

A regular meeting of the Harlowton City Council, held January 26, 2021 opened at 7:00 pm with the Pledge of Allegiance. Minutes of the council meeting on January 12, 2021 were approved as written.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Council member Frank Brouillette stated that he had a few items to discuss that were not on the agenda. First, someone had expressed an interest in the property at the junction for building a drive through coffee kiosk. They wanted to know more about water access as well as driving access. A discussion ensued between Mayor Paul Otten and Frank regarding the hookup costs as well as the best way to access water.

Frank also stated that someone was interested in a lot by Cream of the West. A discussion took place regarding finding out the Fair Market Value (FMV) of the property as well as the process to follow for bidding. Public Works Director Bob Schuchard asked what the person planned to do with the land. He stated that if they planned on subdividing it, they would have to follow the procedures of doing so properly. It was also stated that this area must continue to allow access for the City to areas owned by the City. City Attorney Karen Hammel stated that the land must be posted as a public bid and that a FMV assessment must be done. A discussion continued regarding someone outbidding the person who is interested in the land and what could be done to prevent this. Karen stated that she would have to look into this.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Mayor Paul Otten updated the council on Biegel's Bar ownership transfer. Karen stated that owner Steve Olsen had emailed her back and agreed to the City's conditions for taking over the property. A deed would be drawn up and sent to him.

Paul asked the Pool Manager Hiring Committee for an update. Council member Jack Runner stated that the committee was still looking into some things including a company that would do background checks. Paul suggested that they ask the School for whatever records they had on the applicants but Jack stated that those records would be the school's and not accessible by the City.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Jack reported that the Library had 500+ adults books checked out and 240 kids books checked out last month. The upcoming Library Fundraiser in March would have to be altered a bit to accommodate COVID-safe conditions.

Frank stated that the Ordinance committee met. They discussed Montana Recreational Marijuana law and the conditions of setting up a Marijuana Dispensary within City limits. The Committee will continue to discuss this issue at the upcoming meetings. Frank also stated that the meeting had a very large turn out of citizens.

Council member Charley Bennett gave his report on the pool. He is waiting on Thompson Pools for a start date.

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard stated that there was no new news on the Tree Board. At this time, Mrs. Swickard stated that she had something to show the Council. She presented a written document regarding her concern for how the City trees were being taken care of. Her concern was that certain trees are being trimmed when they are dormant and they should not be. Bob stated that it was not the City that did this and asked if it was the Electric Company. She stated that it was not. There was speculation of who trimmed the trees and Larry Steuben and Todd Schock were mentioned.

Council member Ron Teig stated that there was no new news for the Wetlands Rail Trail. He had received an email from WRT Project Manager Garth French regarding an updated map of the proposed Wetlands Rail Trail site.

NEW BUSINESS

1) A second reading of the Chief Joseph RV Park stay-limit Ordinance took place. The Ordinance would be the first in the “Title 16 Parks and Recreations” section of the ordinance book. The Ordinance would be titled “2021-01”. Paul asked the Council if they had any concerns. Council member Jim Kalitowski stated his concern with the water line construction workers coming next summer. Would this affect their stay in town? Paul stated that he believed they preferred to stay in RV parks with more accommodations (such as hot water). Frank stated that in certain conditions, a variance would be made for special situations. Paul stated that a lady coming next June for a wedding had contacted him regarding reserving 10 spots. He stated that we do not reserve spots and to come earlier to ensure a space. Council member Allison Jones stated that it was good to keep that because if you allow one person to reserve, then everyone would have to be allowed to reserve.

Frank made a motion to pass Ordinance Title 16 2021-01. Jack seconded the motion. The Ordinance was passed unanimously by the Council.

2) A continued discussion of City owned property lease-renewal took place. Paul stated that lease due dates would have to be looked into. Frank stated that the areas that would be within the limits of the proposed Wetlands Rail Trail should not be renewed, as well as grazing-areas and fishing access sites. Discussion took place regarding the “Deborde” leased land. The Council was concern with the area being used as a metal scraping yard and not being kept up. Also, the land lease was not paid up nor was the water. The water had since been severed with an existing unpaid balance on the account. Because there is an existing building on the property, Karen suggested that it would be easier to sell him the land rather than force him to vacate.

Other areas are being considered for sale to interested residents. Lance Schuchard is interested in purchasing a property that is currently being leased as a “grazing area”. A surveyor would have to be contacted.

3) Paul asked Karen to give Council an update on the City/Berg property sale. She stated that a quick claim had been created but some issues had come up because of the complicated subdivision process. She contacted Page Dringman and the process would be completed within the next few days. A merge must be set up to avoid the complicated subdivision process. Karen would be reaching out soon to the Bergs.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR REPORT

Public Works Director Bob Schuchard gave a report. He and Paul had recently drove to Helena to give testimony to the legislators regarding funding for the Water Upgrade Project. They would find out the results in March. Paul stated that the testimony had went smoothly and that a lady from the Musselshell Coalition has also spoken on the City's behalf. Bob also stated that they had hit a deer on the way to Helena and that the headlight in the City Truck would have to be replaced. Bob stated that before the recent snow, the Public Works Department had been patching up potholes and clearing up tree branches.

MAYOR REPORT

Paul informed the Council that the City of Harlowton is 11th in line to receive TSEP funding and 54th in line to receive RRGL funding. We won't know until March what funds the City will receive. He stated that a lot of people testified that day and that each City only had 5 minutes to speak. Paul also mentioned about the second "obscene" flag going up on private property in Harlowton. He stated that he told concerned citizens that there was no ordinance against it and that it was considered "Freedom of Speech". Frank asked if anyone had reached out directly to the property owners about their concerns. It was unknown if anyone had done so.

ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

The next council meeting will be February 9, 2021 at 7:00pm. The next meeting will include a continued discussion regarding City property lease renewals and City property sales as well as FMV reports on discussed properties. An update on the FEMA floodplain map would also be discussed.

CLAIMS

Council member Frank made a motion for the claims from January 11, 2021 through January 22, 2021 to be approved for payment. Council member Allison Jones seconded the motion and the motion was passed unanimously by council.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:05pm.

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

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

Public Present: Dan Edwards, Times-Clarion reporter, Linda Hickman, Rob Elwood, Ron and Merilee Swickard

Paul Otten, Mayor

Lara Brisco, Clerk-Treasurer