

City of Choteau

OFFICIAL MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 07th, 2023 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 Steve Howard, and Council Member Heather McCartney-Duty. Council Member Sara Coccoli was excused.

Staff Present: Finance Officer Tom Frownfelder

Citizens Present: Brian Colesworthy, Phyllis Bechtold, Melody Martinsen, Ali Marschner, Anne Carlson, Theresa Escarciga, Emily Stockard, Kelly Richter

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 October 24th, 2023, council meeting was made by Council Member Merja, Council Member McCartney-Duty seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in attendance voting aye.

REQUESTS TO BE OUT OF STATE

None

OLD BUSINESS

VOTE ON CODE RED AND/OR TEXT MY GOVE NOTIFICATION SYSTEMS

The council has previously discussed the use of the Code Red or the Text My Gov notification alerts systems. There are times when the City may need to alert the public to dangerous situations and/or local information. There has been discussion on just using the systems Teton County already has, or to share a system with Fairfield. The systems are costly to use, up to \$2,000 per year. It has been discussed that the few times we may need the alert system that we work with other organizations to disperse information.

Council Member McCartney-Duty said that she has experience with the Code Red system while working in Cascade County. She commented that though it can be helpful, there were times that just testing the system caused panic in the public. She also feels that if there is true danger, there are larger entities that we can contact to get information out.

Melody with the Acantha Newspaper said that they are more than willing to help disperse information to the public as quickly as possible when needed.

Council Member Merja mentioned putting informative signs around town asking the public to join that Acantha or City Facebook and/or website pages to stay informed with local information.

A call to vote was made by Council Member Howard, with a second by Council Member Merja. All present voted to not purchase either of these systems for the City.

NEW BUSINESS

PAY REQUEST #9, WATER PROJECT

Great West Engineering submitted pay request #9 for Prospect Construction. The total amount requested is \$71,123.60. This is broken out to \$70,412.36 to Prospect Construction and \$711.24 to 1% MT Gross Receipts. A motion was made by Council Member Merja to approve Pay Request #9, with a second by Council Member McCartney-Duty. The motion passed with all those in attendance voting aye.

DISCUSSION ON DOG ORDINANCES

Mayor Hindoien has spoken about the Cities animal ordinances on many occasions. There are parts of the old ordinances that are either outdated, or the City is currently unable to uphold due to changes in the City Animal Control Officer position. Mayor Hindoien would like to update or remove parts of the ordinances to better suit our abilities. He would like to have several public meetings starting in January to review the expectations and wishes of the public concerning dogs, cats, chickens/roosters, etc.

Anne Carlson said she is looking forward to the discussion because she sees many animals around town that are not in control, leaving their property, and has even had her own animals attacked while walking them. She mentioned that enacting a fine system may help enforce the ordinances, and may help pay for an animal control officer.

Council Member Merja, who has been on the City Council for many years, says that some of the issues revolve around the lack of proper definitions within the code, which can make it hard to enforce the code.

It was asked what involvement the Sheriff department has with enforcement. At this point, they tend to only get involved when there is a vicious animal, or animal attack.

Phyllis Bechtold asked if animal licensing fees could be raised and used to help with the costs of animal control. It was discussed that the fees raised would be very little, and increase fees would prohibit the number of people who would voluntarily license their animal.

DISCUSSION ON UPDATING OLD ORDINANCES

Mayor Hindoién expressed his interest in updating and/or removing old ordinances. Some are old and no longer match the current Montana Code. Others are just outdated and no longer enforced. Over the next few months, we will review ordinances, and will be able to do one resolution to remove or change them.

CLAIMS

A motion to approve additional claims for October 2023, check #22142 – 22174 (Check #22141 was cancelled due to printing error) for a total of \$911,879.94 was made by Council Member Merja. Council Member McCartney-Duty seconded the motion. The motion passed with all those in attendance voting aye.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member Howard: He briefly spoke of a recent positive bacteria water test. It's nothing to worry about, and we are actively retesting and flushing water mains in coordination with the DEQ.

Mayor Hindoién: He talked about recent communications with MT DOT concerning the potential renovation of Main Ave streets and sidewalks. There have been issues with when they plan on the renovations due to the need to also replace water lines on Main Ave. The City would like to avoid having to shut down Main Ave two different summers; once to replace water lines, and again to repave the street. There is potential to look at upgrades to streets and sidewalks and lighting before they come through for final renovation. He will keep us informed if any projects come to fruition. Another issue we are looking at is the overpopulation of deer in the city limits and surrounding areas.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Anne Carlson briefly spoke of ARC Solutions. ARC is an interdisciplinary partnership working to facilitate new thinking, new methods, new materials and new solutions for wildlife crossing structures. Their goal is to ensure safe passage for both humans and animals on and across our

roads. Perhaps we could find solutions to reduce the number of animals that cross the highways surrounding Choteau. There are possible DOT grants that support this type of development.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:08 pm

Chris Hindoién, Mayor

Tom Frownfelder, Finance Officer