

MINUTES OF THE CITY OF DRIGGS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
OCTOBER 20, 2009

Pursuant to adjournment of the City Council meeting held October 6, 2009, and the call of the Mayor, the Driggs City Council met in regular session **Tuesday October 20, 2009**, at 7:00 p.m.

PLAN ONE PRESENTATION – BOB HENEAGE AND GARETT CHADWICK

Bob Heneage began his presentation by explaining Plan One's involvement with the Community Center. He stated that the City of Driggs Community Center was the second LEED building that the firm had worked with. He presented the LEED Certified Plaque for 2009 to Council Member Mosher. Garrett Chadwick read a letter from the President of the Green Building Council. Mr. Heneage concluded the presentation by stating that this project was the first LEED project in Idaho that was not completed with federal dollars.

A roll call was taken and present were council members: George Mosher, Dan Powers, Greer Jones and Colin Dye, Mayor Louis Christensen, Planning and Zoning Administrator Doug Self, Financial Officer Amy Smith, and Public Works Director Jared Gunderson. Mayor Louis Christensen led the Pledge of Allegiance.

MINUTES TO REVIEW

Council Members reviewed the minute from the Special City Council Meeting. Council Member Dye voiced a correction to the minutes.

Council Member Mosher made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2009 Special City Council Meeting as corrected. Council Member Jones seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Members reviewed the minute from the City Council Meeting. Council Member Dye voiced a correction to the minutes.

Council Member Mosher made a motion to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2009 City Council Meeting as corrected. Council Member Dye seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

CLAIMS REVIEW

Council members reviewed the claims. Council Member Powers questioned if Knife River was going to pay for the water that was used for the airport project. Council Member Mosher questioned if there would be a trade. Mayor Christensen stated that it was a possibility and there had not been a water meter reading at this time. Council Member Powers wanted to ensure that the Council was aware of the items that would be traded before being approved. Mayor Christensen stated that if there was a trade, the Council would be made aware of it. However, there was also a possibility that there would not be a trade and Knife River would pay the water bill.

Council Member Mosher made a motion to approve the claims as presented dated October 7, 2009 through October 20, 2009. Council Member Dye seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

TETON VALLEY TRAILS AND PATHWAYS – TIM ADAMS

Tim Adams stated he would like to see the original plan completed that was approved by the City Council for 5th Street. He stated he had received complaints from concerned citizens and felt that if a center lane were painted along with a bike lane, it would slow cars down. Mr. Adams stated that if a solid centerline were added, it would give a visual cue not to cross, increasing safety for the children walking to school.

Council Member Powers questioned if a 3-foot bike lane would be sufficient. Mr. Adams responded stating that there was a concern and he “would argue for a 4-foot lane.” It was explained that a 4-foot bike lane would still allow for 10-foot traffic lanes. Mr. Adams felt that narrower travel lanes, enforced slower traffic and concluded that it would be only a visual barrier, “but it is something.” Council Member Jones stated that he felt the school was concerned with traffic lanes being only 10 feet wide.

Jared Gunderson, Public Works Director, stated that when the center lane was not solid, it was an indicator to some that one could pass. He wanted to leave it as it was and then “in time do the North side of Ross and the east side of 5th Street” with a bike path. Mr. Adams responded stating he was concerned that the improvements hadn’t happened and students are on the streets. He felt that paint was cheap and it was safety issue that should be resolved.

Council Member Dye stated that Doug Self, Planning and Zoning Administrator, was pursuing a Safe Routes to School grant for the path on the east side of 5th Street. Tony Liford, Teton Valley Sheriff, voiced his opinion. He stated that a solid centerline should be placed, “otherwise it does indicate that you can pass.”

It was discussed that the pathway should be pathways and not bike paths as there were different classifications for different types of bikers. Mr. Adams stated that bike racers and experienced bikers should be on the street. Little children need to be on the pathway, out of the street.

Mr. Gunderson stated that due to cost, it would be better if it were to be a shared lane. Council Member Powers stated, “Being in a bike lanes gives you a better sense of safety.” He stated that riding a bike on Little Avenue was better as there was a lane assigned for bikes, whereas riding a bike on Main Street did not have that comfort.

Mayor Christensen stated that the Council would have until the spring to decide, as it was too late in the year to do anything at this time. Council Member Dye stated that since this was approved by the City Council previously, “it should be done as approved.”

Council Member Powers made a motion to stripe 5th Street in accordance with the original directive to add bike lanes to each side with the amendment to have the center line a double solid line. Council Member Dye seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

PUBLIC HEARING – WATER FEES – 7:20PM

Mayor Louis Christensen provided the public with a background as to why the increased rate was being requested. He stated that water fees had been kept low for several years. However, the cost to maintain the system had increased. He stated the water system was currently running in a deficit and the City was trying “to keep the budget within reason.” He continued to state that lines that were 70 years old or older should be replaced and at this time there was no funding to do so. He also stated that according to accounting rules by the Federal Government, the City should account for operation and maintenance costs for depreciation of the water lines.

Amy Smith, Financial Officer, spoke stating that the City was trying to encourage people to conserve water and evaluate water use. Mayor Christensen gave examples of water bills with the new and old rate and also gave a comparison to the water rates that the City of Victor charged.

Council Member Powers stated that the City was “on the verge of needing a one million gallon storage tank.” He further stated that if the City could reduce consumption, the need to build a tank would not be so great. By conserving water, Council Member Powers stated,

a “very large amount of money will be saved. If we don’t conserve then rates will certainly go up.”

Council Member Mosher explained that there was a large amount of money spent on electricity to pump water back up to the storage tank and on buying chemicals to maintain the system.

Dave Hartshorn questioned how much water Knife River had used for the airport runway project. Mr. Gunderson stated that there was a meter on the hydrant and at this time, he was waiting for information from Knife River as to how many trucks were filled. Mr. Hartshorn was upset that the City was discussing trading this water for something else in the City and then asking the community for an increase in water rates.

Wayne Hartshorn stated, “We are in a recession and we need to hold back.” He further stated that “everyone is asking for increases,” and felt that the City should not be a part of those increases.

Dale Weeks stated that he was an employee for the City of Driggs in the past and felt the Council and the Mayor “forgot what happens when you throw bills at people and they don’t expect them.” He questioned who was counting the amount of water that Knife River was using to fill their water trucks. Mr. Weeks was also concerned with the pipes during the winter, stating that many must leave the water running to prevent freezing. Council Member Powers responded stating that a “good amount of the city had lines deep enough in the new subdivisions.” Mr. Gunderson stated that the new water lines were insulated, therefore not requiring the need to run water during the winter months. Council Member Powers showed Mr. Weeks the area of town that would still be allowed to have a water allowance. Mr. Weeks was upset that the community was not aware of this area prior to the meeting.

Neil Johnson stated that he sent a letter voicing his concerns about not being allowed to run water through his pipes during the winter months. He had problems in the past with freezing water and found out his pipes were not buried far enough down. He also stated that he was unaware that his home would be allowed to have a winter allowance before this meeting.

Mayor Louis Christensen read public comment letters received.

Mary Lou Hansen felt it was a good idea to move to a user based fee, but questioned the extent the City was taking. She stated her bill would increase about 40% and did not feel the City should make the increase that large. She stated that the City of Victor did not allow tenants to pay water bills, and required the property owner to do so. She felt if the City did this, it might help with bill collection.

Wilda Ball stated that her water bill had increased 52% in 7 years and that if she continued to water her lawn, her bill would be over \$100 a month with the proposed rates. She questioned if the Council wanted “all of the lawns to look like crap.” She also inquired if the water rate increase would help fix the sewer back that her home was involved in.

Dave Hartshorn stated that he understood this was a difficult task and that he would be able to take the increase by increasing his business rates and making costumers pay for it. He stated those on low incomes would be affected the most and felt the City should look at the bottom line and try to find other ways to reduce expenses before “you make raises for the common people.”

Richard Cain stated that his home had problems with pipes freezing in the winter months and was located outside of the winter allowance area. He also stated he was on a fixed income and stated his bill would increase about 50%. Because of this, Mr. Cain stated he would begin to think about letting his trees and lawn die or turn brown and felt that a lush yard was important for those in the valley.

Andy Lundquist questioned the new rates and felt it was a 92% increase. He stated that many lived in a subdivision where landscaping was required and many would not be able to maintain the upkeep of lawns if the new water rates were implemented. He questioned how the money from the increase would be used and felt there should be more public information as to what the deficit was and how the funds would be used. Council Member Powers explained the deficit and stated that the City needed to fund the depreciation to cover the cost for aging infrastructure. He also explained connection fees and stated the funds went toward new impacts on the system and not to maintain the old equipment.

Mark Rockefeller stated that if an increase were to take place, he felt it would be close to a 100% increase. He wanted the City Council to “present the math and the budget of current use and projections for the future use and maintenance.” Mr. Rockefeller felt that the community should understand why the increase was taking place and stated “As City Council Members you owe that to the community.” He further stated that without a detailed analysis “you are losing or confidence in asking for this.” He felt the City Council should look at grant money to offset the cost for the tank. He concluded by stating that commercial developments are required to have landscaping plans, which require irrigation and felt the Council should consider all of the things being affected by the increase. Council Member Mosher thanked the community for their input. It was decided that the Council would have a work session to discuss the comments further.

SNOW SUMMIT 7:45PM

Mayor Louis Christensen stated that the City Council requested a snow summit to discuss the removal of snow since the snow removal ordinance would be enforced this year. He felt this was also important for pedestrian safety and stated that the City should try and work with everyone, including those that don't have a budget for snow removal. The City was currently looking for funding to purchase equipment to help with snow removal on sidewalks.

Doug Self spoke. He stated the City Council asked him to enforce the ordinance. Mr. Gunderson stated that last year the community was notified late in the season and wanted to make sure people were aware of the requirements so “they can keep up with it.” He also stated that since the city storage sheds had been demolished, that area could also be used for snow storage as well as an area near the lagoon. He concluded by stating that he was concerned with the sidewalks on Ross and Little Avenues.

Mayor Christensen stated that those moving snow for businesses along Main Street or Little Avenue should contact Mr. Gunderson to find a place to store the snow.

Cara Barnes stated that the problem was when people did not remove the snow from their property and it continued to pile up during the winter months. She felt businesses should be required to move the snow off-site.

Council Member Powers questioned if the City should develop a “sidewalk cleaning program,” allowing one to do all of the snow removal and charge those businesses involved.

Paul Boillot felt that “the massive pile of snow does not create a good visual atmosphere.” He stated the City should begin to develop a plan now before empty lots get developed, creating a greater problem. He did not feel the downtown area was pedestrian friendly during the winter months due to the large piles of snow one had to maneuver.

Mr. Self stated that a business improvement district could be developed and would be a good way to organize snow removal. At this time, there was no such a district.

Mark Rockefeller stated that he agreed with Mr. Self and felt it could be done efficiently. He volunteered to allow the property at 300 S. Main Street be used for snow storage.

Jay Mazalewski stated he liked the idea of a business improvement district but did not feel it was feasible for this year and wanted to know the plan for the coming winter months. Council Member Powers questioned what areas were a concern last year. Mr. Self stated he sent letters to businesses on Main Street and on Wallace Avenue between Main Street and First Street and Little Avenue to 3rd Street, explaining the snow removal requirement.

Ms. Barnes stated that there were a lot of lots on Little Avenue that were occupied during the summer months and questioned if the City could plow those sidewalks and charge the property owners. Tony Liford, Teton County Sheriff, stated that the work detail crew could also participate with snow removal and help those that were unable to do so.

Bill Urban felt the biggest problem area was on Little Avenue and did not feel it would take a lot of time to maintain those sidewalks. Mr. Mazalewski felt the snow on Little Avenue should be hauled off because piles accumulated and caused a safety issue.

Mayor Christensen read a letter from Linda Borenpohl, who was concerned that the plows put snow on her property after she shovel. She stated she was willing to keep the snow cleared from her sidewalk, "providing they don't have to shovel the snow from the plows."

Mr. Mazalewski was concerned with the core area of town and stated he would like to see snow removal enforcement extend to all new sidewalks in other subdivisions. He also felt there should be notification to the public regarding the enforcement that would take place. Mr. Gunderson added that in the notice, people should also be aware fire hydrants need to be kept free from snow piles.

Council Member Mosher questioned if in the notice to the community it should state it is the property owners' responsibility to contact a snow removal company or the City would do so and bill the property owner. Council Member Powers felt that enforcement should be extended to 5th Street on Little Avenue.

Mr. Self reviewed the enforcement area and stated that the City Council should make sure the "ordinance reflects what we are enforcing." He felt that once equipment was received, there would be enough volunteers or work detail groups that would be able to clear sidewalks for the City.

PLANNING AND ZONING REPORT

Mr. Self stated that he was working on the impact fee study and was reviewing a request for an individual assessment for Family Dollar. The Planning and Zoning Commission are continuing to work on the Sign Ordinance and the R1-R2 Standards. Mr. Self was working on the Safe Routes to School grant and the Local Rural Highway Improvement grant for Johnson Avenue. Council Member Powers felt that the first half of Johnson Avenue, closest to Highway 33 "would be a good place for a LID."

FINANCIAL REPORT

Amy Smith presented a final year-end report that was close to completion. She stated an audit would be scheduled for November 9, 2009 and the City Council should get a final report by the end of the year. There was discussion regarding the road fund deficit.

Council Member Powers questioned the advantage to keeping funds in the reserve fund as opposed to putting some money toward the road fund. Ms. Smith responded stating that if the funds were in the reserve fund, the City would have the option to spend it on various things, whereas if the funds were in the road fund, they it would be paying for things that have been taken out of other areas. Council Member Mosher felt that some funds should be put in the road fund and "get rid of the loss for the year." There was discussion of the amount of money that should be transferred from the reserve fund to the road fund.

Council Member Powers made a motion to transfer \$47,158.89 from the resort tax fund to the road fund. Council Member Mosher seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Council Member Powers questioned if some of the year-end revenue could be used to give funds to Targhee Animal Shelter and the Food Bank. Council Member Mosher stated he would like to make a contribution to both agencies. Council Member Powers recommended giving \$5,000 to each agency. Council Member Mosher stated he would prefer to give \$6,000 to the Animal Shelter and \$4,000 to the Food bank. Mayor Christensen reminded the Council that the City would not receive approximately \$40,000 in property taxes. Ms. Smith stated that there was a surplus “because expenses were cut” and did not see where there would be room to cut more if needed in the future, as “everything is cut back as it is.”

Council Member Mosher made a motion to use a portion of the general funds to go toward both the Targhee Animal Shelter in \$6,000 and the Rotary Food Bank for \$4,000. Council Member Powers seconded the motion. Council Member Powers, Council Member Mosher and Council Member Dye were in favor of the motion. Council Member Jones voted in opposition.

Mayor Christensen stated that the City Council needed “to be careful how you spend the public’s money” and did not encourage “taking tax payers money and turning around and giving it to someone that gets tax payers money already.”

PUBLIC WORKS REPORT

Mr. Gunderson questioned what measures should be taking with snow removal before “it impedes on other businesses.” He did not want to take away from those in the business of removing snow. Discussion on the expense to buy equipment for snow removal on sidewalks began. Mr. Gunderson was also asked if the Public Works Department had the manpower to assist with sidewalk snow removal this year. His response was yes.

Mr. Gunderson apologized for not informing the City Council on the water system maintenance. He explained the procedures for the pump houses and what maintenance was involved with those.

Speed limit signs on 1000 North had been posted. The fill for the Skate Park was done and the lighting was being worked on. The screen for the lagoon should arrive within the next few weeks. Council Member Mosher asked Mr. Gunderson to provide the Council with the total cost for the new screen, as he was worried the cost totaled more than anticipated.

ADJOURNMENT

Council Member Jones made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Mosher seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor and the meeting was adjourned at 10:21pm.

ATTEST:

Sonya Adams, City Clerk

Louis B. Christensen, Mayor