

Town of Farmington
Regular Council Meeting
Onsite Town Hall
March 20, 2023

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Blanche Rhea, Council Members: Lavon Walser, Haleigh Varney, Diana Oliver, and Ben Smith

GUESTS: Joan Smith, and Hal and Annette Lisenbee

OPEN REGULAR TOWN COUNCIL MEETING:

Farmington's March 20, 2023, Regular Town Council Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. This was an onsite meeting.

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA:

- Approval of the February 13th, 2023, Regular Town Council Meeting Minutes
- Approval of the February 14th, thru March 20th, 2023, Check Register.
- Approval of the February 2023 Treasurer's Report

Haleigh Varney **MOVED** to approve the consent agenda for March 20, 2023, council meeting. Diana Oliver **seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.**

OLD BUSINESS:

Mayor Blanche Rhea informed council that a Certificate of Occupancy was issued to Travis LaChance for 102 Main Street. It passed all inspections, and everything looks good.

Mayor Rhea talked with the town's attorney, Eric Hanson, concerning the lack of construction activity at 302 E. Washington, but people living in the house and a travel trailer parked in the driveway. Nothing can be done until remodeling/construction activities start. There has been no communication thus far concerning their plans. Because their W/S utility bill was returned, Mayor Rhea hand delivered it to them and was able to talk with Bill Zellers. He said no work has been done, but if they did anything structural it would be windows, otherwise just removing kickboards and crown molding. A copy of the RV Ordinance (251-21) was sent to him and he doesn't think they are in violation of it. Mayor Rhea said it felt like it was 90 degrees in the house, but Bill said they were using \$79 space heaters. Diana suggested contacting L&I. She's pretty sure the wiring in the house needs redone, among other things, to bring it up to code. Diana asked if the water pipes were fixed and Mayor Rhea said they have water and power, but are putting food out on the porch.

Mayor Rhea and Lavon Walser met with Josh Alderman of H.D. Fowler Company about replacing water meters. Lavon said they walked around and looked at a handful that could just have the insides replaced, but all the rest would be a complete replacement. The meters would have to be read and then the numbers brought to Beth to upload into the software that can be integrated with BIAS. There is a way to lock the meter after shutting it off, when needed. We

would need to purchase our own laptop to read the meters. Estimated total: \$43k. Still waiting to hear from Ferguson WaterWorks for our 3rd quote.

Mayor Rhea said she went back to Jacob with the council's return offer. After thinking on it for a few days, he came to a decision and declined the position due to a conflict of interest.

There have not been any submissions of Letters of Interest for Town Council Seat #5. We have 90 days to get it filled.

The town was awarded a \$5000 grant from AWC to put towards a SCADA system for the Lift Station. Now we need to get quotes and see what is available for getting that done.

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Blanche Rhea reported that there was a volunteer day for cleaning up around the Community Center on March 12th. There were 22 volunteers total, some being students coming from the Upper Columbia Academy in Spangle. They did provide an insurance waiver in place of our Volunteer form. The rest of the juniper bushes were pulled out and lots of raking and picking up branches was done all around the building. Next is to remove the pea gravel.

There was a fire on Chestnut St. on March 9th. The owners of the house did find a place to stay until they figure out what to do. In the meantime, they have a Go-Fund Me set up if anyone would like to offer donations. Haleigh Varney asked if they know yet what caused the fire, Brian Oliver stated that the Fire Inspector was there but cannot give out any information yet. Ben Smith said somebody left a contact card in his door concerning the fire.

Mayor Rhea asked council what their thoughts were on re-establishing a Planning & Zoning Committee. Ben Smith asked what it entails? Diana Oliver said we're already having trouble with filling Seat #5 on Council, filling a whole group will be more difficult. Mayor Rhea reminded everyone that a long time ago it was Town Council's job to oversee, but after talking with the town's attorney, he strongly advised against it. She would like to put up notices and add a note to the water bill asking for anyone interested in creating a new Planning & Zoning Committee before Town Council takes it on.

Mayor Rhea would like to update the terms of the acting Mayor Pro-Tem. It is currently set to 6 months at a time and she would like to make it a full year. All were in agreement with that, so she asked Lavon Walser if she would be willing to be the Mayor Pro-Tem for 2023. She agreed.

There is a window in the town hall office that is in bad shape. It has algae growing in between the panes of glass and there are BB divots in the upper and lower windows. Mayor Blanche Rhea would like these to be replaced and asked Council what they would like to do. Diana Oliver mentioned that it would just come out of Community Center Maintenance, so they can be replaced. Beth will call Steve's Glass in Colfax to find out the cost.

Mayor Rhea asked Council about increasing wages for Beth and Lavon by \$2 each. She said they are both done with their probationary periods and are doing a fantastic job. Council asked if it is in the budget. Brian Oliver reminded them that an increase was recommended back in December

when Beth was hired. Beth offered to run the numbers and mentioned that her pay comes out of 4 different departments: Current Expense, Streets, Water and Sewer; and Lavon's comes out of 3: Current Expense, Streets and Water. Haleigh Varney would like to see more information before deciding. Diana Oliver asked to table it until next month. Mayor Rhea asked if \$2 each could not be done, what about \$1.50 each? And can it be retroactive to April 1st if everything looks good? Council agreed.

Mayor Rhea was able to communicate more with Brian Wilson about road work. The Interlocal Agreement between Whitman County and Farmington has been signed. Mr. Wilson said that both Rosalia and Oakesdale went from 10 employees to 5 and are now very short-handed. Currently there is no one available to come do the work of grading, crowning and graveling our roads. Brian Oliver said he may be able to drag some roads this coming weekend. Ben also offered but the roads are still too wet to really do anything.

Mayor Rhea would like to start having projects done for town council members to participate in. She asked Diana Oliver if she would like to pot roses and take care of planters. Ben Smith can help take care of handyman jobs. She would like people to be interested in the various town operations and volunteer to assist. Haleigh Varney liked that idea. Mayor Blanche Rhea asked everyone to think about what they would like to do.

MAINTENANCE COMMENTS

The new John Deere mower is in Tekoa get retrofitted to accept our current John Deere implements from the old mower. Ben Smith has been helping replace bulbs on light poles and Lavon's been working on the roads, filling holes with gravel.

Mayor Rhea asked Brian Oliver about cleaning up branches before running a street sweeper through. He said to call Garfield and ask about having Shon Clark come over with their sweeper, but suggested it be on a rainy day as the sprayer on the rig doesn't work. Branches will need to be picked up, but the leaves can be left.

CLERK COMMENTS

Beth received a signed copy of the rental agreement with First Step Internet for their hardware on the water tower. She is still waiting for the rental amount due.

Lawna Hergenrider at Liquid Engineering said that it's looking like summertime before they can make it out here. They have to wait for an advanced dive team to be available and that won't be until this summer.

CITIZEN COMMENTS

Brian Oliver said he would get to the burn pile soon. He mentioned that the Fire Department used 14,000 gallons of water for the Chestnut Street fire. He will bring the striper home soon to re-stripe some of the roads, and needs the leaves cleaned up first, but it'll still be 6 weeks before he can get that done.

Joan Smith brought up an idea that Ben Smith thought of: acquiring a cell tower in or close to town and wondered if there was any location that would be suitable for it. Cell service in town is

not that great and during the night of the fire, there was a very bad winter storm and well below freezing temperatures that seemed to hinder cell service even further. He was wondering if there are any other ways to help boost the signal here to provide better access. The town does have a few acres of land available if we want to consider a cell tower going up.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Diana Oliver asked what the status was on the cameras on the Community Center building. Beth said they are up and running perfectly. She mentioned somebody has been letting their dog in on the playground, but not cleaning up after it. One of the play structures is missing a climbing rope. Brian Oliver said there should be a 7/8" or 1" rope in the shop. The tether ball pole seems to have acquired a ringed 'divot' around it.

The Fireman's Picnic is planned for July 11th. It will be a potluck mostly, but Brian Oliver said he will smoke up some ribs and bratwursts, then supply ice cream sandwiches. Flyers will be made and put out in the water bill in June. There was about 75 people in attendance in 2021.

Diana Olive is helping to plan an Easter Egg Hunt in the park on April 8th, come rain or shine. Haleigh said Tekoa isn't even planning one this year because they like Farmington's better.

MAYOR COMMENTS

Mayor Rhea mentioned that the librarian, Rita, is looking into getting some pictures donated to the Community Center to hang in the hallway. Still waiting to hear the final decision on that.

She also said the conference room and kitchen carpets will be getting cleaned. She still has to choose a carpet cleaning company, but after they are done, we'll be bringing the prior tables and chairs down from upstairs in the Community Center and move the cafeteria tables out.

Mayor Rhea thanked everyone that helped with the clean up day and asked for a motion to adjourn.

Haleigh Varney **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting. Lavon Walser **seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously**. The regular town council meeting was closed at 7:21 pm.



Mayor Blanche Rhea

Attest: 

Beth Anderson Clerk-Treasurer

Town of Farmington – Regular Town Council Meeting
Monday, March 20, 2023 - Farmington Community Center
6:00 PM – 7:21 PM