

Harlowton City Council Minutes
January 12, 2021
Library Conference Room

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council, held January 12, 2021, opened at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the December 22, 2020 Council meeting were approved as written.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Paul Otten asked that the meeting temporarily jump to the “New Business” portion of the agenda so that new Ward 1 Council member Allison Jones could be sworn in. Allison will be taking Rob Elwood’s position on the Council. Paul and Allison read the oath of office.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mayor Paul Otten updated the Council on the Biegel’s Bar ownership transfer. No new information could be given on the status of the ownership transfer. Paul had spoken with Cathy Barta of Snowy Mountain Development Corporation (SMDC) and Cathy had actually advised that the City not rush the transfer. This is because there are no available Contractors currently to help with the process of removing contaminated debris etc... Council member Charley Bennett suggested that the Hutterites do the work, but Paul stated that due to the contaminated debris, only a licensed contractor could handle the job. Paul stated that he would be discussing the situation further with SMDC.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council member Jack Runner had no report on the Library this week.

Council member Frank Brouillette reported that the Ordinance Committee met this week. The Committee discussed Marijuana laws in Montana and how the recent legalization of the recreational use of Marijuana could negatively impact the City of Harlowton. Frank stated that the Committee would be looking more deeply into what the Montana laws are about recreationally using Marijuana.

Council member Charley Bennett gave his report on the pool. Charley stated that Thompson Pools are not ready yet to do the work. Contracts had been signed but no work would happen until warmer months ahead. Charley also stated that the boilers had been ordered.

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard stated that there was no new news on the Tree Board.

Council member Ron Teig stated that Lauri Teig would be representing the City during public comment on House Bill 12 as well as the review of the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Project list. Paul stated that the Roundhouse project had not scored high enough on the Montana Historic Preservation Grant Projects list to receive funding. He stated that Jason Seyler is currently looking into other funding options for the project.

NEW BUSINESS

1) The first reading of the Chief Joseph RV Park Stay-Limit Ordinance took place. The second reading will happen at the meeting on January 26, 2021. Paul commented that the draft looked good and that all the changes requested had been made

2) A discussion took place regarding upcoming City owned property lease renewals. Frank stated that he thought the Council had decided not to renew them. Discussion took place regarding the fuel lot area as well as the lagoon area. Frank asked if leasing any of this property again would affect the Wetlands Railtrail Project. Ron replied that he would need to ask Laurie and look into this. Paul stated that the leases with Cream of the West, Dan Dempster, the Martins and the Sorensens would remain. Frank asked if Cream of the West was still interested in purchasing the land. Paul replied that they were not. The \$1 a year lease was too good. Frank asked if that deal would transfer if the Cream of the West were to sell. Paul stated that it would not. Paul stated that they would not renew the lease with Deborde Also, they would need to do clean up.

Frank suggested that Kevin Knudsen could put goats out there to clear area. Further discussion took place regarding Gary Olsen's leased area as well as looking into how the new floodplains map would impact things. Frank asked if there was a map yet from FEMA. Paul stated that we did not yet have a copy. Frank suggested creating subdivisions with City owned land for more houses. Paul stated that no, the City would not do this. Rather, the City could sell the land to someone and the buyers could pursue this idea.

Council member Jim Kalitowski asked if the City wasn't renewing leases, how would they manage the weeds? Ron suggested that sheep be brought out to control the weeds a few times a year.

A discussion took place regarding the area of the floodplains that has purchase interest. Frank stated that a fair market value and bidding would have to take place. Paul asked Charley if he knew anything about the culvert plans. Charley stated that he did not but that he would look into it further. Paul stated that the conversation regarding City owned property lease renewals would continue at the next Council meeting on January 26, 2021.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard gave a report. The Public Works Department had been patching up holes around town. The bathroom upgrade at the City shop is almost complete. The department has also been replacing signs around town. Bob also stated that Public Works employee James Swanson had not passed his DEQ Water certification test. He would be trying the test again in 3 weeks. Bob stated that James has 1 year from the date of employment to complete the 3 tests but the tests are very hard. Bob stated that James is a good worker. Bob and Jeff would like to retire in 10 years and at that time there must be 1 or 2 Public Works Department employees with this water certification.

MAYOR REPORT

Paul informed the Council that he and Bob would doing a practice zoom call the next day for DNRC TSEP funding legislation testimony. They would be testifying on behalf of the Phase 5 Water Project. Frank suggested that former Public Works Director Ian Reed testify on the City's behalf. He had done so in the past and did a great job. Paul stated that he might reach out to Ian.

Discussion took place regarding a lack of ordinance for use of obscene language on banners and signs. Paul notified the Council that a community member had complained to the City about her neighbor's flag which included the "F word" and derogatory comments about the US President-elect. Paul stated that he had discussed this issue with the Sheriff's Department. They stated that if the City did not have an ordinance regarding obscene language, nothing could be done about it.

Paul gave a report regarding the proposed property sale of E Ave to Greg Berg. Paul stated that the situation had become very complicated. County Clerk and Recorder Mary Miller as well as Page Dringman had become involved in the situation. It was revealed that in such a case as this, the property owners on each side of the property for sale should have the opportunity to purchase half the land each. It was not clear as to whether or not this property is considered a street, easement or right-of-way. It was also unclear as to whether Berg planned on making the property an extension of his own property or a separate lot. If it was intended to become a separate lot, subdivision laws would have to be considered. The check for payment on the land had not yet been deposited. The complicated situation is still being looked into.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be January 26, 2021 at 7:00pm. At the meeting the second reading of the Chief Joseph Park Stay-Limit Ordinance would be reviewed. The discussion of City property lease-renewals would also continue. The discussion of the Berg property sale issues would also be further discussed.

CLAIMS

Frank made a motion for the claims from December 21st through January 8th to be approved for payment. Jack seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously by council.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40pm.

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

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

Public Present: Dan Edwards, Times-Clarion reporter, community member (and formal Council member) Rob Elwood

Paul Otten, Mayor

Lara Brisco, Clerk-Treasurer