

Minutes of the March 7, 2024 Meeting of the Town of Bearcreek Council

Mayor Surwill called the Bearcreek council meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. March 7, 2024 in the Town Hall. Council members present were Boos, Cristan, Hogan, and Jenkins. Rob Surwill, Animal Control Officer; Loni Hanson, Zoning Administrator; and Dean Webb, Public Works Director were in attendance. Julianne Lore, Town Attorney and Emelie Eaton, grant writer attended through Zoom.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

The agenda was changed to allow Ms. Eaton to present to the council on her business concept of writing grants on the contingency system. She had served both in the legislature and on the Laurel city council for a number of years therefore she was aware of how government operates. She has a great knowledge source with Montana Rural Water as her husband works for them. While on the Laurel city council she had written grants and after retiring from said position thought it was a good fit for her. She likes working with small municipalities as she feels they work hard for every dollar and many of the bigger towns are allocated funding leaving the small towns fending for themselves. She is in the process of working with Joliet on a grant to fill a 10% gap on the historical funding grant they had been awarded for their Town Hall. Several projects worthy of grants that are now available such as sidewalks and making playgrounds ADA were mentioned to the council by the attorney, explaining that they are being addressed by the Montana Municipal Insurance Authority. Council member Boos questioned if a contract between the Town and Emelie would be needed. She responded only if she would need to apply for a grant requiring the Town's unique entity SAM's number. It would be a very basic contract, allowing her to use the information. The clerk questioned if accounting would be included in the grant dollars applied for. Emelie explained that she did all the line items when applying, but no, the actual accounting would be left to the clerk. Council member Hogan advised he felt the council needed to discuss what kind of projects they would like to see as he felt the main concern for the Town at the present is the water repair. Emelie advised that she would like to take a drive through of the Town and come back with her ideas. The council were in agreement.

A discussion ensued after the Zoom meeting that once again the focus should be on the water system and if she can get grants to assist with that it would be great. At the present Interstate is working on the Rural Development grant that may allow some forgiveness to the Town, but any grant she could apply for to fill the matching gap would be wonderful, so we need to send her in that direction.

Council member Jenkins moved to accept the minutes, financial reports, and budget vs actual reports as presented. Council member Hogan seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Council member Hogan moved to approve the claims as presented. Council member Jenkins seconded the motion which passed 4-0.

There was no correspondence or public comments.

Dept. heads reports was started by Dean who advised the council that the water table was coming up so that was good. The sewer is running fine after Cotter's came and jetted it releasing the

plugged area. Loni stated that she had calls from interested parties, but to date, had no applications. Rob reported that the animal reminder letters for licenses would be going out and all else was fine.


There were no council concerns.

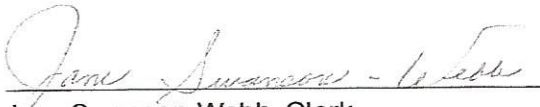
The clerk read the brief email she had sent to Interstate Engineering concerning the lead and copper survey that would be completed by the Public Works director and her therefore Interstate didn't need to incur any costs. She had visited with Greg Montgomery of DEQ, and he stated that if the Town did it themselves, there could be a \$5,000.00 reimbursement to the Town. This was the avenue she and Dean recommended as they could put any reimbursement into the water account. Dean would be gathering all the information from either the letters sent out previously or from inspections. That information would then go to Interstate who would fill out the inventory form, which he and Jane had just completed, so the third party expense wasn't needed. The council was in agreement as hopefully Interstate could expend that time working on the spring box problem. A replacement plan needs to be done for those lead, copper and galvanized lines and needs to show an update every year. The clerk also advised while talking to Greg that he mentioned that the whole process could take 7 years to get all replacements done after a replacement plan is in place. There would be a loan that the Town could apply for which would be 60% forgiveness and 40% pay back at 1.5% interest, but the townspeople who needed the lines replaced couldn't be asked to pay the 40%.

New business had been moved to the beginning of the agenda so Emelie could do her presentation.

Under Clerk's items (1) the clerk advised that she would be again sending a letter in the water bills advising that any extra garbage will not be picked up unless they notify her first, so she can notify the Republic representative and know who to charge for the extra that will be billed to the Town. (2) She questioned the council since they are in the process of the ordinance recodification if they would like to have something drawn up and added to the ordinances explaining to the townspeople that the streets belong to the Town and private individuals unless hired by the Town or permission given by the Public works director aren't to be performing work on them. There are manhole covers, valves, curb stops, etc. that can be damaged while performing these tasks. Not considering the loss of gravel that is being pushed off to the sides in the grass, making the streets a worse mess and making it hard to maintain mowing of the street sides. Private drives may be plowed with the snow being pushed off on the owner's property and not into the street. The public works director will make the decision of whether snow plowing is needed or not. A fine may be imposed and any damage done to the property of the Town will be reimbursed to the Town plus any expenses to replace said damaged property. The council asked that the clerk draw up a Resolution stating such so it can be sent to the firm doing the recodification by April 15.

With no further business council member Jenkins moved to adjourn the meeting. Council member Cristan seconded the motion which passed 4-0.


Debbie Surwill, Mayor


Jane Swanson-Webb, Clerk