report directly from the Auditor had been published the previous week but that she was not sure where the second article's information came from. Lara stated that the newspaper had been given a copy of the audit along with the report and that the second article was the newspaper's interpretation of the audit documents. Frank stated that if anything was incorrect, the City should let them know. Allison suggested that the newspaper be required to pick up documents from City Hall instead of emailing them.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council member Jack Runner gave a report on the library. Brick building club had started up again. The Senior Center, Museum and Library are collaborating on humanities presentations. The presentation on Dementia would be coming up soon. The Librarian and Assistant would be taking technology courses on Thursday mornings. The year-long reading program had started for kids and adults. The volunteer policy was being revamped.

The Ordinance committee did not meet.

Council member Charley Bennett gave a report on the pool. Jimbo and Mike were done digging and would be installing pipe and pouring concrete soon.

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard stated that there was nothing new to report regarding the tree board. The Public Works Department has been busy trimming trees.

Council member Ron Teig stated that there was nothing new to report on the Wetland Rail Trail project. Paul stated that he had been at the capitol in Helena earlier that day to provide testimony regarding grant funding for the Roundhouse project. The meeting went well. The project was rated #1 in the State. Asbestos abatement would start up again around March/April.

UPDATE ON PAST AGENDA TOPICS

Council members were asked to give updates on Decay Ordinance-related complaints from the community. Frank stated that the residence in question still had trash out front but no signs of a dumpster. He had reached out to the owner but had not received a response since October. Paul asked if there were other ways of getting it done. Frank stated that the next conversation would need to be different and that the next step would be necessary. Charley asked if the State board of health should get involved. Frank stated that the City's decay ordinance should cover it.

Jack asked Lara if the City had heard back from the Senior Center or Joe Brouillette regarding the letter that had been sent out. He stated that they had 30 days from receiving the letter to respond. Lara stated that no one had reached out.

NEW BUSINESS

- 1) Sheila Crow was present to take the Oath of Office to become the City's new Court Judge.
- 2) Discussion took place regarding a schedule for the new Deputy Clerk. Alanna stated that initially she was hired to work 32 hours/week but instead of receiving a raise, the hours of operation for the City were opened to include Wednesdays. Alanna stated that the work required for the position was not enough to be at work 40 hours/week. Also, the amount of patrons coming in on Wednesdays did not make it worth being open. Lara stated that being closed on Wednesdays when she was a new clerk was nice because it was a day of no interruptions and she could catch up on work. Allison asked if the new Deputy Clerk's schedule could include Wednesdays and two other days. Paul stated that this could be something that the hiring committee discussed. Paul asked who would volunteer to be on the hiring committee. Allison volunteered. The committee would consist of Alanna, Allison and Paul.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Bob gave his report. There had been a water leak at the water tower. Bob killed the power and took off the access cover. The check valve isn't used so Bob covered it with a piece of copper. There are issues with the low temperatures and splitting. Currently there is a poly pipe going out to a manhole to drain it. Bob called around and found out that the tank is considered "old". The person who sold the City the mixer is doing research on ways to handle the leak. The cheap part is installing a bolt, the expensive part is the diver going in to install the bolt. Lara stated that it was around \$12,000 to have the divers clean the tanks last year. She stated that ARPA funds could be used towards the cost of repairs to the tank. Bob stated that he was advised to wait and have the repairs done when the tank is cleaned before the new water source comes in. Bob stated that the second conduit might fail and that an engineer might need to get involved with the plans for repair. Bob stated that the lift station pump had been giving them issues. Seth from Townsend Pump would be in town on Friday to do repairs.

The public works department had been doing tree trimming lately. The trees usually are left with only 1/3 cut out but due to damage and disease, many of them required trimming to the point that only 1/3 was left of the tree. People were upset with the changes. Frank asked if the plan was for the trees to be replace. Bob said that it was a process that they were working towards. Bob mentioned applying for a grant to help with the costs of hiring someone to cut trees. Lara stated that her research on grants only showed options for planting trees, not maintaining them. She stated that comprehensive tree maintenance did not seem to be a priority for grants opportunities.

New PWD employee Chip Horne would be taking his first water operations license test soon.

REPORT OF THE CLERK-TREASURER

Lara stated that she had been training Alanna to take over. Alanna was able to experience a quarterly payroll process which was very important and sometimes complicated. Lara had not had the opportunity to see that when being trained, so it was nice to show Alanna. They would work on bank reconciliation processes next. The W2s went out earlier in the week and 1099s would go out by the end of the week. Lara had been looking into using Strom for a 2-year audit but unfortunately the federal spending in FY 2021-22 was higher than \$750,000.00 so a yearly audit would be necessary.

MAYORS REPORT

Mayor Paul Otten gave a report. A youth technology grant would be made available through Triangle Community. Paul asked if anyone could think of a community program that could benefit from the information.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Charley asked to discuss getting a designated dog catcher in town.

The next council meeting will be Tuesday January 24, 2023 at 7:00pm.

CLAIMS

Frank made a motion to pass the claims 19874 through 19897. Ron seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:50pm

(The City Council asked the public to leave so that a closed session to discuss litigation with the City Attorney could take place.)

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

Council Members Absent: Kathleen Schreiber

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

Public Present: Donny and Kristi Lode, Sheila Crow, Joyce Spencer

Paul Otten, Mayor

Lara Brisco, Clerk-Treasurer