

CITY OF CHOTEAU

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OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 5, 2017 MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

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

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

Citizens present were Sheriff Keith VanSetten, Drena Lindgren, Paul Dreyer, Melody Martinsen, Beth Barlow and Mark Major.

CALL TO ORDER

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

PUBLIC HEARING – FY2018 FINAL BUDGET AND FY2018 ASSESSMENTS

Mayor Conatser opened the public hearing at 7:01.

Mayor Conatser asked for comments. Council members Lannen, Crawford and Merja said the budget looks good to them. Crawford and Merja both stated they had spoken to City Finance Officer Jodi Rogers about the budget and she had answered their questions. No one from the audience or other members of the public spoke. After calling for any additional comments and there being none Mayor Conatser closed the public hearing at 7:10.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the August 22, 2017 meeting was made by Council Member Lannen, seconded by Council Member Crawford. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

REQUESTS TO BE OUT OF STATE

Mayor Conatser requested to be out of state from September 6, through September 11, 2017. Council Member Lannen moved to allow Mayor Conatser to be out of state during this time

period, seconded by Council Member Crawford. Motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

WASTE WATER TREATMENT PLANT UPDATE

Public Works Director Mike Maples reported on in-flow, oxidation ditch quality, WesTech programmed work, nitrogen and phosphorus sampling, lift station performance, lagoon pumping and draining, and failure of another RAS pump, which had been replaced by Williams Brothers.

NEW BUSINESS

VOTE ON RES. NO. 821 – FY2018 LEVY ASSESSMENTS WITHIN SPECIAL IMPROVEMENTS

Mayor Conatser called for questions or comments. Council Member Crawford asked about the change in the city's mills levied, noting that the levy was increasing. Council Member Crawford wanted it to be noted the increase was so the City would not lose the mills. Mayor Conatser agreed, saying that due to a legislative change in the way cities calculate their budgets and their property taxes, the City would lose approximately 8 mills of budget authority if they weren't levied this year.

Council Member Owen moved to adopt Res. No. 821, Council Member Merja seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

VOTE ON RES. NO. 822 – FY2018 FINAL BUDGET

Mayor Conatser stated this resolution was for approving the final budget for the new fiscal year.

Council Member Merja moved to adopt Res. No. 822, seconded by Council Member Owen. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

CLAIMS

Mayor Conatser explained that Finance Officer Rogers was unable to attend the meeting and that approval of claims would need to be delayed until the September 19, 2017 council meeting.

Council Member Crawford moved to table claims until the September 19th meeting, Council Member Merja seconded the motion. The Motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR'S REPORT

1. Update on waste water treatment plant:
 - a. Flows are down to <250 gpm average.
 - b. The ditch biology is ok; we are averaging around 4200 mg/L suspended solids. In early August, we were seeing excellent results in our weekly sampling. However, BOD and TSS of samples have been slightly and steadily increasing. We are contemplating a strategy to get the plant back to producing excellent results. It is likely the sludge age is getting a little too old.
 - c. Westech sent process engineer Mark Biesenger to work with us last week. We confirmed the ditch flow velocities are correct and worked through nutrient sampling and nutrient removal. It appears the plant is doing a fairly good job of nitrogen removal. We have some work to do in regards to phosphorus removal.
 - d. Westech still has some outstanding subjects to address including programming and data trending issues.
 - e. The lift station issues appear to have been rectified.
 - f. We are done pumping lagoon water through the plant. The lagoon is effectively drained, with only an area of saturated sludge in the middle. Last week, we began investigating strategies for conveying ground water out of the lagoon, surveying elevations, and clearing sludge to assess sludge volume. Today I met with Mike Abrahamson and Paul LaVigne of DEQ to discuss constructing some drainage ditches in the lagoon. We agreed on a plan. It requires a significant amount of sludge clearing. We began some clearing work last week and continued today. It is going OK.
 - g. We experienced a failure of a bearing in the RAS #1 pump motor. WBC replaced the motor. It was one of the flooded motors. So far, two have failed and been replaced by WBC.
2. We have not yet run the August numbers for water pumped, metered, and lost. It will be interesting to see if we have any water savings after fixing the leak by the school last month.
3. In regards to streets:
 - a. We should hear this week from Rural Development regarding financial assistance for the purchase of an asphalt grinder. If funding is as we expect, we will acquire the grinder as soon as possible.
 - b. We removed the motor from the city's front end loader. It is currently being completely rebuilt. Hopefully, it will return to us next week and we will re-install it.
 - c. With the loader rebuilt and, hopefully, a grinder, we will begin to rehab streets.
4. We conducted some more camera work on sewer collection mains, trying to identify leaks, breaks and ground water infiltration. We have identified a couple more lines that possibly need attention.
5. Flushing of the sewer mains continues.
6. We have had several water service connections, one sewer service connection and assisted on a couple service line repair/replacements.

7. We have been trimming tree growth along the alleys to facilitate garbage pick up and some trimming along streets, where limbs and growth present obstacles for traffic.
8. Parks work is going well.
9. The compactor in the garbage truck has suffered a little damage. We patched it back together and hope to fix it properly next Thursday, when no garbage is collected.
10. We have had the normal mix of everyday tasks like recycling, water shut offs, water meter repairs, water sampling, waste water sampling, garbage collection, line location requests and mechanical repairs.

FINANCE OFFICER'S REPORT

Finance Officer Rogers was excused.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

Council Member Merja said that a concerned parent told him she was nearly hit by a car going well over 15 mph in the Choteau Public Schools school zone. He said he has also almost been hit in that zone and that, despite the radar speed limit signs, the city needs to look at more ways to improve safety in the zone.

Public Works Director Maples said in the summer tourists frequently use Seventh Avenue Northwest to go between U.S. Highway 287 and U.S. Highway 89. He said he was passed in that zone by someone going nearly 50 mph and texting.

Citizen Beth Barlow said GPS software is routing travelers past the schools. She suggested a four-way stop at the intersection of 3rd Street and 7th Avenue.

Citizen Paul Dreyer said the City should block off 7th Avenue N.W., preventing people from using it for through traffic.

Council Member Owen suggested posting the Avenue for no through traffic.

Mayor Conatser said he would set up a public meeting with Sheriff Keith VanSetten, Superintendent Chuck Gameon and citizens and get information from the Montana Department of Transportation on possible ways to improve safety.

The Mayor also said that the installation of sidewalks along 7th Avenue next summer could alleviate some of the danger to pedestrians.

Council Member Merja also said City needs to be proactive as the Choteau Swim Team plans to host approximately 300 swimmers for the divisional swim meet here in late July or early August 2018.

Council Member Owen asked Sheriff VanSetten to enforce laws prohibiting people from talking on their cell phones while driving. Sheriff VanSetten said there is no state law on that, but that other cities have passed their own cell phone-ban ordinances. Mayor Conatser said he would also look into this and have more to report at a future meeting.

ZONING PERMIT REPORT FOR JULY 2017

Name	Address	Description
Jack Conatser	21 2 nd Avenue SW	Replace Deck
Diana Levine	111 1 st Avenue SW	Deck Railing
Margi Corey	301 11 th Avenue NE	Deck
Don Depner	513 1 st Avenue SW	Roof

PUBLIC COMMENT

Citizen Drena Lindgren thanked the City Council for being gracious and caring in response to all the negativity that has been going on in social media, regarding the City Council's actions on medical marijuana dispensaries and other city decisions. She thanked the elected officials for caring about the community and said that serving the public is a difficult job with very little financial compensation. She said that instead of slandering the City Council, the people should get together and say thank you to the City Council.

Mayor Conatser and Council Member Lannen both thanked her for her comments.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 p.m. was made by Council Member Owen, seconded by Council Member Crawford. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

John W. Conatser, Mayor

Jodi L. Rogers, Finance Officer