

Harlowton Public Hearing Minutes  
February 13, 2024  
Harlowton City Hall

The Harlowton City Council opened a Public Hearing at 6:30 pm at the Harlowton City Hall. The Mayor & Council held the hearing to discuss with the public, suggestions, and concerns regarding the Junk & Decay Ordinance.

The hearing opened with Mayor Otten stating that the Council has discussed this Ordinance over multiple Council Meetings, and The City is having difficulty enforcing the ordinance. He wanted suggestions from the City on how to enforce and clean up the town.

Luke Buelke stated that the City has limited options for disposal of decay and junk items, he thinks that the prices for the landfill are high, and this is a deterrent for people to take items to the landfill. Buelke suggested lowering the prices, or offering additional free dump days would assist with the problem. Council member Charley Bennett spoke and stated that the City is currently working with the County to get them involved with the Dump and have them include a Mill Levy that would include all members of the County assisting with the costs associated with the dump.

Council Member Frank Brouillette joined the conversation by informing the public that the costs that the City charges for the dump is exactly what we pay for the services. The City is not making a profit, we are losing money for this service. Bennett then brought Joe Hagl into the conversation and informed the public that Hagl offers a location for metals and appliances to be disposed of. Hagl stated that he is also accepting junk/scrap vehicles at his location for no cost. Hagl will have the vehicles taken away and disposed of. Discussion then ensued about the vehicles that are able to be brought to Hagl's location.

Brag Berg, a member of the public, brought up the point that because Mr. Hagl does offer these services and location for specific decay & junk items, there should not be an excuse for the community not to dispose of these items. Mayor Otten followed up by stating that we want to enforce the ordinance, but do not want to impose a financial penalty if they have the resources to get things cleaned up. Mayor Otten also suggested to inform the public that Mr. Hagl's location is an option for junk vehicles, as well as appliances.

Rebecca Buelke then asked the Council how they would determine what is or is not considered a junk vehicle, and what the criteria is. Mayor Otten stated if it has four flat tires and isn't functioning, it is considered a junk vehicle. Buelke then questioned if she had an older model vehicle in her yard that has not been running, would this be a violation? Council Member Frank Brouillette informed her, per Montana Code Annotated (MCA) we can remove junk vehicles from the roadway.

Julie Berg then questioned if the City could remove vehicles from personal property. Frank Brouillette referred her to MCA, but he was unsure of the answer.

*Per MCA:*

**75-10-505. Shielding and removal of junk vehicles generally.** *Notwithstanding the provisions of this part, any person possessing one or more junk vehicles, regardless of ownership, shall shield the vehicles from public view or remove the vehicles to a licensed motor vehicle wrecking facility or to a licensed motor vehicle graveyard after the vehicles are released from the owner. Small*

*accumulations of salvageable vehicles or component parts, none of which are offered for sale, retained by active farming or ranching operations for repair and maintenance of vehicles, or agricultural equipment used in their operations, are exempted from this requirement.*

Discussion ensued between council and the public about the junk vehicles throughout town.

Julie Woodard questioned the council on if there was a designated person, who speaks with the public and informs them of the ordinance violation and works with them to have it resolved. Frank Brouillette responded and stated that he would be happy to be that person, but currently we do not have a specific position for that role.

Charley Bennett followed up by saying, "we just want people to take pride and keep their places clean and tidy." There are a lot of people in the city that are willing to help.

Cody Nelson, then questioned whose financial responsibility would it be to move junk vehicles from a residence and bring them to Mr. Hagls lot. Members of the Council all stated they would be happy to help move the vehicles to his lot. Conversation then ensued about how to get this information to the public, a few suggestions of posting on Facebook, posting information at the senior center and the library, as well as putting a notification with the water bill.

Brad Berg stated he truly believes in this community and that there are plenty of people willing to step up and volunteer their time to assist someone who needs help cleaning up their property. Weather it be mowing a yard, cleaning up tree limbs, moving a car whatever it may be, there are members of the community willing to step up and help.

Rebecca Buelke asked if the City hosted a community cleanup day, to which the Council informed her that we do a free dump day, as well as discounted dump days. Buelke suggested having a community dump day where anyone who is available to help others in need, volunteers their time and resources that day to help.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

  
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Mayor

  
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City Clerk- Treasurer