

City of Choteau
PO BOX 619
CHOTEAU, MT 59422-0619
406-466-2510

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 20, 2016 MEETING
OF THE CHOTEAU CITY COUNCIL

Present were Mayor Jack Conatser, Council Member Dan Lannen, Council Member Stewart Merja, Council Member Jill Owen and Council Member Rose Crawford.

Staff present was Public Works Director Mike Maples and Finance Officer Jodi Rogers.

Citizens present were Jim Patterson and Kevin Johnson of DOWL, Rich Lusky and Harold Yeager.

CALL TO ORDER

Council Mayor Conatser called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF DECEMBER 6, 2016

A motion to approve the minutes of the December 6, 2016 meeting was made by Council Member Merja, seconded by Council Member Lannen. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

REQUESTS TO BE OUT OF STATE

Council Member Crawford requested to be out of state December 22-28, 2016.
Council Member Owen requested to be out of state December 21-28, 2016.

A motion to approve the requests was made by Council Member Lannen, seconded by Council Member Merja. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Kevin Johnson reported that the lift station is up and running and waste water started flowing through the plant yesterday. He stated that the generators are ready if the power goes out, there has been training by some of the vendors, the oxidation ditch has thawed out and is receiving water, the clarifiers are about 80 percent done, there are some electrical items that need to be

completed and the drying beds still need to be finished. Williams Brother Construction will keep working, weather permitting.

Mr. Johnson reported that WesTech will be here on February 6, 2017 to program the system and train the operators. In the meantime, the plant will be running manually. It will be about a month or six weeks before regular sampling can be done. There is some finish work to be done in the office before Mike and Levi can take the boxes over and set up the lab equipment.

NEW BUSINESS

MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION & ANALYSIS FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2016

Finance Officer Rogers reported that we had the audit last week and the audit review was held at the end of the week. There were no findings and they didn't have any concerns. They also audited the MD&A and found it matched what is in the annual report. The city is very solvent and all the debt is in our enterprise funds (water, sewer & garbage). The only debt in our governmental fund is for our half of the firehall. Our reserves are at 45 percent, the maximum we can have is 50 percent.

Mayor Conatser stated that the auditors were very appreciative that we had everything ready for them when they got here.

DISCUSSION & VOTE ON RESCHEDULING JANUARY 3, 2017 MEETING TO JANUARY 10, 2017 AND CANCELLING JANUARY 17, 2017

Mayor Conatser explained that there is not a lot of business being done at the beginning of the year. The Post Office will be closed on the first so no claims can be received.

A motion to approve the meeting changes was made by Council Member Owen, seconded by Council Member Merja. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

LAW ENFORCEMENT REPORT

The Law Enforcement Reports for August, September and October 2016 were submitted for council's review.

CITY JUDGE'S REPORT

The City Judge's Report for November 2016 was submitted for council's review.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTORS REPORT

Public Works Director Maples reported that there is sewage going through the plant as well as the lagoon. He stated that we had the phone and data lines installed in the Headworks building. They will be cleaning the UV lights and have built a stainless-steel tank for cleaning the UV lights. There has been a lot of training on the wastewater treatment plant. He received a deficiency report on the gravel pit. He will work to get them resolved.

Public Works Director Maples further reported that the crew has been busy plowing and removing snow, re-built the leaf vacuum engine and ordered a new impeller, installed the new wood stove, exercised water valves and repaired a fire hydrant that had been run over.

FINANCE OFFICERS REPORT

Finance Officer Rogers reported that on Wednesday, January 4, 2017 at 2:00 p.m., there will be a planning meeting with the Tree & Sidewalk Board at City Hall. Different grant options will be discussed.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Member Merja reported that the committee is still working on raising funds for the playground. They hope to have the playground put in this summer.

Council Member Lannen stated that this is a legislative year and there needs to be a discussion on raising gas taxes. It would be a fair tax in that everyone, residents and non-residents would pay the tax. We need to be able to fund our streets and highways. Part of the discussion needs to be about electric cars and hybrids. Finance Officer Rogers stated that the allocation for each of the communities needs to be changed. It has not been changed in 20 years. Our other option is to increase our SID and only homeowners would bear the burden.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Rural resident Harold Yeager requested the city adopt an ordinance requiring law enforcement officers to use deadly force against any grizzly bears found in the city limits or on city-owned property. Mr. Yeager stated that such an ordinance is necessary to impress the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service with the need to remove the grizzly in the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem from the Endangered Species Act protection since the grizzly population in the NCDE has met all the recovery milestones and in fact is growing and pushing east onto private property well east of US Hwy 89 and even east of Interstate 15.

Mr. Yeager said he and representatives from the Miller, Birch Creek and Pondera Hutterite colonies attended the December meeting of the Interagency Grizzly Bear Management Committee in Missoula and are trying to make their case that the feds need to delist the bear as

soon as possible. Mayor Conatser and council members were sympathetic to Mr. Yeager's request, but Mayor Conatser said the City Council could not legally pass or enforce an ordinance that contradicts federal law, it is also unenforceable.

Mayor Conatser and council agreed that they would write a letter in support of the prompt delisting of the grizzly in the NCDE that Mr. Yeager could present to the interagency committee at its next meeting (which is tentatively in mid-June in Choteau). Mayor Conatser suggested that Mr. Yeager approach other individuals and organizations in Choteau asking for letters of support from them as well.

Rich Lusky wished the Mayor and council a Merry Christmas.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:53 p.m. was made by Council Member Owen, seconded by Council Member Merja. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

John W. Conatser, Mayor

Jodi L. Rogers, Finance Officer