

April 28, 2026
Harlowton City Hall

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council was held on April 14, 2026. The meeting opened at 7:00pm with the Pledge of Allegiance.

The minutes of the March 24, 2026, Council meeting were approved with addition of where Mayor Runner and Public Works Director Bob Schuchard were and why they were absent.

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Library: Councilmember Susan Beley reported that Tina and Lori are going to the MLA Conference. Tina is also working on the Emergency Disaster Plan with Cody Nelson. The library is also getting ready for the Summer READING program which is held on Tuesdays during June and July.

Tree Board: Councilmember Vicki Paddock reported the Tree Board met April 8, 2026. The Arbor Day Celebration will be April 24, 2026. It will start in Chief Joseph Park at 10am. They have 4 trees to plant. They will also have a tree trimming workshop, the time and date is to be announced.

Ordinance: Councilmember Frank Brouillette reported that the Ordinance Committee went through Title 15 and 16. They expect to have some recommendations for the council at the next two meetings.

OLD BUSINESS: No old business.

NEW BUSINESS:

Jonathan Weaver Great West Engineering: Jonathan Weaver explained that he is helping the City work on the issues with Jawbone Dam #1. There have been visual and video inspections of the pipe running through the dam, which shows a crack all the way around it. Both dams are considered high hazard, and as such have to have a five-year permit from DNRC. There is a grant available to repair the dam. The first repair is a cure in place liner which would reline about 40 feet of pipe. The other repairs are spot repairs which would only repair 4-foot lengths. Great West can write the grant for the city, but the grant cannot pay for Great West to write the grant.

There is also another issue, the Hydraulic Evaluation of the dam shows that the dam is .1 feet too short if there is a certain amount of rainfall per Montana Regulations. Great West is going to redo the evaluation with accurate population numbers and feels this will not be an issue.

Donna Neste- Hospital Update No report

Harlowton Baseball Fencing Request: Kylie Meeker and Mariah Holt, representing the Harlowton Baseball Association, asked if they could put a permanent fence on the City Field. They have been using orange fencing, but the wind has torn it apart. They want to put a perimeter fence around the field. It would be 160 feet from the backstop. It will be about four feet tall. They will also put the protective top on the fence. This will also allow the t-ball to move back over to the end of that field and off the inside of the track. They also would like to remove the fence between the discus and shot-put area. They have talked to the school, and the school is okay

with them removing it. The baseball association is also looking into buying a mower to help with that for the city and county fields. Public Works Director Bob Schuchard asked that if the fence is approved, that the posts be cemented in so that it stays straight.

Councilmember Susan Beley moved to let them take the old fence out and prep the ground to install the new fence. Councilmember Charley Bennett seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

There was discussion on the water at the fields. There is a water fountain there, but every time Bob fixes it, it gets broken. There was discussion about putting in a hydrant. Because of the high-water table, the new hydrant needs to wait until baseball is over because it will make such a big mud hole. The baseball association would also like to paint the dugouts and wondered if the city would let them paint names of donors on the dugouts like the Remembrance Wall. The Council will refer these two items to the Recreation Committee.

Callant Grant Approval for City and Library: The City and the Library would both like to apply for the Callant Grant. The library is applying for the furniture and equipment from last year. The city applies for Spay-Neuter, Weed Spray, Recycle, and a couple small projects at the pool. Councilmember Frank Brouillette moved to approve applying for the grants. Councilmember Charley Bennett seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Grant Money for Capital Improvement Plan (5-year plan): Mayor Runner explained to Council that every town needs to develop a Capital Improvement Plan every five years. This plan includes project we would like to have done, where we are on those projects, and things we need to get done. The CIP plan makes us eligible for loans, grants and debt forgiveness. The City's last CIP was done in 2014. The Council voted to explore funding for a CIP in 2021 and passed a resolution at that time. The city received grant money for this. In August of 2024, the grant money was returned with a letter stating the city did not have time to write a CIP. Great West is the one to make application for us and put this CIP together for us. Mayor Runner asked for permission to pursue a grant to write our CIP plan and if there is, come back to them with a resolution to pursue the grant funding. Councilmember Frank Brouillette moved to pursue grant funding for writing the CIP for the city. Councilmember John Billadeau seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Park Use Agreement: Mayor Runner asked for a motion to table the Park Use Agreement until the next Council meeting. There is new information that will change the agreement. There was discussion on restricting alcohol in certain areas of the park and quiet hours in the park. Councilmember John Billadeau moved to table the park use agreement for the next Council meeting. Councilmember Vicki Paddock seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Dump Truck Repairs: Mayor runner explained there is an estimate in the Council packet for repairing the newest dump truck. There was discussion that since it is an estimate, there should be some additional money added to the total in case the mechanic finds something more wrong when they get into the repairs. Councilmember Susan Beley moved to accept the estimate from Inland Truck as well as add a \$2000 extra repair amount. Councilmember Vicki Paddock seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

City Committee Members: Mayor Runner reported we have on the Tree Board, Vicki Paddock, Alicia Moe, Diane Jones, Steve Martin, Todd Schock and Bob Schuchard. On the Recreation Committee, we have Charley Bennett, John Billadeau, Darian Murray, Aubrey Miller, and Kylie Meeker. We need one more for each committee. Council approved both committees.

Ordinances, City Responsibility and Authority: Mayor Runner handed out a report on the powers that a city has and doesn't have. He reminded the council and audience that anything the city does has to be fair and equitable for all residents and businesses. We must have ordinances in place to be able to enforce our laws in town.

Current Water/Sewer Rates: Mayor Runner started out talking about funding the maintenance, operation, depreciation, and the debt that we have for the water and sewer funds. We currently have about \$4 million in debt. By law, for each loan that the city has, we must have in reserves one year's payment plus ten percent. We also need to have some capital reserves for any machinery, equipment, and infrastructure repairs that we need to do. Water, sewer and solid waste funds are called Enterprise funds, which means they must sustain themselves. They cannot be funded by tax dollars. Mayor Runner also stated he has talked to Republic Services about a municipal rate for garbage service. They have not gotten back to him on those rates.

Bobbie Shular from Montana Rural Water will be here on Friday, April 24 at 2pm to go over the rate analysis with the Council and any residents that would like to attend. Mayor Runner then handed out the spreadsheet with the numbers of meters that have been severed but are active in the Black MT system. There are 59 active accounts that have been severed, that are not contributing to city accounts. It comes to over \$81,000 in a year's time that the city is losing. The 59 accounts (EDU's) that we are talking about are being billed by Central Montana Water. If we take these accounts off our EDU's our rates would go up \$30/month. So instead of being \$140/month, the rates would be \$170/month. The question was asked why our rates go up if we remove EDU's. Mayor Runner explained that we lower the number of EDU's that share the debt, but the debt we owe doesn't go down. Mayor Runner reminded the Council that since we can't finance Enterprise funds with tax money and we aren't getting the correct amount of EDU's charged for water, sewer and solid waste, these funds are in the negative. This is an ongoing problem and one that we have gotten findings for on our audits for the last five years. We have corrected the billing so that we are charging the correct rates that the council approved in 2023, but this still leaves a deficit. The city can legally bill property for water and sewer that they have available but are not using. That is something we are going to have to look at for the infrastructure.

Proposed Water Project: Mayor Runner explained that Amy Deichler from Great West Engineering came to the city with next water project plan, which she said they were told to go ahead and do this project at \$3.5 million. Mayor Runner felt this was high and the city couldn't afford more debt at this time and asked if it could be broken into smaller projects. Amy came back with a project priced at \$1,013,000. Since the city's CIP is not in place and if we don't get any grants, we would have to get a loan for this amount. Mayor Runner would like to move this project to 2028.

Proposed Sewer Project: The next sewer project that RPA had for the city was priced at \$6.5 million. This came with \$850,000 debt forgiveness, but the rest would have to be paid for with loans. Mayor Runner asked if this project could be broken down into smaller pieces as well. He came back at \$2.5 million with \$850,000 debt forgiveness.

Mayor Runner would like to push both the water and sewer projects out to the next cycle. Without a CIP in place, we are not as likely to get grants and loans or debt forgiveness. This also gives us time to get our water and sewer rates established so we are covering our debt that we currently have. Councilmember John Billadeau moved to push the water and sewer projects out to the next cycle which is 2028. Councilmember Vicki Paddock seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Lead lines: The City has 39 residences with lead lines that need replacement. Mayor Runner and Public Works Director Bob Schuchard were figuring the bill would be about \$350,000-\$400,000. Currently the state has \$18 million to help replace the lead lines from the curb stop to the meter and the state will do 70% debt forgiveness. The numbers Mayor Runner received today from Amy Diechler and Tucker Greenwell of Great West were 93 lines and a bill for that project was \$2.5 million. Mayor Runner would like permission to pursue more information on this project. Councilmember Susan Beley moved to get more information for lead line removal. Councilmember Kyle Lawson seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Jawbone Dam Repairs: Mayor Runner reminded the council of Jonathan Weaver's report that re-sleeving the pipe in the dam would bring us back into compliance. There is a grant to pay for the repairs, but the grant cannot be used to pay for the grant writing. Councilmember Frank Brouillette moved to allow Jonathan Weaver to write the grant for money to repair the Jawbone Dam #1 and pay for the grant writing. Councilmember Susan Beley seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT: Public Works Director Bob Schuchard reported he had picked up a load of road patch and they went through it in two days. They replaced the manhole in front of the post office. They are working on safety issues on city properties. Public works is also working on cleaning the storm drain by A Ave NE. Bob also mentioned he is looking at other options for the drinking fountain in the park.

REPORT OF THE CLERK-TREASURER: Clerk-Treasurer Anita Leach is working on gathering information for the audit which is June 8th. She is going through all the Utility Billing Accounts. The City is having a shredding event May13th from noon to 2pm in front of City Hall and the Library.

MAYORS REPORT: Mayor Jack Runner let the Council and community members in the audience know about the Childcare conversation April 30th at the library at 5:30. The MCA code for the Enterprise Funds is 37-50-209. And the city is working on doing performance reviews for the first time ever.

REPORT OF ATTORNEY: City Attorney Brent Brooks said he has 8 misdemeanor cases. He thinks some of the park use agreements are in Title 4 of the ordinances.

REPORT OF WCSO: Sgt. Tim McKenna said neither he nor any of the Wheatland County Sheriff's office can comment on the incident on Highway 191, April 5th. They have no information. Fergus County is in charge of that. He also reported the sheriff's office got new body cams, dash cams and tazers. The body cams and dash cams work in tandem.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING: CIP Grant Resolution, Park Use Agreement, MMIA Worker's Comp-State Fund, Local Government Review-Diane Jones, Callant Grant-Golf Course, Wind Impact Grant-Baseball, Golf Course, Library, City,

CLAIMS:

Councilmember Frank Brouillette made a motion to approve claims, 22692-22750. Councilmember John Billadeau seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00pm

Council Members Present: Susan Beley, Kyle Lawson, Charley Bennett, Vicki Paddock, Frank Brouillette, John Billadeau

Council Members Absent: None

City Office: Mayor Jack Runner, City Clerk-Treasurer Anita Leach, Public Works Director Bob Schuchard, City Attorney Brent Brooks

Public Present: Sheila Blanton-Cole, Sheila Crow, Jonathan Weaver, Kylie Meeker, Mariah Holt, Sgt. Tim McKenna, Charlotte Runner, Dane Elwood

Jack Runner, Mayor

Anita Leach, Clerk-Treasurer