

**Town of Farmington
Regular Town Council Meeting
August 17th, 2020 – 6:00 PM
Telephone Dial-in Available
Telephone: 1-216-452-9859 / PIN: 451 477 903#**



Open Regular Council Meeting:

Farmington's August 17th, 2020 Regular Town Council Meeting was called to order at 6:00 PM.

Roll Call:

Mayor Brian Oliver, Councilmembers: Lavon Walser, Jaime Lopez, Diana Oliver, Shelly Lobdell and Blanche Rhea.

Visitors:

Dwayne Alexander, Todd Lobdell, Sandra Hansen, John Ewing and Heather Lopez.

Approval of the Consent Agenda:

Diana Oliver **MOVED** to approve the July 20th Regular Council Meeting Minutes. Jaime Lopez **seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.**

Total claims and payroll from July 21st to August 17th totaled \$14,057.03, with claims totaling \$9,804.04 and payroll totaling \$4,252.99. Jaime Lopez **MOVED** to approve claims and payroll from July 21st to August 17th. Diana Oliver **seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.**

The July 2020 Treasurer's Report showed a balance of \$273,670.60, with \$183,486.96 in the checking account and \$90,183.64 in the VMMA account. Lavon Walser **MOVED** to approve the July 2020 Treasurer's Report. Shelly Lobdell **seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.**

OLD BUSINESS:

Mayor Oliver explained there was a water hammering event that occurred when refilling the water reservoir and caused some damage to some residents within the Town of Farmington. Shelly Lobdell questioned how many residents have called in to say they had damage. So far, the Johnson, Hokenson, Varney and Lisenbee households had called to say there was damage to their pipes. Of them the Johnson's were the only ones who had major water issues within their home. Shelly said she sees a check made out to the Hokenson's and feels that a public notice should be put out to see if anyone else encountered damage so the town knows the full extent of the issue and if it would be better to pay from town funds or to turn it over for an insurance claim.

Shelly suggested putting a notice in the water bills, as well as putting something about the event on the website and give residents who may have had issues time to reach out to the town so they know the full extent of the incident. It is thought that when the tank was emptied to flush the system and then refilled, protocol was not followed and created a lot of pressure in the lines. There is still a lot of galvanized piping in the ground and Todd Lobdell says when re-pressurizing the lines, it is a slow and methodical process. Lavon Walser said, fortunately anything that was going to happen because of this event has already happened so people will know if they had issues due to this event at the time of incident.

Mayor Oliver discussed the oiling of the roads and said he used all the budgeted \$5,200 that was allotted to him to spend on the oiling. Several phone calls and emails came in the next day after oiling asking why certain roads had not been done. Mayor Oliver decided since the roads were not going to be scraped and re-graveled, he would just go ahead and request the oiling of the other high traffic roads within Farmington. He asked for council's support in spending an additional \$4,156.00 to complete almost all the north/south dirt roads in town. Shelly said in the future she would like to see an A/B route and the years they receive oil application would alternate. Jaime Lopez suggested the main farm truck routes would get oiled every year. This route could then be posted and if someone elected to get oil on their road on an off year, they would be provided with the winning bid oil company number and

they could make arrangement themselves to schedule and pay for that application. Shelly asked if the invoices could be split one for the amount already agreed to and then a second invoice to reflect that amount needing approval.

Mayor Oliver said he would still like to see the roads be scraped and re-crowned with new gravel bed brought in. Some of the roads need to be reopened back up to 16 feet wide again as some of them are starting to change shape do to no maintenance being completed on them. Shelly Lobdell **MOVED** to approve a second oiling charge of \$4,156.00. Lavon Walser **seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.**

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Oliver said he has trapped 9 racoons and 1 beaver. In the past, to pay a trapper to come in and caught these animals, it was between \$50 and \$90 depending on the animal. The town spent \$600 on traps, so the traps have already paid for themselves. Blanch Rhea said it would be great to catch the badger that has been spotted by Cody's house.

Mayor Oliver and clerk/treasurer Cody will meet with Whitman County Library Director Kristie Kirkpatrick and Port of Whitman representative Kara Riebold to talk about the CARES grant funding that is available for Covid related expenses. The port is taking lead in helping small towns to file and received up to \$25,000 of CARES funding. This money must be spent first for Covid related costs and then a reimbursement will occur from Dept. of Commerce. At the next council meeting the results of this meeting will be shared.

Mayor Oliver explains that in addition to the CARES funding, Whitman County is taking lead in a consortium grant that allows low income households to apply for rent and utility assistance through the Community Action Center in Pullman. The amount of the grant that would be eligible for Farmington would be small but basically it is a one-page application in which the county and community action would be facilitating all other details of the grant and disbursement. The funds would be available through Community Action for up to one year, so even if the community is not having issues at the moment, if Covid get worse or layoffs start to affect local residents, the money would be available for relief.

Mayor Oliver said he would like to start looking into water system grant opportunities. Several regional towns are receiving money and starting to update their infrastructure. Grant money could be used for distribution, storage or service lines. There are currently AC pipes and concrete asbestos pipes carrying the water through town. Council members were encouraged to call some surrounding communities who have received grants and see how those funds were applied and how the process faired for them. Cody said the first step would be in contact with an engineer that the council felt suitable to explore granting opportunities with. It is a long process with many steps, but a good engineer will walk the council through all of the items needed, including conducting a rate study. At some point the town would need to do a request for proposal and interview engineers to pick the best one for the project. Cody can reach out to 3 engineers to start the process and have them come visit the council on the next 3 consecutive meetings. JUB, Keltic and Century West would be the engineers he could get schedule soon.

In order to do a project like this there will need to be a rate study to show that enough money is being charged to maintain the new upgrades and pay for the town's portion of the project. This will require water rates to go up in town. Shelly said there are two ways to think about this, be proactive and start making the rate adjustment now so the funds are available when the town is ready to start the project or wait until the system fails and ends up costing the residents more in the long run, knowing that emergency situations always cost more. Todd said years ago the council elected not to take an annual rate increase so the town residents could have low utility rates. Now there is no money in the reserve accounts to be able to do a project such as this, so a rate change will be needed.

Diana Oliver said the sewer rate is currently at 70% of the annual budgeted amount and that sewer rates are not high enough to keep up with expenditures at this time. Further discussion will be needed to discuss the current rates and how much the town will need to increase to keep up with expenditures and to have a reserve account built up for future infrastructure improvements.

Mayor Oliver said there are now 5 members on the planning and zoning committee: Sandy Hansen, Shelly Asmus, Chad Hansen, Heather Lopez, and Jodi Denton. The town is waiting on some direction from Eric Hanson so the group can get started looking over the current plans for the town.

Dwayne Alexander was present for the council meeting. He is currently working on several projects within town. He said one issue he has is the town does not offer any normal business hours to allow him to come in and fill out a building permit. Cody explained to Dwayne that he could reach out via email, phone or request documents and he would be happy to drop them off at the bank for him to pick up, that it is less about the hours open and more about the desire to move forward without following proper procedures. Cody asked Dwayne if he called 811 to schedule a utility locate before digging on the project at 1st and Main Street with his excavator. Cody stressed the importance of Dwayne following these procedures much like any other town would have in place before remodeling or building.

Dwayne also voiced his frustration about his electrical being shut down at his project on 1st and Main Street. Mayor Oliver said the town has nothing to do with electrical and in Whitman County, that is managed by Labor and Industries. Mayor Oliver said you will want to schedule with them and have a licensed person working on your electrical and following code or they will shut your project down. They may not be as responsive right now due to Covid, but they should still be scheduled. Dwayne said his plan for the building at 1st and Main Street is to remodel the space into a restaurant / bar and have someone rent the space from him and run the business. Mayor Oliver said that Dwayne will also want to be in contact with Whitman County Health Department since he is planning to use it as a commercial food operation.

Dwayne said he would like to request permission to add a sidewalk and ADA ramp and man door to the building so that a deck can be utilized at the back of the building. Blanch thinks this would enhance the downtown look and Jaime and Diana agree but say that planning and zoning committee should look into the ordinance and see what the rules and regulations are for this and go by what the ordinance says. Dwayne says he is asking rather than just doing and Jaime said he appreciated that but ask him to give them time to do their due diligence.

Blanch said at the corner of 3rd and Washington, the weeds have grown up so high that it is becoming hard to see oncoming traffic at that corner. Mayor Oliver said he will have George cut the weeds down and then spray them out. Dwayne asked what he should be doing with his stumps and branches and Mayor Oliver said organic material can be taken to the branch pile just on the Tekoa side of town.

Shelly asked the council to really think about a rate increase and thinks that if the community is informed ahead of time as to why the town will be increasing the rate, they will embrace the change. Todd agrees that transparency on the issue and the need that is there will help the community to see how it benefits everyone. Shelly said if they decide that a rate increase is in order then they can give the residents of Farmington a heads up in October that rates will increase in January. Mayor Oliver said the Current Expense Levy and the Street Levy appear to be failing at this time, so they will have to inform the community what that money is used for so if they fail again on the general election, the community will be forewarned what services they will be foregoing in the coming year.

Blanche Rhea **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 7:17 pm. Diana Oliver **seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.**



Mayor Brian Oliver

Attest: _____



Cody Lord Clerk-Treasurer

Town of Farmington - Regular Town Council Meeting

Monday, August 17, 2020 - Farmington Community Center

6:00 PM – 7:17 PM