
CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER GOVERNING BODY

Verl Pressnall At Large, Position 1
Steve Irving At Large, Position 2
Edwin E. Chesnut At Large, Position 3

Lewis S. Key Mayor
Orrin Lyon (CL President) Ward 1
Bradley J. Humbert Ward 2
Jose Garcia Ward 3

**CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES****August 12, 2019**

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met Monday, August 12, 2019 at 7:00 p.m. in the Albee Room of the Library, 8 SW 8th Avenue, Milton-Freewater, Oregon.

The following City Council members were present: Mayor Lewis Key, Councilors Orrin Lyon, Ed Chesnut, Verl Pressnall, Jose Garcia, Steve Irving and Brad Humbert.

Staff members present were: City Manager Linda Hall, City Recorder Leanne Steadman, Public Works Superintendent Brian Steadman and Fire Chief Shane Garner.

Citizens and Guests present were: Wes Koklich, Janice Holden, Rick Saager, Bill Saager, Marlene Saager, Kandy Pressnall, Dan Kilmer, Bob White, Cheryl York, Karen Bright, Suni Danforth, George White, Charles Danforth, John Shafer, Ian McVey, Mitch Gibson, Ron Brown, Verne Watson and Mike Onstot.

Representing the news media were Sherrie Widmer of the Valley Herald and Alex Castle of the East Oregonian.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS:

The consent calendar items consisted of:

- Council Minutes from July 8, 2019
- Accounts payables from July 3, 2019 through July 16, 2019
- Accounts payables from July 17, 2019 through August 6, 2019

Councilor Pressnall motioned to adopt the consent calendar items. Councilor Humbert seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS ITEM:**CONTINUED DISCUSSION – REGARDING THE AMBULANCE SERVICE DISTRICT**

Milton-Freewater Health District Board members Janice Holden and Dan Kilmer gave a presentation regarding the ambulance service district. Ms. Holden stated their goal was to maintain an ambulance service that meets the needs of the community in the terms of quality service, personnel and equipment. She then gave personal testimony of her experience with ambulance service. She stated that Milton-Freewater EMS (M-F EMS) has provided the ambulance service area (ASA) service since the early 80's and the last several years they have been operating in the red. Seven years ago a permanent tax rate was established at 25 cents per one-thousand dollars of assessed value. The ambulance board has provided equipment replacements, insurance for the first time for the ambulance employees and supplemental income to attract and retain paramedics. She stated the cost to replace an ambulance in the recommended five year time period with new equipment will exceed \$250,000. The proposed rate increase of \$1.40 per \$1,000 of assessed value would provide a savings account to support that purchase and additional equipment needs. She said employee turnover in this type of business is very high. The tax rate increase will balance the budget and assure there would be enough funds in the coffers for

the approximate next 20 years. Ms. Holden stated that in less than a year the board's contract with M-F EMS expires. She then listed mutual aid services provided to police and fire by the ambulance service provider. She then spoke about compression, stating that a report had been run by Umatilla County Assessor Paul Chalmers and it showed there was minimal impact in the region served by the ambulance service district.

Mr. Kilmer then passed out examples of the rate increase and impact to a select few of the City Council member's personal properties.

Ms. Holden stated Mr. Chalmers has provided a program that each voter can plug in their property information to see the impact on their tax statement. This program would be available if the measure is allowed to be placed on the ballot.

Mr. Kilmer passed out a graph of the M-F EMS run count for the city and rural area. The graph showed years 2012 through 2019 currently with an average of approximately 1,000 calls each year.

Manager Hall asked what source provided the run count.

Ms. Holden stated the numbers came from their server, M-F EMS, they provide monthly reports along with specifics about the call and service provided.

Manager Hall asked if any of the information came from the Milton-Freewater Dispatch.

Ms. Holden replied, no. She stated the population between the city and the entire district boundary is about the same but the one thing that increases the number of calls in the city is the number of assisted living facilities and nursing homes inside city limits. She then referred to Medic 400, who serves Athena, Weston and Helix. She stated last year their ambulance board passed a tax rate of \$1.00 per \$1,000 of assessed value and their original tax rate was \$.14 per \$1,000 of assessed value which equates to a 614% increase. Medic 400 answers approximately 200 calls per year. Ms. Holden stated that the board's \$1.15 request represented a 560% increase.

Councilor Chesnut asked for clarification if the \$1.15 was the proposed rate or amount of increase.

Ms. Holden stated it was the amount of increase. She said the increase would raise approximately \$932,000 annually.

Ms. Holden attributed the need for the increase was due to the cost of ambulance equipment and the replacement of an ambulance itself. The current provider's ambulances are of date 2014, 2003 and 1995.

Ian McVey, a paramedic and Mitch Gibson, an EMT with M-F EMS, both presented the detailed workings of an ambulance and the reason for some of the equipment that makes an ambulance so expensive.

Ms. Holden stated the current provider had three EMT's and two paramedics and the proposed budget included four EMT's and four paramedics. She then reviewed what was included in the proposed budget. Some of those items being the mandated expense of equipment and insurance, state industrial, there was an increase in wages and benefits and bullet proof vests as well as the expense of medications on the ambulance. She spoke about Medicare and Medicaid insurance and what they pay towards ambulance service and that their payment has dropped since 2012. She

spoke about the economy growing in Milton-Freewater and referred to ground breaking on a new housing division along with eleven houses currently being built in the city.

Mr. Kilmer read a letter addressed to the Mayor and City Councilors from Paul Seaquist. The letter asked for the council to support the Ambulance Board's request in allowing the ballot measure to go before the voters.

Mayor Key stated there was no denial of the need for an established ambulance service. He said he felt the discussion lies with the rate being proposed and if that was a fair rate to assess and if it was fair to the citizens compared to other districts.

Ms. Holden spoke about compression again and stated that if approved by the voters in November of 2019 then funds would be available in November of 2020. She said what the Board was requesting from the council was a "yes" vote to place the measure on the ballot and they were not looking for an endorsement of the measure but the consent to put it before the voters. She said the second Public Hearing was scheduled with the Umatilla County Commissioners on Friday, August 16th at 10:00 a.m. about this subject.

Councilor Humbert asked why the Special District needed the City's consent for the measure to be placed on the ballot.

Umatilla County Commissioner John Shafer said that state statute says that three things must happen. First there is a vote to dissolve the current District, then a vote to establish a new District, and then a vote for a new permanent tax rate. If all three don't happen then "state law" allows it to revert back to the current amount being assessed of \$.25 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

Councilor Humbert asked why they were not just going out for a levy instead of a permanent tax rate increase because then they would not have to get the City's consent or the County Commissioners.

Ms. Holden stated they were looking for a long term solution for the ambulance service.

Manager Hall clarified what the ambulance board was proposing was to change their permanent tax rate base. In order to do that they must dissolve their current district, form a new district and have a new permanent rate approved. She clarified what Councilor Humbert was referring to was a levy that can be set for five to ten years and has a finite ending date and specific dollar amount. She stated they used to have to be for capital improvement such as a new ambulance or fire station, but they are now allowed to be used for operations.

There were several questions from the seated audience.

Councilor Chesnut stated at the last council meeting that a list of expenses was only half the budget and that the revenues were needed to complete the budget. He said in the packet that was received it addressed most of this but stated he felt the biggest mystery was what will the provider service rate going to be for 2019-2020. If this new rate became effective then what would the new contract be.

Ms. Holden stated that the provider contract expires at the end of June 2020. Sixty days prior to that date the board will be putting the service out to bid. She said that a lot of the budget that the district has is a savings account for the ambulance and the medical equipment and for things that have not been utilized to support the ambulance service like training. She stated they have an

ongoing savings account that's building and after four years they can afford an ambulance and then start the savings account again. This savings account is in addition to the budget.

Manager Hall asked if the District or provider would be purchasing the ambulance.

Ms. Holden stated that the proposed budget provides for the District to purchase the ambulance.

Manager Hall asked if the District would be responsible for housing and maintenance of the ambulance.

Ms. Holden stated that would be something that would need to be worked out.

Manager Hall asked if the District would hold the capital holdings.

Ms. Holden replied, yes. She said currently the District has a set amount that goes to support the service, and then they pay items like insurance. They don't give the provider a blank check; it has to go through the board for approval. The District manages the funds. She said they have a question into County Counsel of how that ownership would work legally.

Mayor Key asked if the District owned the ambulances now.

Ms. Holden replied, no, they belong to the provider.

Manager Hall asked what made the board decide to move towards owning the ambulances instead of contracting that out for the service.

Mr. Kilmer referred to the City of Walla Walla and City of College Place and what they are doing in regards to their ambulance service.

Councilor Chesnut asked if the District was taking the first steps in becoming its own service provider by owning its own ambulance, over a period of time owning all three and hiring staff. The other way to go about providing the service is to contract with the current provider with the understanding of the requirements of the contract and a part of that requirement is to replace the ambulances, which he will want more money than what is available now. He said he doesn't understand why the District, a five member board, would want to be an owner of an ambulance. He stated he wants ambulance service and without question there needs to be more money but the way you get there will be very important on whether you get a yes vote. He said he knows very few elected officials that could run an ambulance service. He stated the council has been requested to give a "yes" vote and allow this to be placed on the ballot and asked if there was any room in the timing to work out some of the conceptual items. He asked what the deadline was to make it available on the ballot.

Mr. Shafer stated it was Friday, August 16, 2019.

Suni Danforth, 225 Maple Avenue – referred to Mr. Kilmer's comment regarding the Cities of Walla Walla and College Place changing their ambulance structure. She said by replicating smaller services it could cost more.

Mr. Kilmer spoke about response times from neighboring cities.

Ms. Danforth stated that covering more area doesn't mean you'll have less service. That provider would supply more units for a bigger area.

Councilor Chesnut stated that anyone who bid on the service would only do so if they could make a profit.

Ms. Danforth said she didn't understand the relevance of discussing Walla Walla and College Place.

Councilor Chesnut said he believed he understood that they were not interested in bidding on the service.

Rick Saager stated they were asked and they were not interested because they don't have anyone who is licensed in Oregon and their figure started out well over a million dollars.

Ms. Danforth said she understood that the District was asking for a \$1.15 increase and with looking twenty years down the road that would be the maximum amount assessed. She stated she assumed that if this were to pass that the tax rate would not jump up to that total amount the first year and that it would be at a lower rate and work up to that maximum rate.

Mayor Key stated it would be that rate from the beginning.

Charles Danforth, 225 Maple Avenue – spoke in favor of supporting the ambulance service.

Councilor Humbert asked if the city council consents to allowing the measure to be placed on the ballot and it's voted in favor to dissolve the current district along with the current tax rate which would also dissolve the current board members, then it's vote in favor to form a new district along with the proposed tax rate of \$1.40 per \$1,000 of assessed value, then will the County Commissioners appoint a new board or will there be a Special Election to vote in new board members.

Mr. Shafer stated the Board will still be active but the District would go away.

Councilor Humbert asked how that could be since the district would be dissolving that would include the Board.

Mr. Shafer stated the board would have to be re-elected.

A discussion ensued regarding how the Board would be re-established.

Councilor Chesnut asked what will happen if the voters approve to dissolve the current district and approve to form the new district but doesn't approve the new tax rate.

Mr. Shafer stated there was a caveat in the election process that if any one of the three measures fails then it would revert back to the current district and current tax rate.

Councilor Chesnut asked what if that was challenged.

Mr. Shafer stated it was state law that if any one of the three measures failed it would revert back.

Councilor Chesnut stated he wants to help make sure the ambulance service continues and the existing situation doesn't seem to have enough funds and he stated he was concerned with how the proposed rate was going to be accepted. He stated he did not want to insert his judgement for the judgement of an elected board of another district. He then made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2400, A Resolution Granting Consent for Umatilla County, Board of Commissioners to Place

a Measure on the Ballot Regarding the Ambulance Service District. Councilor Humbert seconded the motion. Before roll call was taken there were a couple more council comments.

Councilor Pressnall stated he wasn't impressed with the budget proposal and stated he felt the citizens should have a right to vote yes or no on it and that he didn't disagree with the motion. He stated he agreed that the ambulance service was much needed.

Councilor Irving said he based his figures on the average house assessed at \$189,000 which is currently paying \$47.00 and with the increase it would go to \$264.00. He stated he has been told by some of his constituents that they are having a hard time with that amount of increase. He said he does realize the importance of the ambulance service and supports the motion.

Roll call was taken, the motion passed with Councilor Humbert abstaining from the vote.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

APPROVAL OF REVISED LIBRARY CIRCULATION POLICY AND NEW LIBRARY BULLETIN BOARD POLICY

Manager Hall stated the Library Circulation policy was revised in 2015, and in that policy in order to get a library card a resident had to show proof of address within the Umatilla County Special Library District. In the proposed revision those that cannot provide proof of address can check out one item at a time, and will have access to use library computers and technology.

Councilor Chesnut motioned to adopt the revised Circulation Policy. Councilor Humbert seconded the motion which passed 5 to 1 with Councilor Pressnall being the dissenting vote.

Manager Hall presented the new Library Bulletin Board Policy. She stated the library has two bulletin boards, a pamphlet rack, and an electronic sign. Two of the bulletin boards are for community events and are used frequently by organizations in the area. The new policy guides staff and patrons in what items are appropriate to be posted and how long they can be posted for. She stated The Friends of the Milton-Freewater Library purchased the electronic sign with grant funds.

Councilor Pressnall stated he has witnessed on three separate occasions drivers going by the library and being distracted by reading the sign and drifting into the bike lane.

Councilor Lyon stated it was hard for him to read what the electronic reader board says because the words move too fast.

Manager Hall stated she could talk with the employee who operates the reader board to see if the information could stay on the board longer before moving off.

Suni Danforth, 225 Maple Avenue – said she felt it shouldn't only be for city or library use since it's a community sign.

Councilor Chesnut stated he would like to have the grant document checked to see if there was a stipulation on the use of the sign.

Councilor Humbert read from the sign policy, "The library maintains an electronic reader board outside of the library. Due to limited space on the reader board only Library and City events will be posted. Exceptions to this policy are made at the discretion of the Library Director or City Manager".

A discussion ensued.

Councilor Humbert motioned to table this item until a new Library Director has been hired. Councilor Pressnall seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2401, OREGON DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION COOPERATIVE IMPROVEMENT AGREEMENT NO. 33445 FOR BIKE AND PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS

Public Works Superintendent Brian Steadman stated the city was awarded a Safe Routes to School grant to install a rapid flashing beacon at the intersection of SW/SE 10th Avenue and Oregon State Highway 11. The agreement for the project was approved by the City Council in February 2019. After discussions with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT), it was determined that ODOT should manage the project to ensure it will meet all of their standards since they have jurisdiction over Highway 11. It was determined the most efficient route would be to cancel the existing grant agreement that the City has approved and create a new grant agreement between the Safe Routes to School program and ODOT Region 12. The City's match will still be utilized to meet the Safe Routes to School grant agreement requirements. ODOT will be responsible for contracting the project and administering the grant, including grant deliverables.

Councilor Humbert asked if ODOT will be responsible for all over-runs on the project.

Manager Hall stated staff had in writing from ODOT staff that the project will stay within the grant budget.

Councilor Humbert motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2401, A Resolution authorizing signature to Cooperative Improvement Agreement No. 33445, Bike and Pedestrian Improvements Milton-Freewater with Oregon Department of Transportation. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

UPDATE/PROGRESS REPORT – ON CITY COUNCIL GOALS ADOPTED JANUARY 9, 2017

Manager Hall presented the updates on all the goals that had progress since her last report in April 2019. She stated that Library Director Erin Wells will be leaving the end of August to go work for the City of Walla Walla as their Library Director so there will be a recruitment to fill that position. She reported she met with the new School Superintendent Aaron Duff and he is still interested in getting a School Resource Officer. She said staff will be submitting another grant application for this goal. She reported the elevator project is well under way. The completion date is the first of next year. There has been an item added to the project and that is a battery backup for the elevator itself since it has its own electric supply and it was not cost prohibitive to be hooked up to the backup generator for city hall. The cost for the battery was approximately \$1,200.

Councilor Lyon said batteries go bad, what was the plan to make sure the battery was always good.

Manager Hall stated that with any elevator it must be inspected on an annual basis and that will include testing the battery backup. She said even the chair lift at city hall is required to be inspected annually.

MANAGER'S REPORT

Manager Hall stated that the League of Oregon Cities (LOC) Annual Conference was at the end of September and so far Mayor Key and Councilor Pressnall have indicated they will be attending. The LOC asks that a voting delegate and alternate be appointed for the annual conference. There was consensus for Councilor Pressnall to be the voting delegate and Mayor Key as the alternate. She reported the water line extension to the north is progressing. There will be a bid opening on Friday, August 16, 2019 and she asked for the council to check their schedules to see if they would be available to hold a special meeting on Monday, August 26, 2019 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting would be to award the bid for the water line project to keep the project progressing.

Councilor Irving stated he would not be available that day and Councilor Pressnall said he would be available. The rest of the council members stated they would check their calendars and get back to Manager Hall.

Manager Hall stated that the Public Works crew will start crack sealing soon beginning at Grove School and working south.

Councilor Humbert asked if the city staff had an agreement with the state to use their crack sealer.

Manager Hall replied yes, and that staff had good collaboration with the County Public Works Department too.

Councilor Lyon asked who the company was going around patching small areas.

Manager Hall stated that Cascade Natural Gas is replacing some of their meters and when they dig up city streets they must patch them back up. She stated that the fire department has responded to three gas leaks in a short amount of time.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Councilor Chesnut asked if all city employees receive the city newsletter.

Manager Hall said she believed that they were distributed to all departments but she would double check.

Councilor Chesnut stated he would like to see the golf course study group session scheduled. He said he attended the Parks and Recreation Community meeting at the Community Building and that it was very low key, six easels with information on it and maybe a dozen people attended.

Manager Hall stated the consultant will be back in October and there will be better concentration on advertising.

Charles Danforth, 225 Maple Avenue – stated the inside door on the west side of city hall should be a fire door with a fire actuator.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:53 p.m.

Lewis S. Key, Mayor