

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council, held April 28, 2020 opened at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the March 10, 2020 council meeting were approved as written. Minutes of the March 24, 2020 council meeting were approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Beley addressed the council regarding the recent phase 4 water project work that had been done near her home and other family member's homes. She was wondering if repairs to her retaining wall, sprinkling system and yard would be performed as the construction crew (Do All) had driven into her yard and Ward's yard making it difficult to mow. She also noted that the sewer line, which is shallow going to her home, had been broken and reinstalled but no insulation had been installed when it was reinstalled. Bob Schuchard explained to Susan that Do All had mistakenly used Ward's property as a temporary "staging area" as they thought it was owned by the city due to the amount of old equipment there. Paul told Susan that the retaining wall and yard damage would be repaired. Bob also explained that the "reinstall" of the broken sewer line is also temporarily done as Do All will fix it completely once the "tie-in" portion of the water project in that area gets done.

Mark Feist asked if they would be allowed to participate in the Tucker Town Sewer District conversation. Paul informed him that he would and that it was in the unfinished business portion of the agenda.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mayor Otten updated the council on Biegel's Bar ownership transfer. He has not had any further communications with Steve Olson. Due to the city staffing situation (COVID 19), a letter giving Mr. Olson a deadline of May 1, 2020 to complete the paperwork necessary to transfer ownership of the building had not been sent. Rob Elwood made the motion to submit the letter to Mr. Olson with a deadline of September 1, 2020. Frank seconded the motion. There were no further questions or discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Mayor Otten had called and email Karen Hammel regarding getting research and paperwork drawn up regarding the transfer of ownership for the alley and easement exchange for Bryan Tomlinson. Due to COVID 19 precautions, the Wheatland County Courthouse had restricted access in place, so Karen had not been in to do any of the research necessary. Bryan requested confirmation from the council that the exchange was going to take place as he is listing the property for sale (post note – council had approved this exchange at the February 25, 2020 council meeting). Bryan provided copies of information regarding the property descriptions to hopefully assist Karen Hammel in expediting the preparation of the paperwork.

Bryan also informed the council that the sanitarian was coming to the property to do testing for the septic that the council had given a variance approval for. He provided information (ARM 17.36.328) stating that he didn't need a variance for septic or water due to the cost that was quoted to him.

Charley asked Bryan about the opportunities for Enbridge Grants (whom Bryan works for). Bryan suggested that Jesi McKeever (pool manager) continue to submit the grants repeatedly until a response is received.

Mark Feist (acting as spokesperson for Tucker Town Sewer District-TTSD) asked if the council had received the Proclamation of Non-Annexation that he had had some of the property owners in the area sign. Paul informed him that the whole council had received a copy. Mark emphasized that he believes a majority of the property owners do not want to be annexed into city limits. Paul clarified that as it now stands the TTSD is using a city owned and maintained sewer main line and the TTSD appears to be “defunct”. The city needs to be compensated for the repairs and maintenance that continue to be done on that line even though there appears to be no contract between TTSD and the city to do so. Paul reiterated that the process of annexation is a lengthy process and the city isn’t necessarily insisting on annexation-just fair compensation for the use of the sewer line. Rob Elwood asked if Mark would be willing to “ram-rod” the reformation of the TTSD. Kathie clarified that Mark Feist isn’t actually a customer that is classified as being charged the “tucker town” sewer rate. Mark is on city water and sewer and pays according to the established rates of the city. Kevin Holmquist wondered how much more each member would have to pay in order to cover these estimated costs. Rob informed him that the city would try to put together some estimated costs; but it would be up to them to determine that. Rob Elwood reiterated that the original 1980 TTSD agreement was with the county not the city. Gary Olson commented that he is possibly the only original TTSD member still around and confirmed that the district was established in 1980; but did not have any more specifics. Gary indicated his appreciation that the city had allowed the TTSD to use the city’s sewer line as most of the property in that area is low, somewhat wetlands and private septic systems were likely not feasible. Estimates of costs to continue using the city’s sewer line will be prepared and submitted to Mark Feist for further discussion.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Jack Runner reported that the library has been operating through curb side or door pickup services during the COVID 19 situation. The library staff have been cleaning books, shelves, toys, games, etc. When the library reopens they will start allowing 2-3 people in at a time and limiting computer use to 3 at a time. As Debbie Davis hasn’t been working at the city (usually scheduled for Monday and Tuesday each week and due to COVID 19 limited hours hasn’t been working at the city hall), the library asked if a budget amendment could be done to transfer that to the library. Paul informed Jack that likely the limited hours restriction will be lifted as of Monday May 4 so it is a moot point. The library roofing project started on Monday and Rob Elwood removed his solar panels from the roof.

Rob Elwood reported that the ordinance committee has not been meeting due to COVID 19 restriction, so there was no report.

Kathie reported on the wetland rail trail progress. Four draws on four different DNRC grants have been done to pay for the work the DEQ has performed in the Milwaukee Railroad grounds areas. WWC has been awarded the Milwaukee Railroad concept design project and want to start putting together focus group meetings. Michael Miller (as the city’s representative on the Upper Mussellshell Conservation District board) will be a part of the steering committee. Paxton Wojtowick, Ian Reed, Mandie Reed, Ron Teig, Lauri Teig, Bob Schuchard, Kathie Newland, and representatives from Snowy Mountain Development Corporation are also on this committee. Charley Bennett will contact the City County Preservation Committee (Railroad Museum) to see if someone would like to be on this steering committee. Paul was also going to check with Drew or Melanie Galahan to see if they would be interested.

Bob reported that the tree planting has been put on hold as delivery of the trees has been postponed due to COVID 19 restrictions.

Charley Bennett reported that the pool has been getting cleaned and prepped for opening hopefully within one month. ASP has been on sight repairing skimmers. Charley has information on a company that has a new 100 mil spray in pool liner. He is going to continue research into that. Bob asked if ASP is taking care of re-cementing when they are done repairing skimmers. Charley said that ASP is taking care of the cement and the lines will be pressure tested prior to cementing.

NEW BUSINESS

Paul informed the council that the Chamber sponsored city wide garage sales that were scheduled for May 2, 2020 have been postponed. Typically the city sponsors a reduced rate dump day the weekend after the garage sales. Paul asked if the council wanted to hold the dump days in May or wait until after the city-wide garage sale. Council decided to wait until after the city-wide garage sales are held. Additional discussion regarding city residents "hoarding" garbage all year long in order to save money during dump days was held. Charley asked if our decay ordinance addressed this. Paul stated it was likely in there but our ordinances are not currently being enforced.

Bob asked when the transfer station should open on Saturdays. In the past it has been the 2nd and 4th Saturdays 1:00 to 5:00 during May through September. Paul asked that the dump be open May 9, May 23, June 13, June 27, July 11, July 25, August 8, August 22, September 12 and September 26. Bob asked about the rates that are being charged for these regular dump days. Kathie stated that two years ago Ian had calculated the cost of getting the large transfer station bins dumped and that is how the current rates were calculated.

Kathie asked if the council was going to continue to sponsor one free pass for yard waste to each paid customer account again this year. Rob made the motion to allow for one free yard waste pass to each paid customer for the regular transfer station season. Charley seconded the motion. There were no further questions or discussion. Motion passed unanimously.

Kathie presented the 3rd quarter financial statements for review. She explained portions of the cash report. Frank Brouillette asked about the expenditure budget as a whole. Kathie explained that the fiscal year was 75% done and the general fund expenditure budget was at 64%; so everything appeared to be on track.

Charley asked about the stimulus money (due to COVID 19) that was available. Kathie informed the council the Tim Burton, the director of the MT Leagues of Cities and Towns had been appointed to the governors committee to discuss the appropriate uses of the stimulus money. Kathie felt that Mr. Burton would provide excellent representation for what the municipalities of the state need.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Bob reported that a sewer line had been plugged due to residents putting shop towels in the sewer. DEQ had notified him that the situation will likely cause the city to be out of compliance and this will result in penalties. The city crew have been collecting solid waste (shop towels, toys, other solid garbage) off of the lagoons to try to remediate the situation.

Bob reported that the phase 4 water project has recommenced. 5th Street NW was first, then Do All will be progressing south down Central Avenue, before starting on the highway portion. Rob asked if there was a plan for rerouting traffic off of the highway when the projects gets to that point. Bob indicated that once they confirm where the actual water line is, they hope to have only

one lane closed. Large traffic will likely be routed through the park and onto the “old highway” to avoid the construction area.

Some problem trees in the park have been cut down.

James Swanson and Charley Church have been hired to fill the empty public works positions.

Rob wanted to thank the city crew for the snow plowing that was done in the city park before the Sunrise Easter Services.

Bob asked when the Chief Joseph Park restrooms should be reopened. Paul asked that they be ready on Monday May 4, 2020. The county spigot that had been broken in the rodeo grounds has been fixed and the water is back on in the park.

Charley asked if the valve on the waterline by the City County Preservation museum had been fixed. Bob was unaware of any issues so will check into it.

Rob asked about the cost of installing “chopper pumps” at the lagoon to deal with the shop towels. It had been discussed during the preliminary engineering portion of this current sewer project but another option had been chosen.

MAYOR REPORT

Mayor Otten reported that a budget amendment was going to be scheduled for the May 26, 2020 meeting in order to allow for the pool to spend the money they have raised and been granted after the original fiscal year 2020 budget had been approved by the council.

Fischer Construction will be starting the “pave the wave” sidewalk project this weekend.

Paul reported that the decision to go with Rural Development for financing of the sewer lagoon project has been made. RD approved a \$750,000, 40 year low-interest loan and around \$600,000 grant; while SRF was only potentially offering around \$300,000 in grant and a higher interest rate on the loan. Kathie reported that the city will also be “refinancing” the 2000 sewer bond (loan) to a lower interest rate loan through the Coal Severance Tax. This will save the city around \$10,000 a year in loan payments for the next 20 years.

Charley asked for clarification to what is considered “tucker town”. Bob reviewed the wall map and explained it starts at Wheatland Avenue and goes east from there.

Jim Kalitowski gave an update on the MT Rural Water Authority. There appears to be grant funds available at the Economic Development Administration of the Department of Commerce for the rural water authority project. If they are successful in getting grant funds the project would be ready to start the construction process.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be May 12, 2020 at 7:00pm at the Harlowton City Hall. A phase 4 water project bond resolution will need to be passed at that meeting.

CLAIMS

Frank Brouillette made the motion to accept the previously approved claims, checks #22412-22439, from March 21, 2020 through April 10, 2020. These claims had been previously approved due to cancellation of the April 14, 2020 council meeting. There were no questions or comments. Charley Bennett seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Frank Brouillette made the motion to pay claims, checks #22440-22450, from April 11, 2020 through April 24, 2020. There were no questions or comments. Jack Runner seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 pm.

Council Members Physically Present: Charley Bennett, Frank Brouillette, Rob Elwood, Jack Runner

Council Member Present via WebEx meeting: Jim Kalitowski

Council Member Absent: Ron Teig

Employees Present: Bob Schuchard

Paul Otten, Mayor

Kathie Newland, Clerk

DRAFT