

North Powder City Council Meeting
January 8, 2024
City Hall 7PM

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

Others: Midge Clause, Nina McClure, Wynn Nielsen, Nanci Klein, Shorty Schwehr, Barbara Weeks, Mike Schoeningh, Mike Wisdom, and Nick Ducote (on phone for part of meeting).

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

Public Comments: Barbara Weeks had an issue with dogs at the Powder Club building that are allowed to run free and circle when she takes her dog for a walk. They also come into the RV Park and won't leave. She wondered what citizens could do to protect themselves and their own animals. John has talked to Sheriff Bowen about the issue. The Sheriff is going to try to attend the next Council meeting to address the issue. John added that we will address the problem more under new business.

Agenda: Lindsey made a motion to accept the agenda. Jeff seconded. All were in favor.

Minutes: Logan made a motion to accept the minutes from December 4th. Don seconded. Motion carried with 4 in favor. Justin abstained as he was absent.

Accounts Payables: Beth reviewed the accounts payables. \$1338.83 was already paid to SAIF and Oregon Secretary of State as they were due by December 31st, and \$2380.54 was paid to CIS and due Jan. 10th. Other December bills came to \$35,230.75. Beth pointed out some of the larger payments such as \$5356 to the Rural Fire Department, \$6900 to Solutions CPAs and \$8735.43 to Miller's. Wastewater grant bills came to \$24,581.97. Justin made a motion to pay the bills. Jeff seconded and all were in favor.

Library Report: Mike Schoeningh gave the Library report. The board voted to use some of the Union County tax money to purchase some new books. There is approximately \$9000 in that fund. Board member Terri Brown is working on a short biography of the library, including services offered, to be included on the library's page on the City's website. They would like to add a link to the library's Facebook page which has almost 200 followers. They want to post things like library activities and when new books become available to try to increase community awareness and participation. The board is working on developing policies which include, among other things, how to handle controversial material.

Barbara Weeks has resigned from the Library Board so there is an opening on the board. Mike thanked her for her dedication and contributions to the library.

Huckleberry Report: Nothing at this time.

Public Works: Rick has been taking pictures for Saunders Company of the run off at the lagoon. The ponds are filling up quickly. Anderson Perry took some sludge samples. The new snow plow blade has been mounted on the "new" dump truck. Rick still needs to do a bit of work on the truck but the new blade works well. They will work on snow removal as much as possible. John reminded that overtime needs to be approved and if they need extra help with snow removal, they should call him.

Recorder Report: Beth asked if the Council had looked over the audit report and if so, we need a motion to approve it. Logan made a motion to approve the audit for 2023. Don seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Water overages in December came to \$276.07 and \$31.22 was issued for freeze credits. We used 1,080,806 gallons of water.

Beth read a letter from Councilor Vicki Townsend asking for a leave of absence from council meetings in January and February in order to deal with some medical issues. She will still be available to support Beth, sign checks, and keep up on key issues. She just can't guarantee she can make meetings. Don made a motion to approve a leave of absence. Justin seconded. All were in favor.

Beth read a letter from Rosemary (Free) Wickham asking for a discount on her sewer bill at 200 3rd Street as nobody is living in the house so the sewer has very little use. Since this is the only house in town that is not attached to the city water system, it is impossible to administer how much use there actually is. There are a few other places in town where nobody lives, but they keep the water and sewer active year round and pay full price for services. We don't have a snowbird policy and if water is deactivated for a period of time, they pay the full amount of the activation fee to reactivate the services. The consensus of the council was to say no as they felt it could "open a can of worms".

Beth noted that Suite Blue, the old Hudleson building, is having an Open House on January 18th from 4:30PM to 6:30PM. It is open to the community and they will have a door prize drawing and offer special deals to locals.

Mayor's Message: John reiterated that he has been talking with the Sheriff about dogs and different things.

He felt the Tree Lighting & Parade were really nice and there was a good turnout. It was a great thing to have for the community.

John worked with the City of La Grande Public Works to get the snow plow blade mounted. We haven't received a bill yet, but they had to do some modifications because they don't make a mount that fits the particular model truck.

OTEC was contacted about more street lights.

John met with Myron Miles to get the Mutual Agreement signed for testing for dredging the lagoons. John has talked to Molly Smith about a couple of high school seniors who need some community service work for senior projects and possibly having them help out at the library. They are still working on the details. Barbara interjected that the Grange could use some help, too.

Old Business:

Wastewater Project: (Beth called Nick Ducote) The Saunders Company has asked for permission to leave the straw wattles around the new pond until the vegetation is established. It is part of the 1200 C Permit requirements.

Anderson Perry would like to meet on Wednesday, January 10th at 8AM to do a final walk-through of the project.

Beth & Nick were still trying to find a way to fund the dredge without having to take out an additional loan. Jeff interjected that Joyce has been talking to Sarah with NEOEDD about grants to help off-set an additional loan. John noted that a lot of those smaller grants have fall application dates and that is too late. Nick added that most of the private grants are for community projects, not maintenance, but he will look in to some of them. He was not a fan of a \$13 increase. Anderson Perry was going to see if DEQ would allow us to do a partial dredge with the money we have. If they do, we should be able to apply for another block grant in about 5 years. Nick thought CDBG was the only large grant source for water and sewer infrastructure. We are going to be short about \$400K to \$600k for the dredge. He felt the odds were fairly good that we could get another block grant if we combine collection system improvements that we weren't able to do this time, with the dredge. The motion made at the last meeting was to remove solids from both ponds, cap the project at \$800,000 and raise rates to \$61.00. Beth noted that we don't have \$800,000. We still have a little bit of time if we are going to apply for an

additional loan/grant. Justin wanted to look for more grants. Beth suggested doing a partial dredge now with the funds we have available and applying for another CDBG grant in 5 years. Even if we can't ground apply the sludge in 5 years, we should be able to get enough grant funds to cover the extra cost of taking it to a land fill. John agreed there were concerns both ways. He leaned toward doing what we can now and applying for another grant in 5 years. Rick noted that the numbers are improving, but he didn't think it was fast enough. Jeff added that the cla-valves were unserviceable and the sprinkler system doesn't work. Logan reiterated that last month we made a plan to dredge the entire lagoon with the money that we have. Don wondered if we could raise rates and if we can get more money, we could void the rate increase. Beth noted that if we take out an additional loan, part of the requirements of the loan say that we have to raise rates by the end of the project, which is supposed to be September 2024. We could use part of the City's savings instead of getting an additional loan. Nick added that at least part of the added loan would be grant, but we still have to increase rates. Jeff felt the longer we wait, the more it will cost. We should stick with the plan to dredge everything now. Don agreed. The rest of the council concurred.

Library: John noted that the City has been awarded a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for \$1.2 million to add-on to the City Hall building for a new library. Nick commented that we have the CDBG contract already. It secures the money for the grant. We also need to approve a contract with Nick for grant administration. The City attorney has reviewed both contracts. Beth noted the two minor changes that the attorney suggested. Nick thought we could be ready to start advertising for a Request for Proposal to hire an architect by March. The architect will prepare a design and construction plans and manage construction of the project. If all goes well, we should have a new library in about 3 years. Logan made a motion to approve the contracts for Ducote Consulting and for the CDBG grant. Don seconded. All were in favor. Vicki, Don and Justin were to appointed to be signers for the disbursement requests.

Old City Hall Building: Mike Wisdom reported that the Historical Foundation has finally acquired funding to get an inspection done on the old City Hall building. It is scheduled for January 19th, weather permitting. John would like to be present during the inspection but will be out of town on the 19th. Mike added that Logan Jones will do the inspection. He has done work for the City in the past. John reiterated that he would like to be there and wondered if they could schedule a different date. Jeff noted that he would be there. Mike clarified that it is an inspection and not an appraisal or feasibility report. The City will get a copy of the report. The Historical Foundation has discussed several options for the building but they want to wait for the inspection report before moving on. Their ultimate goal would be to turn it into a Fire Museum. Jeff interjected that there are grants available to restore the old City fire truck. Logan added that the City still needs the building for a library for the next 3 years or so.

Meeting Room Update: John reported that Jered is hoping to get started on the doors and windows later in the week.

Electronic Speed Sign: Don reported that when he was looking for information on a used trailer mounted radar speed sign, he came across one in Reno for \$1200. He immediately took a chance and purchased the sign and went to Reno to get in. On the trip home, he blew 2 tires. The sign works perfectly. He asked if the Council would be willing to pay for the tires and 2 tanks of gas as well as the \$1200 for the sign for a total of \$1776.00. It is a solar powered sign and is very easy to set up. A new one would cost about \$12,000. John noted that normally we would require the council to approve the purchase in advance, but under the circumstances.... Don added that he had 5 keys made and would donate the hitch. Logan felt it was a reasonable cost and it is a pro-active step. He made a motion to reimburse Don for the sign, tires, and gas for a total of \$1776.00. Jeff seconded. Motion carried with 4 in favor. Don abstained. Don will take care of the placement of the sign. John will notify the Sheriff.

New Business:

Sidewalks: Beth noted that people have been asking about removing and replacing sidewalks. If they take one out, do they have to replace it? City ordinance states that the property owner is responsible for adjacent sidewalks and if one is removed it has to be replaced according to City requirements. Don felt that the city should consider them on a case by case basis. Logan agreed. He also suggested that the City might be able to assist with the cost. Beth noted that we still have \$18,000 from Union County that is dedicated to pedestrian and bicycle paths. We could set up guidelines for contributing “X” amount or “X” percentage toward projects until the money is gone. Jeff thought there were a lot of things to consider, such as is it an existing sidewalk, parts of an ancient sidewalk that is only partially there, etc. It was decided that anyone wishing to replace or remove a sidewalk, needs to present the council with a plan and cost estimates.

Dogs: Beth commented that City Hall has received 5 reports of dog bites in the last few months, as well as several reports of people being cornered or surrounded by dogs. Suggested options for dog control were things such as outlawing dogs in city limits, limiting people to only one dog, or setting a one bite policy. John suggested waiting until we can talk to the Sheriff. In the meantime, we can flood Animal Control with complaints of issues and concerns. As citizens, John thought everyone has a right to defend themselves but it has to be on public property. Logan reminded to keep in mind that there may be consequences. The Sheriff’s Department can’t be here all day, every day and they can’t do it all themselves. Beth will put a reminder in the newsletter, again, and let people know that the council is going to pursue any and all options to identify and remove dogs that bite or run at large.

Council Comments: None

Meeting adjourned at 8: 28PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Attest:

Beth Wendt
City Recorder