

APPROVED MINUTES

The City Council held Council Meeting #1639 on Monday, October 16, 2023, in the Council Chambers at City Hall.

Call to Order:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Peggy Williams.

The Pledge of Allegiance was completed, prayer by Jeff O'Connell, roll call commenced. Present were Mayor Williams, Councilors Gary Beach, Melissa Berke, Zach McNew, Kristin Smith, Hugh Taylor, Clerk-Treasurer Leann Monigold, and (via Zoom) Brian Zimmerman, City Attorney Dean Chisholm.

Mayor Williams welcomed all those present.

Approve City Council minutes for meeting #1638 dated October 2, 2023:

Councilor McNew **MADE A MOTION** to approve City Council minutes for meeting #1638 dated October 2, 2023, Councilor Beach **SECONDED**.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, and Smith voted **FOR**. Council Taylor abstained.

MOTION PASSED.

Announcements:

Mayor Williams announced the Surplus Auction bids are due Tuesday, October 17th at close of business day and will be opened on Wednesday, October 18th.

Committee Reports:

Administrator: Administrator Sikes, Building Report for September, one roof and one deck permit sold. Giving a total of six roofs, one building, one major remodel, one deck, and one commercial shed permits sold so far this year totaling \$1400.

The Annual League of Cities and Towns met from the 11th to the 13th of October in Helena. At the meeting, the city managers and administrators created a new professional association designed to create an assistance and information sharing network, as most of the issues across the state are the same for our members. It will also allow members of the association to travel to other cities in case of emergencies to "hold down the fort" until more permanent solutions can be reached. Mr. Sikes stated he volunteered and was elected to be the initial Treasurer for the association to help get it up and running.

A few of the issues discussed:

1. Not creating or eliminating urban blight by maintaining building standards in new developments.
2. Dealing with the new laws concerning housing requirements in planning.

3. Creating a Cost Recovery Model for fees within the city that would keep up with inflation.
4. New standards for drug testing with the legalization of marijuana.
5. How to lease out more city assets, especially land, to generate revenue for the city.
6. How to mitigate excessive vandalism on city property.
7. How to deal with aging infrastructure and plans on how to find the revenue to deal with the needs.

Mentorship, especially onboarding new employees, including elected officials, and developing existing employees, was also a focus throughout the week. The importance of each member understanding how municipal careers vary from other types of employment should be emphasized because of the differing relationships between elected officials, administrators, department heads, leads, and team members. This means everyone must know what their individual duties, or "scope of authority" are, to lessen confusion and streamline processes.

Mr. Sikes feels the training sessions were worthwhile, with the League bringing in people to discuss safety, grants, grant administration, and housing and revenue issues.

The Executive Forum will be held in Sydney in March, and the next League Conference will be held next October in West Yellowstone.

Police: Mayor Williams clarified though the City has four officers currently, only Chief Ercanbrack and Sgt. Buckner are on the street. Two officers are either at the academy or in field officer training. Officer Luthey is in field training with the County until early December and Officer Thomas will be back from the academy at the end of November and still has modular field training to do.

Ordinances: Councilor Smith announced a meeting will be held Thursday, October 19th at noon to request a minor change to one of the City's traffic ordinances at the request of Chief Ercanbrack.

Lights/Streets/Sidewalks: Councilor Beach announce a meeting will be planned in the next few weeks to discuss a request in a school zone.

Building: Councilor Beach announced a meeting will be planned to review the lease for Pure North.

Water/Sewer: Councilor Beach announced a meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 17th at noon.

Zoning: Councilor Smith announced the Zoning Commission will meet Monday, October 23rd to continue with the Residential District changes and fine-tune them.

Finance: Mayor Williams announced a Budget Committee meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, October 26th at noon.

Clerk/Treasurer Monigold announced information has been being gathered for the auditor's office and a meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, October 24th to finalize the (FY) fiscal year 23 closeout and will allow time to get the information needed to submit the City's Annual Financial Report by the December 31st deadline. In spring they will request another needs list to begin finalizing the audit for FY23.

Ms. Monigold stated the Mayor, Mr. Sikes, and herself had attended the League Conference and the educational seminars. One that was very interesting addressed Cyber Security. Cyber Crime is on the rise with municipalities. A lot of that has to do with a high turnover and mostly comes from emails requesting funds, sending fake invoices, and links containing malware. The City does carry cyber liability insurance, but it is important to make sure the staff is educated about the risks, and to make sure antivirus and firewalls are up to date. So, will be checking computers to update software, educating staff on suspicious emails to look out for, and backing up computers to external hard drives on a regular basis.

Wildlife: Councilor Taylor reported a draft plan for Turkey Management Action Plan was sent to Fish and Game about a month ago, an edited version was received back with changes they would like to see. A meeting will be scheduled to meet with the local biologist, state biologist, and game warden to address those changes to present to Council and then to Fish and Game Commission.

Fire: Councilor Zimmerman (via Zoom) announced for September fire calls, six for City, six for Rural, and one out of district totaling 86 calls for the year. Pump tests have been completed for all apparatus, all trucks passed the test. Hydraulic work was needed for the water truck, Montana Machine was able to fix the issue and the truck has been put back in service.

Water/Sewer: Councilor Zimmerman (via Zoom) announced a meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 17th at noon to go over commercial rates and hookup fees and what is needed to look for in the future with new infrastructure.

Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items:

Bruce Weatherby, 1006 W. 9th St., wanted to recognize Councilor Beach for the excellent job in the steps taken for handicap parking around the city and say thank you.

John Bebee, 704 E 9th St., commented on the Zoning regulations in discussions, living in his RV on his property while fixing his house, requests Council review the Ordinance to extend the time one can live in an RV on personal property while the house is under renovation and take into consideration the lack of affordable housing available for others that may need this to live in this situation within city limits.

Old Business: None.

New Business:

Approve LOR Grant – Streets Radios:

Tabetha Viergutz, Libby Community Officer for LOR Foundation, explained who LOR is and provides funding to local projects. Ms. Viergutz described the grant request by Streets Supervisor Justin Williams for radios inside the department equipment, 10 Icon VHF mobile mounted radios with accessories for each unit, this will provide safety for the crew and public they encounter. Total cost is \$4500 and was approved by LOR on October 6th, requesting Council’s approval to sign the contract with terms therein, a term date of January 2nd is included to have all radios installed and tested. The title of the grant is “Clear Communication for Clear Roadways” a transportation grant.

Councilor Smith inquired if the radios would be purchased and installed prior to the deadline. Ms. Viergutz stated the local person who has volunteered to install the radios has assured the timeline is sufficient.

Councilor Smith **MADE A MOTION** to accept the grant “Clear Communication for Clear Roadways” from LOR, Councilor Berke **SECONDED**.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, Smith, and Taylor voted **FOR**.

MOTION PASSED.

Approve LOR Grant – Pocket Park Improvements:

Tabetha Viergutz explained LOR’s funding for local projects. This project was originally started last year by Heather Robinson and her students at the Central School who will be providing the art. Additional funds are needed to finish the project and include moving an A/C unit, pouring a cement pad where the wings built by Todd Berget and provided by Rotary will be mounted, and painting supplies. LOR grant funding will be \$7320 if approved by Council with a term date of January 1st.

Councilor Smith **MADE A MOTION** to approve enhancing downtown Libby economy with art installation grant provided by LOR Foundation, Councilor Berke **SECONDED**.

Councilor Beach inquired about moving the A/C from the ground to the roof if anyone has looked at the long term such as maintenance and leaks.

Councilor McNew stated he spoke with electrician Ron Miller and the Fire Chief and both agreed there would be no issues with the move.

Councilor Beach asked if there would be an additional charge to have the A/C serviced if it was moved to the roof. Mayor Williams stated that could be inquired into.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, Smith, and Taylor voted **FOR**.

MOTION PASSED.

Approve MT. Department of Labor & Industry, Banner Proposal:

Janelle Kimberlin with Department of Labor and Industry Engagement Team. Ms. Kimberlin described the roles and responsibilities of the Engagement Team and are requesting, with collaboration from FVCC, Kalispell and Lincoln County campus to bring awareness to the community of the manufacturing opportunities already in Kalispell and Lincoln County. The group is seeking approval of a marketing campaign using existing light poles to place banners around Libby to raise awareness. With approval they will be working with LOR for grant funding to work with the banners and will work with Council, other groups, and local manufacturer creating those banners. It was explained the banners will not have advertising names but will have pictures of local manufacturing along with other industries and will use local photography and local printing for the banners. Also, will be working with FVCC for short term certificate trainings like introductory to welding and CNA classes.

Mayor Williams explained the current brackets on the light poles are used for the Christmas wreaths and go up about around Thanksgiving and come down mid-January. Graduation banners are also hung but was unsure of the dates.

Councilor Smith stated that was a very creative way to use the poles and has wanted to see banners up for a long time. Inquiring if there were more details and if there was a time frame, they planned how long the banners would be in place. Ms. Kimberlin explained more details and stated no time frame is set yet and will depend on the response.

Councilor Zimmerman (via Zoom) wanted to applaud them for this idea and stated in agreement with Council Smith it would really brighten up the downtown.

Councilor Smith **MADE A MOTION** to conditionally approve the use of the light poles pending grant funding and a more thorough proposal before they go up, Councilor Berke **SECONDED**.

Mayor William stated they may want to look at cost of the brackets, they may need repair.

Justin Williams, Florence Rd., stated it was a great idea and wanted to inform for the placement and removal, equipment is limited to Montana Sky and Flathead Electric and will need to work with them for scheduling.

Bruce Weatherby, 1006 W. 9th on behalf of Sherpa Trailers, volunteered to help with any fabrication needs, locally.

John Bebee, 704 E 9th St., expressed his support and suggested looking into legislation support.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, Smith, and Taylor voted **FOR**.

MOTION PASSED.

Approve Resolution #2023, Amendment of the Design and Construction Standards:

Mayor Williams explained the resolution and read the introduction of Resolution #2023.

Councilor Beach **MADE A MOTION** to approve Resolution #2023, Councilor Berke **SECONDED**.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, Smith, and Taylor voted **FOR**.

MOTION PASSED.

Discussion on names for Mineral Avenue Pocket Park:

Mayor Williams explained there have been suggestions in the past, one was to name the park after Ferdinand Bochman who is the only police officer ever killed in the line of duty in Libby. A call was received from someone with a proposal to have a plaque or memorial in the park. April 2024 would be the 100th year anniversary of that incident. A letter was received from Jennifer Nelson and asked Council for any ideas on a name. Councilor Taylor suggested Tom Wood due to having over 50 years of service in the community, Councilor Smith suggested Peace Officer Park, Councilor McNew suggested a plaque in memory of Todd Berget in the concrete below the wings he built, Councilor Berke agreed with Peace officer and suggested plaques as well, Councilor Beach suggested commemorating Tom Wood at Fireman's Park and agreed with the name of the fallen officer for the park, Councilor Zimmerman (via Zoom) agreed for Tom Wood's years of service could definitely have something at Fireman's Park and agreed the new name should go along with law enforcement.

Mayor Williams read Jennifer Nelson's letter suggesting Peace Park as the name, representing peace officers and the peace pole located in the park.

John Bebee, 704 E 9th St., suggested having the school kids name the park.

Bruce Weatherby, speaking as a member of Rotary who has done a lot for the community suggested Rotary Peace Park or Rotary Community Park.

Mayor Williams recommended the community provide ideas to get as many as possible and discuss over the new couple of meetings to come up with a name.

Councilor Smith inquired if the public would be choosing from the top 3 names or new suggestions, Mayor Williams suggested giving everyone a chance to provide names and then the top names and unique names could be discussed at the next meeting. Deadline to receive those names would be October 31st.

Approve all claims received to date:

Councilor Smith **MADE A MOTION** to approve all claims received to date, Councilor Berke **SECONDED**.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, Smith, and Taylor voted **FOR**.

MOTION PASSED.

General Comments from the Council:

Councilor Smith commented the idea of drawing attention to Libby's manufactures, having a lot of welders out there and we have a turkey problem suggesting to have a contest to build a turkey fryer and get some recognition.

Councilor Smith commended Mr. Sikes and Ms. Monigold for the level of professionalism the City is at right now, it is at a really nice high and she is very proud of everybody's efforts and appreciates that. Councilor Smith suggested moving auto-trailer 4.028 into Ordinance Committee to start that discussion.

Mayor Williams commented the election is about three weeks away and has talked to the election administrator, mail-in ballots should be out this week and the polling place will be at the Memorial Center open 7am to 8pm. On County level there is a vote for 3% additional tax to stay within Lincoln County on marijuana sales. The way the tax revenue will be divided between the County and cities, it would be a nice piece of revenue for the City.

Mayor Williams stated while in Helena we all attended a grant seminar. Knowing there are many grants out there and has been asking around trying to find someone local that works on grants, but most are already employed as grant writers. A meeting has been scheduled with LOR on the 18th to speak with their grant person. There are a lot of grant services, you pay for the service, and they identify grants. Several have been mentioned so those can be looked into. The City would really like to receive more of the grant monies out there for cities.

Mayor Williams spoke with Steve Lauer at the Fire Department, Mr. Sikes had mentioned at the last meeting about the draught and water levels dropping. It is not felt that the city is in danger but knowing a fire would take a lot of water, Chief Lauer said he would make sure their tenders are ready for smaller fires and will not need to use City water, this will help prevent drawdown. Chief Lauer said they also have alternative water sources so will be looking at those. Mayor Williams assured the water inflows and outflows are holding steady, there are no problems at this point but wanted Council to be aware the water is low.

Adjournment:

Councilor McNew **MADE A MOTION** to Adjourn and Councilor Beach **SECONDED**.

Councilors Beach, Berke, McNew, Smith, Taylor, and voted **FOR**.

MOTION PASSED.

Mayor Williams adjourned the meeting at 7:52 PM.

Mayor Peggy Williams

Attest: _____

Clerk/Treasurer Leann Monigold