

TOWN OF BEARCREEK PUBLIC HEARING FOR PUBLIC INPUT ON THE MONTHLY WATER BASE RATE INCREASE

Mayor Surwill called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m., November 2, 2023 in the Bearcreek Town Hall. Council members Boos-Bader, Cristan and Jenkins and the clerk were present. The department heads in attendance were Loni Hanson, Zoning Administrator; and Dean Webb, Public Works Director. The public present were Sherry Knowlton, Skip Boyer, Barbara Downing, Earl Craig, and Paul Lemire.

The pledge of allegiance was recited.

The clerk read the comments she had received from John Coutu. He remarked that if the over 50% increase had been done over a period of years, it would have been easier to take. He also wondered if the residents could be assured there won't be the same increase next year. He questioned if there was another person that was certified to take Dean's position should something happen to him, and if not, what was being done to correct this. The clerk had responded to John concerning the person certified to take over if something happened to Dean. Loni Hanson, who had worked in the public works department in Red Lodge prior to being their City clerk, was certified and has kept her certification current, therefore she is Dean's relief.

The Mayor reminded all that were present that the increase was necessary for the Town to apply for some of the funding. Reminding the people that we only have 65 users it is harder for the Town to raise the money needed for the things that have happened. She hoped that all the people would come together and support the increase as it a major project with the system being over 55 years old. Funding is being sought from many different sources and hopefully we will have the system up and running and even better than it was. She explained that some of the funding was denied and is in an appeal status. The clerk further explained that FEMA had denied the funding for the spring box repairs, but the local and state DES representatives fought it and won an appeal. FEMA's position was that the damage wasn't caused by flooding, but by the fire, therefore the ladies explained the funding had been applied for a mitigation for our spring boxes and while FEMA was holding our application in Lala land the new disaster occurred and that is the reason for the request of further assistance. Skip Boyer asked how the appeal turned out. The clerk said they had just appealed and to her knowledge no response had been received. Skip said it was good they appealed as he had heard of others that appealed and it helped them to obtain grant money. Skip asked what the increase and the non-user fee was earmarked for. The clerk explained how the money would be used for the capital improvement and loan payments, plus \$26.01 of it had to be put in a fund monthly required by Rural Development so there is always money available to make the loan payments. Paul Lemire questioned who the Town's engineers were and where did the water come out of the springs at. He had other questions for Dean about the damage. Barbara Downing questioned if there would be another increase like this next year. The clerk responded there may be as the engineers are planning on doing the work in phases and if more money is needed, then probably, but it shouldn't be as much as it is now. Skip questioned the phases and the clerk answered that when the engineers started to do their work in Sept. 2022, it was for improvement of our water line, protecting the water lines at the Meeteetse Trail, bigger lines, fire-fighting hydrants, eliminating the loop with dead ends, etc., but then we got the disaster, which created another phase, therefore the engineers had to go back to the drawing board to make a plan for the repairs and apply for emergency funds. Skip continued with only 65 users it is going to be tough so he requested that the council be on top of it because there is a limit of what you can ask those users for. Loni remarked that we had to do what we had to do as she wants to be able to turn the tap and get good water.

There were no further questions or comments, therefore Council member Jenkins moved to adjourn the meeting. Motion seconded by Council member Boos-Bader passed 3-0.

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The regular meeting was called to order at 7:30 p.m. Rob Surwill, animal control officer joined the meeting with Loni and Dean. Public in attendance were Cyrina Allen, Carbon County DES officer; Earl Craig; Paul Lemire; and Denise Rivette, Montana Independent News.

A motion to approve the minutes, financial report and budget vs actual report was made by Harold. Betty seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

Betty moved to accept the claims as presented. The motion seconded by Harold passed 3-0.

Under correspondence the clerk had received an email from Michael Grossheim, who wanted to attend the council meeting for an approval to build a single family dwelling. She had corresponded with him, giving him Loni and Dean's information to contact. A thank you note from Cy and Beverly Murfitt was read thanking the council of the reimbursement for mowing and purchasing of flowers at the park.

There was no public comments.

Loni started dept. head reports by advising the council she had been in contact with the gentleman that the clerk referred to her. She had advised him of the procedure of obtaining a zoning application but hadn't heard anything further. Rob reported that he had one call for a dog at large, which he took care of, and all seems fine. Dean advised he is still at a loss for a temporary fix of the spring boxes as if it isn't done right, it could cause more infiltration and do more damage. He has taken several contractors to the site, but no one calls back. Paul Lemire advised he was a hydrologist engineer and would like to see if he could help and he may have a contractor that would be interested in the job as the contractor loves a challenge. He and Dean will visit further. Paul also mentioned that Jon Reiten, Billings, who has a home in Bearcreek is a hydrologist engineer as well. Dean reported that the sewer and streets were fine.

There were no council concerns.

Under unfinished business (1) The amendment of Resolution 22-05 was held until the next council meeting as the attorney wants to add to the Resolution so instead of having 2-3 amendments, we will wait and do it all together. (2) The Mayor introduced Cynria Allen, the Carbon County Disaster Emergency representative. She had previously submitted a Mitigation Grant to FEMA for the town on the spring box area, but then the flood came and caused the damage, therefore it was denied as stated at the Public Hearing. Cynria and the state DES representative appealed their decision. Cynria advised that there was another grant application that is due Wed., and she would like to apply for it since Bearcreek is on the radar of FEMA. The council had given Cynria permission to apply for FEMA grants by Resolution in October, 2021, therefore it was an update on what new funding was available. The Mayor will sign a letter showing FEMA that Cynria has the Town's permission to continue to apply for funding in this new grant cycle. (3) Harold moved to pass Resolution 23-9 to accept the determination that an environmental assessment is appropriate for the Town of Bearcreek's water system preliminary engineering report (PER) phase one improvements. The motion seconded by Danell, passed unanimously. (4) Harold moved to accept Resolution 23-10, raising the monthly base water rate by \$98.01, starting with the January billing. Betty seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

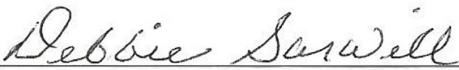
There was no new business.

Under clerk's items, the clerk advised that the final PER would be completed by Interstate, and she would be passing the hard copies out to the Mayor and council. At the next meeting a Resolution accepting the PER will

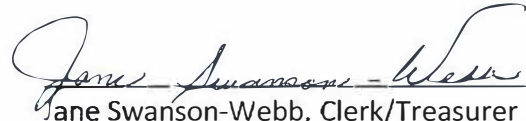
be presented. (2) Republic Service had contacted Jane requesting she go around the Monday of collection to see how many non-bear containers still existed in Bearcreek. According to Republic our resident bear biologist had requested bear proof containers for several residents and therefore Republic is going to change them all out with bear proof containers. She wasn't sure when that would occur. (3) The clerk advised that she had ordered the 2024 animal tags.

Cyrnia asked if she could add to the bear conversation. The county has established a Code Red which each person can download the app and if we need to have her put out alerts, she can draw a line around the Town of Bearcreek and alert each resident. She gave an example of how she alerted the residents of Fromberg about the bears that were roaming the streets on Halloween. This is a service paid by the County and free to the Town to use if they wish. The Mayor thanked her for the information.

With no further business Harold moved to adjourn the meeting. Said motion seconded by Danell, passed unanimously.



Debbie Surwill, Mayor



Jane Swanson-Webb, Clerk/Treasurer