

City Council Meeting
April 23, 2013

Present: Mayor Rose Hanser, Councilpersons Evan Stewart, Lawretta Miller, Tom Jankowski, and John Williams

Also Present: Public Works Director John Bleth, City Clerk/Treasurer Michelle Richards, Assistant Police Chief Kris Egan, Fire Chief Ryan Reid, City Attorney Gary Ryder and Building/Planning Official Jan Morgan

Mayor Hanser called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm. Following the Pledge of Allegiance, City Clerk/Treasurer Richards called the Roll Call.

Consent Agenda:

Councilperson Jankowski moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilperson Stewart seconded the motion. Discussion: Councilperson Stewart requested the comment he made in the minutes of the previous meeting be changed from “allows federal oversight” to “requires federal oversight” during the discussion of the Family and Medical Leave Act. There were no objections to this request. Councilperson Stewart also had questions on the March Financial Report regarding the Sewer Collection & Transmission budget and Solid Waste Collection budget overages. City Clerk/Treasurer Richards responded the Sewer budget went over due to the repair of the sewer main on Woodrose Street and the Solid Waste budget went over due to the continual repair issues with the new garbage collection truck. Motion carried with all in favor.

- a. Minutes of 4/9/13 Regular Meeting
- b. Claims Roster 4/19/13
- c. March Financial Report

Departmental Reports:

Reports were given by Assistant Police Chief Egan, Building/Planning Official Morgan, Fire Chief Reid, Attorney Ryder, Public Works Director Bleth and City Clerk/Treasurer Richards.

Mayor’s Communications:

A thank you card was received from a participant of the School Science Fair. The City of Colstrip donates \$5.00 ‘City Dollar Certificates’ for the school to give to participants of the fair that they can spend at local businesses.

Several city officials will be attending the Elected Officials Workshop, Montana City Clerk/Treasurer’s Institute and City Attorney’s Workshop in Billings in May.

Public Comment and Participation:

Tana Pippin, Deputy City Clerk, reported there will be an Open House at City Hall on May 1st at 1:00 pm with a tree planting demonstration. The Tree Board will be making a presentation at Pine Butte Elementary School on Arbor Day, May 3rd.

Unfinished Business:

Councilperson Stewart moved to adopt the Personnel Policy Manual with the submitted changes. Councilperson Jankowski seconded the motion. Discussion: Councilperson Stewart commented there has been a lot of discussion and review on this subject and would like to see it move forward. No public comment received. Motion carried with all in favor.

Councilperson Jankowski moved to adopt the Procedures Manual as submitted with the additions and recommendations from the Personnel Committee. Councilperson Stewart seconded the motion. Discussion: Councilperson Jankowski thanked the members of the Personnel Committee for all their time and work. No public comment received. Motion carried with all in favor.

Mayor Hanser opened Public Comment on the Annual Employees Benefits Package. The Personnel Committee recommends continuing the medical and health benefits currently in place for the new plan year that begins July 1, 2013. The committee also recommended the City Council consider amending the city's Credit Card Use Policy to allow employees that were negatively impacted by the prescription drug coverage change and would not otherwise be able to pay for a prescription, to use their city credit card to obtain prescriptions only. The employee would then need to reimburse the city for the credit card charge after receiving reimbursement from the health insurance provider or have the amount deducted from their next paycheck.

Tana Pippin, 3125 Antelope, commented that when the change was made on the prescription coverage the employees were not notified. She realizes it was not intentional but requested better communication regarding changes to the employee's benefits. She feels the city can afford good benefits for its employees.

Councilperson Williams will not approve any changes that were not previously agreed to by the City Council and feels the city needs to go back to the way it was before. Mayor Hanser explained the Personnel Committee felt their recommendations would take care of both the employees by allowing the use of the credit card and also be responsible to the taxpayers by saving money on health insurance premiums.

Darcy Dahle, representing Montana Public Employees Association, stated she is limited on what she can but did suggest allowing a 5 minute recess for employees to meet, discuss the information presented at this meeting and come back to the City Council with their comments.

Instead of a recess, Mayor Hanser continued the meeting with New Business items to give the employees time to meet and will return to this agenda item at the end of the meeting.

New Business:

Councilperson Jankowski moved to approve Resolution No. 2013-R03 declaring 2010 Ford Explorer as surplus equipment. Councilperson Stewart seconded the motion. Discussion: Councilperson Stewart commented he would be voting no on this issue as he feels this wasn't the right decision when discussed at the previous meeting. No public comment received. Councilperson Stewart voted nay. Councilpersons Williams, Miller and Jankowski voted in favor. Motion carried 3-1.

Councilperson Stewart moved to approve Resolution No. 2013-R04 regarding the rental fee and use of the sewer auger. Councilperson Williams seconded the motion. Discussion: Fire Chief Reid commented he rented the sewer auger recently and really appreciates the city allowing the use of it. Councilperson Stewart asked about liability for the city. City Clerk/Treasurer Richards explained the city has a rental agreement for use of the sewer auger that includes language indemnifying the city in case of injury while using the equipment. Motion carried with all in favor.

Councilperson Stewart made a motion to refer Water and Sewer Rate increases to the Public Works Committee and strive to have a recommendation ready for the next City Council meeting. Councilperson Miller seconded the motion. No discussion or public comment received. Motion carried with all in favor.

Mayor Hanser reopened Public Comment on the Employee Benefits Package. Brad Purdon, 3084 Cheyenne, asked why the change was made. It was very easy to obtain a prescription prior to the change and only pay a co-pay instead of waiting to receive reimbursement from insurance and/or flex accounts. He doesn't feel \$25,000 per year is a lot to the city and there are a lot of other places the city could cut in the budget if it is a financial issue but he doesn't think the city is having financial problems.

Paula Peplow, 310 Alder Avenue, commented that employees were told the prescription card would be changed back when the new plan year begins and then later told that may not happen due to the additional cost of the prescription drug card. She is concerned about the lack of communication to the employees regarding possible benefit changes.

Don Purdon, 23 Clover and President of the Police Collective Bargaining Unit, stated he is speaking on behalf of some employees not present. It was the employees' understanding that going back to the old system was not an option. The employees he has talked to would prefer going back to the old system of having the prescription drug card.

Bryan Swan, 10 Linden Court, doesn't understand why the change was made the way it was done and there are other places to save money in the city's budget instead of cutting employees' benefits. In his 13 years of employment with the city he hasn't seen this amount of distrust that exists between the employees and the City.

Darcy Dahle, representing Montana Public Employees Association, commented that the union contracts state contract negotiations begin 120 days prior to expiration date. If the city is interested in opening negotiations for new contracts earlier, she would be open to that.

Councilperson Williams made a motion to reinstate the medical benefits in place prior to July 1, 2012 by reinstating the prescription drug card option to the health insurance. Councilperson Stewart seconded the motion. Councilperson Stewart thanked the employees for their comments. He doesn't like spending \$25,000 more per year but has learned that if the city is going to cut employee benefits that it should also look elsewhere in the city's budget for reductions. Councilperson Jankowski appreciates the employees that spoke and stated it does make a difference. Councilperson Miller commented that the Council just discussed having to raise water and sewer rates but are going to spend an

additional \$25,000 per year for the employees to have a convenience. Solid Waste collection rates will also need to increase because the expenses are greater than the revenues. Councilpersons Williams, Stewart and Jankowski voted in favor. Councilperson Miller voted nay. Motion carried 3-1.

Administrative Matters:

City Council went into Executive Session at 8:52 p.m. for Attorney Ryder to update the City Council on a case before the Human Rights Commission. City Council returned from Executive Session at 9:01 p.m. No action was taken.

Adjournment:

Councilperson Stewart moved to adjourn the meeting. Councilperson Jankowski seconded the motion. Mayor Hanser adjourned the meeting at 9:02 p.m.

Michelle Richards, City Clerk/Treasurer