

City of Choteau

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE APRIL 02, 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, Council Member Polly Cunningham and Council Member Sara Coccoli.

Staff Present: Finance Officer Tom Frownfelder, Public Works Director Colin Lightner.

Citizens Present: Brian Colesworthy, Rich Lusky, Melody Martinsen (Acantha), Brock Bouma, Jim Bouma, Chad Bouma

CALL TO ORDER

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

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

A motion to approve the minutes of the March 19, 2024, council meeting was made by Council Member Merja; with a second by Council Member Coccoli. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

REQUESTS TO BE OUT OF STATE

Council Member McCartney-Duty will be out of state June 4th.

Council Member Cunningham will be out of state in the first week of May.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

The approval of the contract for bid to dig the new water well is still tabled, and we do not have any updates at this time.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION ON PROPOSED FLOOD MAPS AND OPTIONS FOR LACK OF ADEQUATE INFORMATION

After meetings with the DNRC and FEMA, it would appear that they are firm in their calculations and adjustments to the floodplain map. Mayor Hindoien has been hearing from local citizens about their concerns, and made it sound like banks are already moving forward with asking for them to get flood insurance on their home loans.

Brian Colesworthy confirmed that there are upcoming meetings with the DNRC and FEMA, including a review of the river hydrology on April 30th, and an open house to the public on May 29th.

Mayor Hindoien would like an explanation from the DNRC and FEMA about the data for their map. It has been said that they don't have as much information on the Teton River as they did for other communities for whom they have reduced the flood plain. This leads him to wonder if they have appropriate and sufficient hydrology to accurately produce the new mapping. If they are unwilling to review and alter their data, what do we do? We will have 90 days to dispute the changes once presented. Do we need to take them to court? The City has multiple buildings and properties that will be going into the floodplain. Do we ask for an injunction until adequate data can be gathered? Mayor Hindoien briefly talked about doing a case pro-se as a citizen to avoid court costs to the City.

Jim Bouma expressed his concern about the costs to homeowners, including insurance and home values. He also feels that there are odd discrepancies in the map for what is being put in or removed from the floodplain.

Council Member McCartney-Duty says that she would support a Stay of their decision, as these changes will be detrimental to our community. She asked what other communities have been dealing with similar issues. Mayor Hindoien said that Saco and Forsythe have had the same issue with map changes. Three Forks got a grant for 4million to build a levy, but it only gave them minimal relief and mitigation. Heather asked if Brian Colesworthy could come up with a half-sheet of information that we could give out to help explain the situation to the public. Brian mentioned that the DNRC was supposed to be mailing an information packet about the town hall to those who will be affected by the changes; though no one has received one to date.

APPROVE APPLICATION FOR SOUND VARIANCE – TOREY CHARPENTIER

A sound variance application was received to allow for outdoor music until midnight in a residential area at 75 HWY 221. Council Member McCartney-Duty asked if the neighbors have been contacted, as this was not filled-out on the application. To our knowledge, no neighbors had been contacted. A motion to table the vote until the applicant could contact neighbors was made by Council Member Coccoli; with a second by Council Member McCartney-Duty. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

CLAIMS

A motion to approve additional claims for March 2024, check #22423 – 22440 for a total of \$43,792.48 was made by Council Member Merja; seconded by Council Member Cunningham. The motion passed with all those in attendance voting aye.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member McCartney-Duty

- She talked about the recent work session for animal ordinances. She has produced a draft ordinance to present at the next public workshop on April 10th.

Council Member Cunningham

- The Wild Wings festival last weekend, along with the Old Trail Museum Wild Game Feed, was a success. We had a decent turnout, even with the weather, and the birds put on a good show.

Council Member Coccoli

- The City Tree Board applied for a tree grant, and got a pre-approval for \$25,000. The grant will pay for tree removal and some education. They are also planning an Arbor Day celebration in conjunction with the \$850 tree grant we received.

Council Member Merja

- He asked if the new recycling center is open for business. Yes, it is ready for full use.

Mayor Hindoen

- He mentioned that Tucker Rogers is inquiring about de-annexing from the City.
- He expressed that we are not actively trying to inhibit anyone from buying/selling property within the city. All we do is give current information concerning floodplain or zoning regulations that pertain to a property in question.
- There is a meeting on April 3rd at the city pavilion that will review State Constitutional Initiatives 126 and 127 which concerns how we vote on ballots.
- It is open burn season outside city limits.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Jim Bouma presented an RV Park that he would like to build on the open lot to the South of the Stage Stop Inn. ~~It would be a year-round facility.~~ It would not be a trailer park for mobile/manufactured homes, but only RV trailers and camping. They have bathroom and shower facilities in the hotel that the customers would have access to. The map he provided has 10 rental lots. He said that he would make it a nice place with fencing, trees and picnic tables.

He spoke with our previous public works director, Mike Maples, who said that connecting to water and sewer would not be an issue. Jim would like to get on a City Council agenda for an official presentation for approval. He has reviewed the ordinance and zoning regulations, and believes he can meet all of the criteria, including water/sewer/electricity. Mayor Hindoien said that he would add him to the agenda for the next meeting on April 16th.

Chad Bouma spoke of his concerns about the floodplain and the potential of the new maps that will hinder expansion of city growth. It will also affect the affordability and ability to sell homes in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:16 pm

Chris Hindoien, Mayor

Tom Frownfelder, Finance Officer