

North Powder City Council Meeting
January 10, 2022
7PM Wolf Creek Grange

Attendance: Mayor John Frieboes, Councilors Mike Morse, Logan McCrae, Joyce Lawyer, Vicki Townsend, Jeff Grende. City Recorder Beth Wendt, Public Works Director Rick Lawyer. Councilor Justin Wright was absent.

Others: Barbara Weeks, Jeff and Wynn Nielsen, Shorty Schwehr, Lindsey Thompson, Dave Rose, Patricia Martin, Maryanne Ritches, and Ralph Riomondo.

Mayor Frieboes called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was said.

Public Comment: Wynn Nielsen thanked those who voted in the Christmas Lighting Contest but she was surprised that there were only 3 votes, which showed that not even all of the City Councilors took part. Vicki didn't think the Council could be a part of the voting. John reminded that this was the first time we opened it to the public for voting.

Jeff Nielsen thanked the City and the Community for helping to keep the streets, sidewalks, and driveways cleared of snow. It is awesome to have that kind of community support.

Barbara Weeks thanked the Public Works department for taking care of the burned out street lights and for helping to clear driveways. Mike Morse added his thanks.

Agenda: Logan moved to accept the agenda. Mike seconded. All were in favor.

Minutes: John asked if there were amendments to the minutes from December 6, 2021 Council meeting and the Work Session on Dec. 14. Mike made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 6th Council meeting. Vicki seconded. Motion carried with 4 in favor. Jeff abstained as he was absent. Logan made a motion to accept the minutes from the December 14th Work Session. Jeff seconded. Motion carried with 3 in favor. Vicki & Mike abstained as they were absent.

Accounts Payable: Beth reviewed new spreadsheets for the accounts payables and extra bills paid in December that weren't on the AP list. Beth pointed out that the credit card bill included \$407.10 for a building permit. The AP also included rent for the Grange Hall and the 1st quarter payment to the Rural Fire Department. The total AP came to \$20,205.36. Joyce made a motion to accept the accounts payables. Mike seconded and all were in favor.

Library: Maggie was absent, so no report.

Public Works Report: Rick reported that they've been spending a lot of time on snow removal. They have been asked to help out at the school where snow was piled in the wrong spot. It was pointed out that when the City abandoned that small section of 4th Street it was with the understanding that the City wouldn't have to do any maintenance, including snow removal. John noted that it isn't actually plowing the street. They have a new person working at the school and snow was piled behind the old gym in such a way that it is in the way of parking and emergency access for a fire lane. The Council agreed to help them move the snow. Joyce was concerned about the City's insurance when it came to clearing driveways. Logan noted that most of that is on the City right-of-way.

Rick noted that DEQ reports are due by the end of the week. They are still working on other information for the new permit and still need to take pictures at the lagoons.

We borrowed the County's bucket truck and got some street lights changed. Rick hopes to use it to take down the Christmas decorations later this week and hopes he can use it to trim a couple of trees.

The burn pile needs to be burned so Rick will try to schedule time for that as soon as possible.

Rick hasn't had time to do much work on the VAC truck. It needs to have some hoses replaced and needs new clamps and filters. He estimated at least \$2000 for parts.

We are still struggling at the Lagoons. We had another e-coli hit last month. Rick was hoping to hold off on going to the river until February, but that may not happen. When we get a hit, we have to do a new test every 5 hours for 24 hours. Ralph Riomondo recommended the City strongly consider getting set-up to do our own testing. He estimated the initial cost of the test equipment to be about \$8000 and would cost about \$14 or \$15 per test. Testing is easy to do and takes about 10 minutes to complete. It would save a lot of time that is spent delivering test samples and it's cheaper than paying someone else to do the tests. Plus we wouldn't have to wait 2 or 3 days to get the results. We could test for e-coli, coliform, ammonia and alkalinity. Logan agreed that we should start looking into it.

Vicki thanked the Public Works Department for all of the hard work and time spent clearing roads.

Ordinance Report: Beth noted that Shawn Wood would be by in the morning to sign the contract and planned to make his rounds on Saturdays for a while.

City Recorder Report: Overages in December came to \$219.40 and \$71.85 was applied in freeze credits. We used 1,119,540 gallons of water.

Copies of the 2020-2021 Audit were provided to the Council for approval. Mike made a motion to approve the audit. Logan seconded. Motion carried with 4 yes. Jeff abstained as he hadn't had a chance to look it over. Logan felt the reason the Audit always goes so well was thanks to Beth and Bingham, Bingham, & Huntington.

Beth has contacted the Baker County Road Department to see if they would have time and be able to do our 5th Street SCA project. They are still working on their schedule for 2022 and have added us to their list. They should be able to let us know by early February if they can do it or not.

The next LOC Small Cities Meeting is Wednesday, January 19th at 11AM. It will be a Zoom meeting but anyone interested in attending still needs to register. The main topic of discussion will be ARPA funding. Vicki asked if she could sit in at City Hall. Beth will check on that. Mike would also like to sit in.

Information regarding SEI filing was handed out. Beth reminded that emails will be sent to Councilors around March 15th and they have until April 15th to complete the filing.

Mayor's Message: John reported that he worked with the Union Co. Road Department to get the use of their bucket truck to take down banners, change street lights and take down Christmas decorations. He also worked out a deal to purchase diesel from them since Sinclair has been out of diesel.

John attended a "meet and greet" with Congressman Bentz and is working on setting up another meeting with Sheriff Bowan. He also spent some time visiting with Commissioner Donna Beverage. They talked about different available funding that is not all tied to COVID. The County would like to help local businesses. There is some Economic Development money but most of it requires matching funds. Anyone interested should contact Donna.

John met with Haley Patterson, the new Ag Teacher, about the possibility of doing flower baskets for North Powder but it probably won't happen this year. We will need to have some brackets made for the street light poles. The shop class might do that. We will have to work out some type of watering system. It is still in the development stages. Along with that, John thought we could add a pipe to use for hanging banners for different occasions.

The 2nd Street street lights are metal halide and they go out frequently. John thought with his electrical license he could by-pass the ballasts and put in LED lights. The bulbs would be cheaper, brighter, and last longer. John is looking into what it would take to change the lights.

John asked for Council permission to take out the old Fire Department sign and have a new sign done for City Hall. He suggested we ask if the middle school and high school would like to have a contest to design a new sign and make suggestions of what it should be made of. John offered to personally provide a cash prize for the winning design. The sign should say City Hall and Library. The Council was okay with the idea.

John has been checking into the possibility of having a shelter put up near the “Welcome” sign at the Café for Community Connections bus services between La Grande and Baker. We need to determine who owns the property and what is available. John asked for permission to pursue further discussions with Community Connections and the Planning Department to know if it is possible. Joyce made a motion to give permission to check it out. Mike seconded. All were in favor. Vicki asked if there was something that could be done to clean up the corner lot across from the Post Office. John noted that it was private property. Dave Rose interjected that he bought the property and wanted to offer overnight camping for tents and RVs. John suggested he go to City Hall and talk to Beth. Beth noted there is an overlay zone so it would have to be checked out.

New Business-

Ralph Riomondo: Ralph remarked that there are major fines for going over the limits on e-coli at the lagoons. The penalties are generally a minimum of \$1800 to \$2300 and the new DEQ is getting harsher and stricter about violations. There is very little leeway. He reiterated that a testing system could more than pay for itself in saved fines.

Public Works Assistant: Beth noted that as of the 1st of November we are paying PERS on our Public Works Assistant. Since Galen didn’t come back after his Worker’s Comp Claim, we can offer David Rosingana the position, if the Council wants to. If David continues to work 20 hours per week or more year round, we will keep paying PERS. Beth provided budget information should the Council decide to offer more than 20 hours per week. If we offer 25 hours or more, he would be eligible for health insurance and 30 hours would classify him as full time. We could end up about \$4000 to \$11,000 over budget, but we can do a budget adjustment resolution if we need to. John wondered if there was a way that some of Rick’s time might be paid for with CDBG funds when we start the Wastewater Project construction. It would free up some funds. Beth didn’t think so, but she will check. Ralph strongly recommended offering more hours to the Public Works Assistant. The paperwork alone, between water, sewer, and roads has become astronomical. Beth noted that we need to do something about a PW Assistant since David was only hired as a temporary employee. She suggested offering at least 25 hours at \$15. The added benefits would be a huge increase for start. Logan wondered if it would cover weekends. Rick said weekends would be included as part of the hours. Jeff felt we should talk more at budget time about having a 2nd person at 40 hours and another part-time person. Logan made a motion to offer David Rosingana, full-time position with 30 hours per week at \$15 per hour with full-benefits effective as of January 1, 2022. Mike seconded and all were in favor.

Old Business-

Playground: Beth noted that the playground is essentially done. There are 3 border pieces missing. We finally got verification that they are on order. The additional cost is \$326.70. After we pay for the border pieces, we still have about \$5400 in our playground fund. We need to do 2 educational signs. We have collected \$1000 toward those and another \$1000 has been pledged. That leaves \$4400. Thank yous and pictures have been sent to grant foundations, volunteers and donors. Beth thought we should decide what to do about plaques or recognitions. Joyce thought something like the bronze plaque at the school would be nice. She thought it could be done for about \$1,000 to \$2,000. Logan agreed that it would last a while. Joyce will look into it. Jeff asked if we needed to have the park inspected. Beth thought that would be done in the spring. She wondered if the Council wanted to have some sort of dedication for the park. And do we want to name the park? Mike thought we should name it. Jeff noted that we will need to re-install chips next year. He felt putting gravel in the parking area is a must. Joyce suggested we put a notice in the Newsletter asking for suggestions to name the park.

Beth noted that we received a \$10,000 grant from the Buerkel-Zoellner Foundation to use toward fixing the Library side of the roof on the Fire Station. We have until August 1, 2022 to use the funds. Joyce

suggested using it to pay someone to take the gutter down. John felt we should work on the City Hall portion first. Beth interjected that the grant was for “roofing the library building and other improvements to the building to house the library and city hall” as set forth in the application.

City Hall/Library: Logan reported that we have a Building Permit. We’ve had a few hang-ups in getting started but the windows are specked out and are about 10 to 12 weeks out. We are to the point we can lay the lines on the concrete. Logan thought we could fire up the building committee again to start talking about what the City and Library need and want. The contractor’s contract hasn’t been signed yet, but Logan thought it would be quick and easy to do once we are ready to actually start work. Beth wondered if we should extend the March 1st deadline since it is so late getting started. Logan didn’t think it was necessary at this time. The bid was for 30 “man-days”. Jeff thought we may be the ones holding things up with windows and doors. John noted that we need to have an electrician come in to do some work but we need get the outside lights replaced as soon as possible. The 3 that are there need to be replaced. He thought Arrows Electric might be able to get to it fairly quickly. He estimated about \$1000 depending on the fixtures. Jeff verified that it wouldn’t affect the lighting we eventually do with the overhang. . John added that we are just talking about exchanging light for light. Logan said Jared is talking about starting the end of the month. He was concerned about people talking to Jared and slowing him down. Logan suggested if anyone has a concern, they should talk to him and he will talk to Jared. He suggested we could put that in the newsletter. Vicki verified that the Council approved for John to talk to the electrician.

Beth and Vicki would like to think about adding security cameras at City Hall. Vicki stressed that it would give the Recorder some warning of who and what is coming into City Hall. John agreed that in this day we should pay attention to safety inside and outside of the building. Logan thought that was something to add at the end of the project. John agreed that it would be a deterrent and we should look into.

ARPA Funds/Project List: Beth made a preliminary list of projects that have been discussed as possibilities that we could apply to the County for funding assistance. We need to submit our requests to the County before February 12th. Joyce wondered if we could apply for funding for the Wastewater testing that Ralph mentioned earlier. John suggested having a work session to finalize a list and prioritize the projects. The projects can be things that aren’t necessarily covered by ARPA funding. Some might require matching funds and some may not. Beth noted that a Special Meeting has been scheduled for Monday, January 24th a 6PM to discuss the Wastewater Project and what can or can’t be covered by the grant. We have some things that have come up since we submitted the Plan so we don’t know what additional things can be covered. We also have our own ARPA funds that we can use for water and sewer infrastructure. Logan asked if we could add this discussion to the agenda for January 24th. If we don’t have time to do it, we could extend it to January 25th. He would like to have the meetings at the fire station. Beth will post the meeting on the 24th for the Wastewater Project to be followed by a discussion to prioritize the project list as time allows and if we run out of time, it will be extended to January 25th at 6PM, at the fire station.

Wastewater Project: There was nothing more at this time.

Lindsey Thompson asked for time to talk about a Farmers Market. She asked for permission to use the park by the gazebo and possibly the youth park for vendors. They hope to start in June and run thru November. The planned schedule is for Thursdays from 3PM to 6PM. However, that is subject to change. They would like to put out cones on 3rd Street between City Hall and the fire station to let people know that there are pedestrians in the area. They will get their own event liability insurance thru the North Powder Community Partners. She provided information about the health and community benefits for having a Farmers Market. So far she has about 20 interested vendors. It will be once a week and is non-profit. Any funds received would go toward banners for advertisement. Lindsey

reiterated that she just wanted to get permission from the Council. Mike thought it was a great idea. Joyce agreed. There were no objections. Lindsey will keep the Council up to date.

Council Comments:

Vicki thanked everyone for their help with the Christmas lighting and parade. She was proud of everybody that participated. We had a very good turnout.

Meeting adjourned at 9:04PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Beth Wendt
City Recorder