

Harlowton City Council Minutes
January 14, 2020
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council, held January 14, 2020 opened at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the December 10, 2019 council meeting were approved as written.

There was no public comment.

Mayor Otten updated the council on Biegel's Bar ownership transfer. Paul reported that he had spoken with Steve Olson and informed him of that there is water damage being caused to city hall because of the disrepair to his building next door. Paul also provided contact information for people who could potentially assist him with removal of his personal effects and the awning from the front of the building.

Rob Elwood suggested that if Bryan Tomlinson still wants a private septic system on his property that he should fill out a variance request form so the council could get this item finished. Frank offered to inform Bryan of the councils request to have him fill out the form.

Paul said that he has not spoken with Ken Berg yet. He is the new owner of the property that the city would need to request easement from to extend 6th Street NE out to the Old Gap Road.

Darlene Bacon updated the council on the "Welcome to Harlowton" sign. The Wheatland Chamber has allowed the FFA to place the sign on the old "Smart" property (corner of 2nd St NW and Central Ave N). They have decided on a design for the sign (Nikki Hereim's design). The city has received official approval from the Wind Impact Grant committee to place the sign at the new location rather than in Fischer Park. Paul and Ron recommended that the chamber or Darlene check with the MT Department of Transportation before proceeding with the sign placement as there are restrictions and official approvals that need to be done to place a sign along a state highway.

Paul also commented that a city business had requested placing a business sign on that property and he informed them that the city has nothing to do with that property and they needed to contact the Wheatland Chamber of Commerce for permission.

There was no library report.

Rob Elwood reported that the ordinance committee had reviewed sections 1 and 2 of the draft rules and regulations document for water and sewer governance. Sections 3-6 will be reviewed next.

The Harlowton Tree Board has applied for two grants for continuing to plant trees within city limits.

The Wetlands Rail Trail committee reported that there is a funding call to be held on January 17, 2020 at 3:00pm. Phase 2 contamination removal is done for this year.

The Pool committee's items will be discussed as they are on the agenda.

Jesica McKeever asked the council if the fees for the 2020 pool season could be raised. She verbally proposed changes to the rates. Discussion regarding the county's financial contribution to the pool was held. Kathie informed the council that census statistics regarding city residents versus non-city residents had been provided to the mayor for the past three to four years and this information had been brought to

the county commissions in hopes they would continue to increase their pool financial support. They did increase their support in the first year but had not increased it since then. Council asked if Jesi could submit a report with all of the suggested increases for the next council meeting.

Jesi has requested to be trained as a “lifeguard trainer”. Frank asked if Jesi could continue to be the pool manager in reference to potential nepotism issues. Kathie explained that job openings are offered internally first and Jesi had re-applied for the position. As many precautions had been taken on Jesi’s initial hiring, there was nothing else that could be done. Jesi explained she was still attempting to acquire more detailed information on the cost and benefits of becoming a lifeguard trainer. She will bring information to a future meeting so the council has solid information to make a decision on.

Esther Fischer, on behalf of the “Friends of the Pool” committee, requested permission to apply for the Wind Impact Grant for the 2020 year. Council gave consensus with the stipulation that they approve the grant prior to submittal. Esther is aware of the process for this.

Paul requested that the previously unapproved claim (17333) to Thompson pools for ordering the pool pump rebuilding parts be approved. Charley asked how much the pool savings account had available. Kathie informed him the pool funds reconciliation had been emailed to him earlier that day. Jesi read the report to say there was \$15,678.01 in unrestricted funds with a total of \$23,538.06 in the savings. Charley Bennett made the motion to pay Thompson Pools for claim 17333. Ron Teig seconded the motion. There were no further questions or comments. Motion passed unanimously.

An ordinance variance request form had been received from Clint Huck for a variance from ordinance 1-2103 for having more than one property serviced by one utility line. The proposal is to allow the current hook up situation to continue until the phase 4 water project goes past the property at which time a new service line would be installed. Rob Elwood made the motion to allow the variance until June 30, 2020. Frank Brouillette seconded the motion. There were no further questions or comments. Motion passed unanimously.

Paul Otten appointed Jack Runner to replace John Anderson on the Harlowton Public Library Board.

Ian reported that the public works department has been removing the Christmas decorations from the streets and working on snow plowing. Street patching had also been done where possible. In addition there have been a few minor water issues they have been dealing with.

Paul Otten reported that the MT Department of Revenue has approved an increase in the lodging tax (increase of 1%) and wanted to know if the council wanted to increase the camping fees due to this. Council consensus was to leave the camping rates to mirror the state off-season camping rates.

Paul reported that he has been trying to get a valuation for the 1878 silver dollar coin that Pete Glennie donated to the city for a fund raiser for the pool.

Paul reported that large interstate sized speed limit signs had been installed by the MT Department of Transportation on the west end of town. They are also working on brackets to install on the signs to bring more attention to them.

Paul reminded the council that utility rates increases will be inevitable with the upcoming wastewater and water projects that are being worked on this coming summer.

Jim reported that the Central MT Rural Water Authority is still working on getting their projects passed through legislation.

Kathie informed the council that the MSU Local Government Services has updated the “MT Municipal Officials Handbook” and part one is now available on line.

The next council meeting will be January 28, 2020 at 7:00pm at the Harlowton City Hall.

Rob Elwood has offered to take on the NW Energy street lights / lack of contracts issue the city has been working on for quite a few years. Paul will get the contact information he has for this project to Rob.

Ron Teig made the motion to approve previously paid claims, checks #22284-22302, from December 7, 2019 through December 20, 2019. These claims had been previously approved due to holding only one council meeting in December each year. Frank Brouillette seconded the motion. There were no further questions or comments. Motion passed unanimously.

Ron Teig questioned what claim 17512 (Magda Nelson) was for. Kathie explained Magda is who is training her to complete the annual financial report. Ron Teig made the motion to pay the claims, checks #22303-22325, from December 21, 2019 through January 10, 2020. Charley Bennett seconded the motion. There were no further questions or comments. Motion passed unanimously.

Charley asked if the city would be accepting “auto-pay” on utility bills any time soon. Kathie explained there is a module to Black Mountain Software that could make this possible; however, the module costs around \$3,000.00 and there had not been many people asking for this option. Rob asked Charley how many people had asked about the option. He commented only a few so far.

Meeting adjourned at 8:01 pm.

Council Members Present: Charley Bennett (via telephone), Frank Brouillette, Rob Elwood, Jim Kalitowski, Jack Runner, Ron Teig
Employees Present: Ian Reed, Jesica McKeever

Paul Otten, Mayor

Kathie Newland, Clerk