

Minutes of the August 3, 2023 Public Hearing and Bearcreek Council Meeting

The public hearing on the preliminary '23-'24 budget was called to order by Mayor Surwill at 7:30 p.m. All council members were present, as was Rob Surwill, animal control officer; Dean Webb, public works director; and Juliane Lore, Town attorney. Public in attendance was John Coutu; Ruth Moon; Lowell Cutshaw, Interstate Engineering, Skip Boyer; Cynria Allen, DES; and Kim Bader. The mayor asked for written and public comments of which there were none. The clerk did advise, that although it wouldn't be at this time, that at the meeting with the engineers concerning the water projects that have been proposed for the coming year, to obtain federal funding the town would have to meet the targeted water rate per month. This would mean the monthly rate would need to be increased \$29.00 a month per household. There was no further discussion, therefore the public hearing was adjourned.

The regular meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. All persons present at the hearing joined the regular meeting.

Harold moved to accept the minutes, the financial report, and the budget vs. actual report. Betty seconded said motion which passed 4-0.

Claims were presented for payment. It was moved by Paul and seconded by Harold to approve all claims. Motion carried unanimously.

The clerk read a letter from the DNRC/RRGL advising of the awarding of the Emergency Grant on the spring box emergency repairs.

There were no public comments.

The clerk started department head reports by presenting Loni's report for Zoning. There will be a Board of Adjustments public hearing on August 9th at 7:00 p.m. concerning the variance requested by Dave Schneider to place an accessory building on a vacant lot without a primary residence, which needs a variance per the ordinances; and is requesting a variance in the setbacks from the required 15' to 3'. Dean reported that a representative from the Montana Rural Water Association is coming next week to assist in finding the water leak in town. He has been trying to come up with a temporary solution to fix the problem at the spring boxes and an estimate of the costs. He has several contractors who expressed an interest in checking it out and will take them up to see the problem. We have gotten one permit, permission from BLM, but are working on one from the Corp of Engineers. It seems every time he goes up there something else has occurred. He warned it won't be an easy fix. We are presently holding our own with the water capacity since we have asked for water conservation. Rob reported that he had nothing for animal control.

Under council concerns Paul addressed the necessary rate increase that will be needed to obtain grants and loans for the water system.


Under unfinished business (1) Betty moved to approve the Resolution setting the '23-'24 fiscal year budget. Harold seconded the motion which passed 4-0. (2) Cynria Allen, with DES, advised the council that the Town had started a mitigation grant with DES/FEMA since the Robinson Draw Fire and it is ready to approve; but now that we have had the erosion, which was caused due to the fire, the mitigation grant may be amended, and more money will be available and now it is an emergency. There is a meeting on Tuesday, that the Mayor, the clerk, Public Works Director, and Interstate Engineering will be attending with the FEMA representatives, and other agencies so that the Town can take full benefits of the money being offered. There could be money to make the water system sustainable for another 50 years. She mentioned that even though some of the grants have a matching amount from the Town that there are other grants that the town may get to meet those match amounts. Lowell Cutshaw, Interstate Engineering and Cynria discussed a drone flying over the spring box site and then fly the whole water line and into town. This would be valuable to the Town for further use as it shows elevation and numerous other aspects. Lowell provided the town with different grant and loan funding avenues that the engineers find may be quite affordable to the town. He advised the council that Interstate's PER on the Meeteetse Trail project had been given to the clerk and public water director at the meeting the day before

with Interstate Engineering. His associate, Gina, will be at the next council meeting to present the final. The Meeteetse Trail project (burying the water line deeper under the roadway to prevent breakage) should be started in late fall. Interstate is going to provide the Mayor and council with a copy. They are hopefully going to be able to solicit quotes, if they come in at \$80,000.00 or less. If not, we will have to go into the public bidding process, which takes longer. This project is funded by the grant that the County allowed Bearcreek to have. Different avenues of fixing the problem temporarily with the spring boxes came into discussion. The attorney will ask for permission from BLM and Forest Service to see if a waiver could be granted for motorized vehicles so that supplies, etc. may get to our spring boxes. One of the backup plans if, after fixing the spring box erosion, was to drill a well. This brought into play another discussion of location, electricity, etc. Paul commented let's fix the existing problem and find alternative solutions and go big later, which everyone was in agreement with.

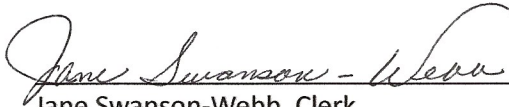
Lowell presented the council with the MCA on Special Improvement Districts created by action of the Town Council concerning the hope of Karl Hanson to have one created with Steve White, Margie Nelson, and himself for the water/sewer extension. Interstate will provide an estimate of assessment for the project. Citizens will have the opportunity to protest and make public comment before this would occur. More information was needed, and Lowell will check it out further. Karl did advise he may visit with the landowners prior to see if they would be interested before spending more time and money.

Under clerks items: (1) The clerk advised the council that she had been soliciting firms for the ordinance codifications. 2 firms out of 3 had replied. One bid was \$8,500.00 and the other was \$4,000.00.

With no further business Harold moved to adjourn the meeting. Paul seconded said motion, which passed unanimously.



Debbie Surwill, Mayor



Jane Swanson-Webb, Clerk