

CITY OF CHOTEAU

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OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE JULY 18, 2017 MEETING OF THE CHOTEAU CITY COUNCIL

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

Staff present was Deputy Clerk Mary Corey and Public Works Director Mike Maples.

Citizens present were Melody Martinsen of the Choteau Acantha; Kelly Skinner and Kathy Jones of the Choteau Community Art Studio; Jim Hodgskiss, Teton County Commissioner; Marlin Styren and Lyle Otness of the Choteau American Legion; Sandie Hodgskiss of the Prairie Mountain Players; Kathleen Moscatello; Pete Howard; Eva Anseth; Mary Sexton; Corlene Martin; Brian Carlson; Linda Spinder; Jason Lytle and Beth Barlow.

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 20, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 20, 2017 meeting was made by Council Member Lannen, seconded by Council Member Merja. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF JUNE 29, 2017

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 29, 2017 meeting was made by Council Member Crawford, seconded by Council Member Lannen. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

REQUESTS TO BE OUT OF STATE

None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

DISCUSSION ON FUTURE USE OF NURSING HOME BUILDING

Cathy Jones read a letter from Susan Luinstra. The letter reiterated what was discussed at the last meeting. How the facility is centrally located, within walking distance to just about anywhere, the building is safe and accessible, has a large common area, a small common area for perhaps an art gallery and gift store, artist workshops and much more. She stated that a center like this would take time to establish. She has lined up enough people to have approximately \$1500 a month to help cover expenses, she needs about \$2500 per month.

Mary Sexton stated that she looks at the former nursing home building in terms of assets and liabilities. The building is currently a liability for the county, they have \$20,000 to \$40,000 in expenses per year. They have been trying to sell the building to no avail. The other options are to sell it to the City or tear it down, which would be expensive. She stated that more creative thinking and time is what is needed right now. She explained that if the City were to acquire the building, they would also have expenses, especially if there are renovations needed and an engineering study needs to be done. She explained that a planning grant could be obtained to have an engineer come in and look at the building to see what can be done, but it all takes time. If a loan is needed, the payment amount would have to be added to the monthly expenses. She suggested looking at dedicated sources for the funding, possibly a long-term endowment. If it is large enough, the interest could be used to cover some or all of the expenses. Another possibility could be a small mill levy that could raise \$10,000 to \$15,000 per year.

Mary Sexton suggested that more research be done and other options pursued.

Jill Owen stated that before any remodeling is done, wouldn't it be a good idea to know how the building is going to be used.

Jim Hodgskiss stated that the energy audit will be done on July 24, 2017.

Mayor Conatser explained that he understands that the county wants to be out from under the building but realistically we are 60 days out before any reports come in or getting more thoughts together so we need more time to figure things out.

Sandie Hodgskiss asked if the city were to take over the building, would they be able to cut back on some of the expenses such as water and sewer. Mayor Conatser replied that we would.

Beth Barlow stated that she is in support of using the building for the arts. She stated that it would promote economic development. She encouraged the city and county to work together. Sandie Hodgskiss asked if the Community Arts Council is the only group the city is working with. Mayor Conatser replied that it is.

Council Member Owen asked if the Community Arts Council has been working with the dance people. Kelly Skinner replied that they have as well as some of the local artists.

NEW BUSINESS

RESOLUTION NO. 819 - SET SALARIES FOR CITY OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES

A motion to approve Resolution No. 819 was made by Council Member Merja, seconded by Council Member Owen. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

VOTE ON APPROVAL OF DOCUMENTS DESTRUCTION LIST

Deputy Clerk Corey explained that these records will be destroyed according to the State of Montana's retention schedule. A motion to approve the destruction of records following the State of Montana's Retention Schedule was made by Council Member Owen, seconded by Council Member Crawford. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

DISCUSSION AND VOTE ON RESOLUTION OF INTENT TO FOLLOW FEDERAL LAW

Mayor Conatser explained that the city is looking to pass Ordinance No. 314 stating that Choteau will follow federal law. Land use that is in violation of Federal, State or local laws shall not be permitted in the City of Choteau. He explained that marijuana is not legal at the federal level. If the ordinance passes, marijuana will not be legal in the city limits of Choteau. This resolution of intent will start the public hearing process.

A motion to approve the Resolution of Intent as written was made by Council Member Lannen, seconded by Council Member Crawford. Council Member Lannen, Crawford and Owen voted aye. Council Member Merja abstained.

VOTE ON CHANGING AUGUST MEETING DATES TO THE 8TH AND 22ND

Mayor Conatser stated that there is enough going on that we will need to have two meetings in August.

A motion to change the August meeting dates to the 8th and 22nd were made by Council Member Merja, seconded by Council Member Owen. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

CLAIMS

A motion to approve the claims for June in the amount of \$36,374.61 was made by Council Member Merja, seconded by Council Member Lannen. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

LAW ENFORCEMENT REPORT

There was no Law Enforcement Report submitted.

CITY JUDGE'S REPORT

There was no City Judge's Report submitted.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTORS REPORT

Public Works Director Maples reported that the flows at the wastewater treatment plant are down to an average of 275 gpm and our ditch biology is averaging about 3100 mg/l of suspended solids. Williams Brother Construction is demobilizing but there are a few issues that need to be resolved; pump motors and clarifier covers. WesTech still has some issues to address; including programming and data trending issues. We are still having problems with the lift station pumping to design specifications. The lagoon is draining slowly, pumping efforts have ceased due to the pump sucking up mud. There is about 3,000,000 gallons of water left to drain.

We have addressed a number of safety hazards identified during a Department of Labor inspection of the city shop, water works and wastewater treatment plant. The hazards have been corrected and we have initiated a safety training protocol to bring us into compliance with the Montana Safety Culture Act.

The re-lining project is a go, will start sometime in the fall or next spring.

The crew has been busy jetting sewer mains, picking up branches, patching potholes and grading alleys.

Council Member Owen asked if there was any chance of fixing the railroad crossing on 3rd Street NE. Public Works Director Maples replied that he has been trying to contact the railroad so it can be fixed. Pete Howard explained that he does not feel the city will get any results with the railroad unless the City Attorney gets involved.

FINANCE OFFICERS REPORT

Finance Officer Rogers was excused.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Member Merja reported that he was approached by a young man that would like to have a skate park in Choteau. He stated that there are monies available for community enrichment and the cost of putting one in is significant.

Council Member Merja stated that he has received a lot of comments on the medical marijuana issue. He said that it is good to see the community interested and talking.

Council Member Owen stated that she has also received a lot of opinions on the medical marijuana issue.

Mayor Conatser again thanked everyone that attended the last council meeting for their civility and ideas that were brought to the table.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lyle Otness commented on parking for the rodeo and the lease is up for renewal.

Linda Spinder complained about the fireworks being shot off until 4:30 in the morning and having to clean up after the people shooting them off.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:52 p.m. was made by Council Member Lannen, seconded by Council Member Merja. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

John W. Conatser, Mayor

Mary E. Corey, Deputy Clerk