

City of Choteau

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 20, 2024 MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL

This meeting was held at City Hall and via ZOOM.COM.

Council Present: Mayor Chris Hindoien, Council Member Stewart Merja, Council Member Heather McCartney-Duty and Council Member Polly Cunningham (Zoom). Council Member Sara Coccoli was excused.

Staff Present: Finance Officer Tom Frownfelder, Public Works Director Colin Lightner, WWTP Operator Levi Warehime.

Citizens Present: Brian Colesworthy, Rich Lusky, Phyllis Bechtold, Melody Martinsen (Acantha), Harold Yeager.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hindoien called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING – PROPOSED ANNEXATION REGULATIONS AND PLAN

The Public Hearing opened at 5:31pm.

As required by MONTANA CODE ANNOTATED TITLE 7, CHAPTER 2, PART 46 “ANNEXATION BY PETITION” AND PART 47 “ANNEXATION WITH PROVISION OF SERVICES” the City of Choteau is establishing a Service Plan for Future Annexations. Whereas, the City of Choteau hereby recognizes that Montana State law has established municipal governments for the purpose of providing local government municipal services essential for sound urban development of communities as well as for the protection of health, safety and welfare in areas either already being intensively used or undergoing development for residential, commercial, industrial, institutional and governmental purposes.

Council Member McCartney-Duty expressed that she likes part “F” of the plan that reviews the cost burden of providing services to annexed property being passed to the developers and landowners. The burden of cost should not fall onto the City.

Melody with the Acantha asked if there are any significant changes from previous policy. Mayor Hindoien explained that this policy does outline more so the general policies for providing services to new and existing areas. Council Member McCartney-Duty mentioned that part “J” of

the policy talks about the option for Payback Agreement to developers if the costs of development is paid by future developers and property owners.

The Public Hearing was closed at 5:39pm.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 06, 2024, council meeting was made by Council Member McCartney-Duty; Council Member Merja seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

REQUESTS TO BE OUT OF STATE

Council Member Cunningham will be out of state and miss the meeting on March 05, but will try to Zoom the meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

VOTE ON Res. No. 918 – ADOPTION OF ANNEXATION REGULATIONS

A motion to adopt Res. No. 918, establishing a service plan for future annexations as required under Montana Code Annotated Title 7, Chapter 2, part 46 and 47, was made by Council Member Merja; seconded by Council Member McCartney-Duty. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

VOTE ON Res. No. 919 – AUTHORIZATION TO SELL SURPLUS PROPERTY

Public Works Director Lightner has reviewed the vehicles and large equipment that the City of Choteau has on hand. He has determined that there are several items that the City does not need, and would like to declare the items as surplus, and to sell those items. A motion to accept Res. No. 919 to declare these items as surplus was made by Council Member Merja; seconded by Council Member McCartney-Duty. Council Member McCartney-Duty inquired what the process is for selling the items. Mayor Hindoen explained that we will most likely use the State Surplus department to handle the process. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

VOTE ON RECOMMENDATION FROM ZONING COMMISSION, DENNY PERRY PROPERTY CHANGE FROM GENERAL INDUSTRIAL TO B-RESIDENTIAL

The zoning commission met on February 15th with a public hearing to review the request from Denny Perry to review the potential change of zoning from General Industrial to B-Residential.

The property in question are the lots that he owns that contain his residence, and one lot that is vacant. The properties were grouped with the surrounding businesses when defined as General Industrial. However, to the other side of his properties, it is zone as B-Residential. It was the recommendation of the Zoning Commission to allow the change of zoning. A motion to accept the recommendation was made by Council Member McCartney-Duty; seconded by Council Member Merja. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

CLAIMS

A motion to approve claims for February 2024, check #22355 – 22370 for a total of \$19,572.73 was made by Council Member Merja; seconded by Council Member McCartney-Duty. The motion passed with all those in attendance voting aye.

REPORTS

Reports from City Judge, Public Works Director, Finance Officer and City Civil Attorney are available for review in the Council Packet upon request.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Mayor Hindoien announced that there is correspondence that he distributed among the council members that he has available in his correspondence file for review upon request.

Council Member McCartney-Duty

- She commented on the recent public discussion on animal control. She is looking forward to crafting some sample legislation for animal control to take to the next meeting on March 6, 2024.
- She asked about what the City and community do to help with the affordability and availability of housing in Choteau. She expressed how teachers, and other support staff at local businesses, are having trouble finding or affording housing. Mayor Hindoien acknowledged that this is an issue, but there is only so much a local municipality can do. It would be up to a local organization and builders to use state and federal programs to create affordable housing.

Council Member Merja:

- National FFA Week is here, Feb 17-24.
- He is concerned about bears coming out with the warm weather. He has noticed signs of them. He is excited to see that the Bear Smart group is making some headway.

Mayor Hindoien

- He briefly talked about the City plowing the streets in town, explaining that we are doing the best we can, and can only do so much as plowing the slush around can be hazardous and we don't have a place to put it. This City is only obligated to plow the emergency routes. Council Member McCartney-Duty mentioned that the City does not have emergency route signs posted on the roads in town. Mayor Hindoien said that he would look into this.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Harold Yeager asked if any zoning changes have been enacted yet. Mayor Hindoien explained that we have just started meetings with the zoning commission to look at making these changes. Finance Officer Frownfelder explained that even with the improved zoning code, we still have limitations due to subdivision and floodplain policy.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:18 pm

Chris Hindoien, Mayor

Tom Frownfelder, Finance Officer