

North Powder City Council Meeting
December 4, 2023
7PM City Hall

Attendance: Mayor John Frieboes, City Councilors Vicki Townsend, Logan McCrae, Jeff Nielsen, Lindsey Thompson and Don McClure. Justin Wright was absent. Beth Wendt City Recorder, Rick Lawyer Public Works, Lisa Aichele Librarian.

Others: Barbara Weeks, Wynn Nielsen, Nina McClure, Dave Hoene, David Schwehr.

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

Public Comment: Public comment rules were reviewed. There was no public comment.

Agenda: Beth asked to have the 2022-2023 audit added to new business. Logan made a motion to accept the agenda with the addition of the audit under new business. Vicki seconded. All were in favor.

Minutes: Logan moved to accept the minutes from the November 6th Public Hearing and regular meeting. Jeff seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Accounts Payables: Beth reviewed changes and additions to the AP spreadsheet. There questions about the January health insurance premiums and the amount owed to USA BlueBook. The current total was \$15,605.95. The total Wastewater Grant bills came to \$18,490.31. Logan move to pay the bills. Lindsey seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Library Report: Lisa is still working on cleaning and re-organizing the Library. She started a fund raiser selling "Reading Rag Rugs". The rugs are available at CJ's and the Library. Lisa is also handing out handmade Christmas ornaments to everyone who comes into the Library during the month of December. The theme for the 2024 summer reading program is "Read, renew, and repeat". Lisa will be doing a training on the Sage Program on Wednesday and Thursday. Lisa encouraged everyone to come in to the Library to see the changes.

Huckleberry Festival: Lindsey didn't have anything to report but reminded of the anticipated change of days to Friday and Saturday, instead of Saturday and Sunday, because of the Shriner's game.

Public Works: Rick noted there has been a lot of surface water at the lagoon. It has been raising about an inch per day in the ponds and are starting to see some surface water in places where we don't usually see it until February or March.

Rick has a meeting on Tuesday with Anderson Perry and Saunders to go over a "pick list" for the project. They had to de-water in the new pond in order to do some grouting.

We've been getting a lot of un-natural material coming into the lagoons. Things like rags, toys, wipes, grease, needles, etc. Maybe we can try putting something in the newsletter again to educate people. The new snow plow blade should be here either Dec. 7th or 14th.

The city is still going through about 50,000 gallons of water per day. Some of the codes at the well have been fixed and the modem has been reset. Some tubes in the pumps still need to be changed.

Vicky Day's sewer line is done.

Dave wondered about the fine from DEQ. Beth explained that it was from an accumulation of things pertaining to the non-compliance issues at the lagoons. Some of the fines were because we haven't been able to meet some of the limits set in our MAO. Others came from incorrect filings over a number of years. We have already paid half of the fine and are working toward mitigating for the other half. Dave wondered if the engineer had something to do with the fines. Beth didn't think so. We haven't been able to meet limits on a number of things for several years. Hopefully, between the current project and sludge removal, it will take care of the problems. Our new permits have a lot of new regulations as well as some of the old ones that may continue to be hard to meet.

Recorder Report: Water overages in November came to \$235.42. We used 1,171,441 gallons of water. The newest population estimate, as of July 1, 2023 puts North Powder at 498.

At the request of the Mayor, Beth noted that the newest Federal mileage rates are 62.5 cents per mile, as of July 1, 2022. Logan made a motion increase the mileage rate and to make it a policy to use the current Federal rate as stated in the future. Don seconded. All were in favor.

Mayor's Message: Dave Hoene and Alan Brown helped John spread rock at the entrance to town near the Cafe. They didn't get it all done because they ran out of road fabric. There's still some rock left.

John and Ruth bought new lights for the Christmas wreaths and John put them and the candy canes up on the light poles. One of the poles needs a new GFI which John will replace as soon as we get one.

John made arrangements with the City of La Grande to install the new snow plow blade as soon as we get it.

John worked with Rural Fire Department to clean up some of the brush issues. The corners of 4th and B, and 5th and A have been cleaned up. They made a list of other places that need attention. There is a large elm tree at 2nd and B that hangs over into the street. It is on City property and John would like permission to have it taken out so that the street can be straightened and graveled from the sidewalk to the alley. Don made a motion to pursue getting the tree removed. Logan seconded. All were in favor.

Dave noted that somebody removed some of the brush around the sign at the entrance to North Powder. John contacted OTEC to have some street lights fixed. OTEC replaced them with LED lights. Barbara commented that there is a light out at 1st & D.

Ordinance Report: Beth contacted CIS about having a volunteer do ordinance enforcement. The insurance company was mainly concerned about whether or not the volunteer had any kind of training in law enforcement. Dave did not. John noted that Dave is going to be gone for a while and we could address that when he gets back. Jeff thought he should be paid and not work for free. Dave remarked that he didn't want to be adversarial and would like to approach each situation with a solution. He would like to sit down with the Council to get some direction and guidance. John suggested a work session when Dave gets back.

New Business-

2022-2023 Audit: We received the draft audit along with the Management Discussion and Analysis (MD&A). The Council is responsible for the MD&A. Beth will review it with Jason but each Councilor should read it and the audit. The Council will need to approve the audit. It needs to be filed with the State by the end of December.

Old Business:

Wastewater Update: Anderson Perry has been working with Dan Van Thiel to create a Mutual Agreement of Understanding between the City and Myron Miles for dredging the lagoons. They hope to have it done within the week.

Anderson Perry has submitted a request for an amendment, #4, to our CDBG agreement to compensate for engineering services to complete the Bio Solids Management Plan required by DEQ. They estimate the cost to be about \$20,000. There is money available in the grant to pay that. The Council also needs to make a decision about how to handle dredging. Our options include total removal of solids or partial removal now with a plan to remove remaining solids within 10 years. If we do a partial removal, we should be able to apply for another block grant in another 6 years or so. If do complete removal, we will have to take out another loan which will require sewer rates to be raised to the "affordability rate" of \$61.30 per month by the end of September 2024. Rick felt if both ponds were not totally cleaned now, it would just dump sludge into the new pond. Jeff agreed as there was no way to isolate things. He thought there was a design flaw. John wanted to talk to Brandon. Rick reiterated that the contractor did what was on the design. In addition to the problem with the cla valve, the fountains don't work. Beth reiterated that it is up to the Council to decide whether the Bio Solids Management Plan should include full or partial removal of the

solids. The plan is due by March 1st and the solids removal has to be done by September 2024. We have approximately \$570,000 already committed between remaining grant funds, ARPA money, and a \$390,000 already approved loan. The estimate for the entire project is \$850,000. Lindsey felt we should evaluate adjusting rates because it will continue to affect future plans. Logan remarked that we could remove all of the sludge now but the other option would buy some time to find more funds and finish the sludge removal. Beth added that Business Oregon is willing to give the City an additional loan but it means upping sewer rates to \$61.30 per month by the end of the project. John noted that the block grant we have has been in the works for quite a while. We can't get private grants for this project. Logan wondered if the Library grant was keeping us from being able to apply for another CDBG grant now. Beth said it has to do with timing. CDBG projects are supposed to be intended to last at least 10 to 20 years. Don thought we would just be buying problems if we don't do it all now. John asked for a motion on amendment #4 to write up the Bio Solids Management plan. Logan didn't think we had time to shop around to find another engineering firm to write the plan before March 1st. He made a motion to accept amendment #4 for engineering services. Vicki seconded. Motion carried with 4 in favor. Jeff abstained.

Vicki would like to find out more about the solids removal. John noted that the DEQ has given us until September to get it done. It is a matter of do we do all or partial removal now. If we do partial the sewer rates can essentially stay the same. If we remove all of the solids now, we have to increase rates now. If we do partial removal, it could potentially cost more to finish the job. Logan noted that Anderson Perry has provided an estimate of \$850,000 for complete removal but prices change with time. He would hate to see us painted into a corner if bids come in over \$850,000. Our intent could be to remove all of the solids, but we may have to cut back to what we can afford. Jeff added that Myron Miles is prepared to take the solids now. If we have to truck them somewhere else, it will cost more. Logan remarked that this has been coming for a long time. Beth added that the new pond was designed to take the effluent water because DEQ said we can't dump to the river anymore. Our options included building an additional holding pond and additional irrigation, or the evaporation pond. We didn't have anywhere to build another holding pond and setting up additional irrigation was too costly. Logan made a motion to have Anderson Perry create a Bio Solids Management Plan with the intent to remove all solids from both ponds with the disclaimer that it will cost about \$800,000. Beth interjected that means an additional loan. Logan added to his motion that it would bring sewer rates to \$61.30. Don seconded. All were in favor.

Anderson Perry is working on the application for the reduced fines. It is due around Dec. 22.

The final change order should be coming in from The Saunders Company. It should reduce the contract price by about \$169,000. It is mainly for quantities of supplies that were not used. Logan moved to allow the Mayor to use his judgement and sign off on the Change Order when we get it. Vicki seconded. All were in favor.

We have a meeting at 8AM on Tuesday with Anderson Perry and Saunders for a start-up and walk thru of the wastewater project.

Electronic Speed Sign: There are not a lot of trailer mounted speed signs available. The two that Beth found were solar powered and range in price from \$7500 to \$12,000. Don will continue to do more research to see if we can find a used sign.

City Hall/Library Update: We haven't heard anything about the Library grant yet. Should be anytime. We are waiting on doors and windows for the meeting room. John asked Beth to check to see if our heating system would qualify for Energy Trust.

Council Comments: Vicki reported that everything is moving along well for the Christmas Parade and Tree Lighting on Sunday, Dec. 10th. Line up for the parade will be at 4:45PM and the parade starts at 5PM. Vicky Day is making chili for the Chili Feed.

John noted the first Monday in January is New Year's Day. It was decided that the next meeting will be Monday, January 8th.

Logan thought the messaging with the Wastewater Project was a key issue. Most people are aware that we have issues that didn't happen overnight and we are still trying to find cost effective ways of treating them for the long term. We should get the message out that people should expect an increase in sewer rates. If they have questions regarding the Wastewater Project, they should bring them to the City Council.

Meeting adjourned at 8:14PM

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Beth Wendt
City Recorder