
CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER GOVERNING BODY

Vacant At Large, Position 1
Steve Irving - Council President At Large, Position 2
Edwin E. Chesnut At Large, Position 3

Lewis S. Key Mayor
John Lyon Ward 1
Bradley J. Humbert Ward 2
Jose Garcia Ward 3

**CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES****March 8, 2021**

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met Monday, March 8, 2021 at 7:00 p.m. at the Community Building, 109 NE 5th, Milton-Freewater, Oregon due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and practicing social distancing to stay in compliance with the Executive Orders Issued by Governor Kate Brown.

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

City Council At Large, Position #1 was vacant.

Staff members present were: City Manager Linda Hall and City Recorder Leanne Steadman.

Guests and citizens present were: Damien Reino and Wes Koklich.

Representing the news media was: Sherrie Widmer of the Valley Herald.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS:

The consent calendar items consisted of:

- Council Minutes from February 8, 2021
- Accounts payables from February 3, 2021 through February 17, 2021
- Accounts payables from February 18, 2021 through March 2, 2021
- Liquor License Request from Kanwaljit Singh, new owner of Sam's Stop and Shop convenient store, 1121 S. Main

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

OLD BUSINESS ITEM:**CONSIDERATION OF APPOINTMENT TO FILL COUNCIL VACANCY - AT LARGE
POSITION #1**

Manager Hall reported that both qualified candidates who applied to fill the City Council seat vacancy for the At Large Position #1 were present. Those candidates were Wes Koklich and Damien Reino. As in the past and in the interest of fairness she recommended that the council interview each candidate separately with the other candidate stepping out of the room.

The council concurred.

One at a time the City Council took turns asking each candidate questions.

Councilor Chesnut stated he appreciated the candidates, the Council and staff for meeting his recommendation of holding an in-person meeting to be able to meet and ask questions in person. He stated he felt better looking at each candidate face-to-face and not over a Zoom meeting as this was an important decision.

Councilor Chesnut motioned to appoint Damien Reino to fill the unexpired term of former Councilor Verl Presnall, City Councilor At Large Position #1. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

PRESENTATION ITEM:

REVIEW OF THE COMPREHENSIVE ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT (CAFR)

City Manager Linda Hall stated the Comprehensive Annual Financial Report also referred to as the CAFR, was an even better document than the annual budget for complete information about the city. The CAFR shows a true reflection of the City's financial health and it gives some history of the largest tax payers in the city as well as other statistical data. The document is public record and is available for public inspection through the Library or Finance Department. She highlighted some of the facts from this year's CAFR. She stated overall, the city was in very strong financial shape with strong reserve funds and a low debt to revenue ratio. Staff brought in over \$1,055,000 in grant dollars in the FY20 budget year. The City is not totally dependent on property taxes as most other cities are. The City's tax rate is \$3.7499 per \$1,000 of assessed value and is one of the lowest in the states and she clarified that that amount is permanently capped. This tax rate is nearly half the amount of an Oregon neighbor which their city tax rate is at \$7.57 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The city has lost revenue due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic from the Community Building, liquor license tax revenues due to restaurants being closed, school bus maintenance charges, etc. just to name a few. In order to get balanced and in anticipation of these decreases in revenue, staff cut expenditures by \$622,361 to the General Fund programs alone. Another cost savings was the re-finance of the sewer plant improvement loan which saved \$200,000 during the life of the loan. Temporary stop gap measures such as a hiring freeze, slashing capital purchases, cutting travel and training expenses were also implemented. The City has almost \$11,000,000 in investments and reserves, which resulted in interest earnings of \$528,400 this year. She stated staff will continue to be conservative but be cognitive of not falling behind the curve in keeping up with essential tools and manpower to keep up with the amount of services the citizens have come to expect. She gave the example of the recent snow storm and being heavily criticized for not keeping up with all the plowing to keep all the streets completely clear of snow. She said this became difficult with only one snowplow, one backhoe and a very small streets crew. Some of the challenges facing the city are the costs of doing business continues to rise, even though the property tax amount is permanently capped. Many building materials to repair and maintain city facilities have increased due to COVID-19 as much as 400%. Power purchases from Bonneville Power Administration (BPA) have risen in the double digits over the past decade and costs of vehicles and equipment have almost doubled in the past 10 years. In closing Manager Hall stated the city is in sound financial shape and was able to weather the storms due to a conservative practice but that needs to be better communicated to the citizens so they are better prepared for the tradeoffs of a low tax base, lower cost utilities and lower fees.

Councilor Lyon asked if the conservatism started with Manager Hall's career as the Manager.

Manager Hall stated she believed that began back when the two cities of Milton and Freewater merged.

BUSSINESS ITEMS:

RESOLUTION NO. 2446 TRANSFER FUNDS DUE TO UNFORESEEN REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES

Manager Hall stated the following changes were necessary to comply with Oregon Budget Law and to take into consideration unanticipated revenues and expenditures that have taken place within the current budget year. She summarized the adjustments necessary. The City received a Federal pass through grant from the State of Oregon for \$210,033 to be used for expenditures incurred due to COVID-19 with no match requirement. Those funds were reimbursements for expenditures for medical and protective supplies, disinfecting supplies for public facilities, technical assistance on COVID-19 treat mitigation, public safety measures, small business interruption grants, public safety improvements, etc. The parks department received two grants for the new flag pole at the tri-angle, \$6,500, grant from M-F Area Foundation and \$3,030 Eurus grant. Parks also received a grant for \$27,012 from the Oregon Parks & Recreation Department for a Parks Master Plan. Police Patrol received a grant for \$20,000 from Wildhorse Foundation grant to fix dead spots for the radio repeater. The streets department received \$245,805 to purchase a new street sweeper from the Oregon State STP allocation.

Councilor Lyon motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2446, Resolution to Make Appropriations due to Unforeseen Revenues and Expenditures. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

AWARD OF HOUSE BILL 2017 (HB2017)

Manager Hall stated in 2018 staff was advised the City would be receiving \$3,000,000 for street improvements through Oregon House Bill 2017. The City Council has since authorized entering into agreements with Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) for use of these funds and Anderson Perry and Associates for Professional Engineering Services for engineering designs. The following is a list of improvements that went out to bid; N. Elizabeth Street and NE Dahlia Street Sidewalk (NE 5th Avenue to City Limits), SW 8th Avenue Sidewalk and overlay (Pierce Street to Jacquelyn Street), Chestnut Street overlay (12th Avenue to Thorn Avenue) and SE 12th Avenue overlay (Mill Street to dead end east of Walnut Street), and Walnut Street Overlay (SE 15th Avenue to SE 18th Avenue). These projects have been advertised twice in the city's newspaper of record, the Valley Herald as well as the city website and Daily Journal of Commerce. There were two bids received, Eastern Oregon Contracting, LLC and Humbert Asphalt, Inc. There was a recommendation to award the bid to Humbert Asphalt, Inc.

Councilor Humbert disclosed he was related to Humbert Asphalt but that he had no financial ties with them. He also disclosed he was the one who provided the bid for Eastern Oregon Contracting, LLC.

Councilor Lyon motioned to award unit prices as described on the bid tabulation dated February 26, 2021 for the House Bill 2017 Street Improvement Projects – 2021 to Humbert Asphalt, Inc. of Milton-Freewater, Oregon as they were the apparent low bidder. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed with Councilor Humbert abstaining from the vote due for reasons he disclosed earlier.

GOALS UPDATE ON “EXPLORE RE-ESTABLISHMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION SUPERVISOR POSITION” BY APPROVING JOB DESCRIPTION FOR PUBLIC WORKS PARKS/RECREATION/BUILDING SUPERVISOR POSITION

Manager Hall stated one of the City Council goals was to “Explore re-establishment of Parks and Recreation Supervisor Position”. When the Council set this goal in January 2017, there was a Parks/Recreation lead. Since that time, the former lead position was upgraded back up to a working Supervisor position. The former job description for this position had been made into a single job description. The idea at that time was that the Supervisors for Parks/Recreation, Streets/Water and Solid Waste/Sewer crews could inter-change among the crews. With all the jobs becoming more complicated, governed by ever-increasing laws, regulations and higher standards, that practice was no longer working. With the retirement of a 27 year veteran Parks and Recreation Crew Supervisor Craig Rouse, the job description is being reviewed and updated to ensure it adequately addresses the position it is responsible for, and to be sure it meets the expectations of Council’s philosophy in how this goal should be met.

A discussion ensued regarding the crew and supervisors duties and responsibilities.

Manager Hall stated the revised job description attempts to capture all the varied responsibilities of parks, recreation and buildings and incorporate a focus on a candidate that would be able to offer expertise on how to manage and maintain green growing things as assets in the city.

Councilor Chesnut stated he has pushed for focus with knowledge and planning with “green growing things” as well.

Councilor Lyon stated this position had a wide range of responsibilities.

Councilor Chesnut suggested a change to one of the bullet points under essential job functions and examples of responsibilities. Change “Scheduling and coordinating regular maintenance for city buildings” to “Scheduling and coordinating regular maintenance for city structures and systems”.

A brief discussion ensued regarding “possession of a Certified Pool Operators certificate preferred but not required”. No change was made.

Council Irving motioned to adopt the revised job description for Public Works Parks/Recreation/Building Supervisor position with the amendment recommended by Councilor Chesnut. Councilor Humbert seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

MANAGERS REPORT

Manager Hall reported that Well #2 behind City Hall had some emergency repairs needing the pump to be pulled, parts replaced, labor and reinstalling the pump which came to a total of \$33,250.

Councilor Irving motioned to approve the emergency repairs in the amount of \$33,250 for Well #2. Councilor Humbert seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Humbert gave an update on the Milton-Freewater Water Control District, which he is a board member of. He stated repair work on the levee has been done and it’s in good shape right now and currently there is no flood danger.

Councilor Lyon asked if it was feasible to compile a list that could be used to help with snow removal in the future.

Councilor Humbert stated a small works roster could be used.

Councilor Chesnut suggested putting together a policy that would address snow removal in the future.

Manager Hall said it is hard to put together a written policy on a weather related event when there are so many variables. She stated she and Public Works Superintendent Brian Steadman have come up with ideas for the future and one of those are to purchase a snow plow for a pickup truck that could help in an event of heavy snowfall.

Councilor Chesnut gave an update on his progress of moving and said their plan was to start moving April 1st but that he would more than likely be present for the April 12th council meeting.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Lewis S. Key, Mayor