
CITY OF MILTON-FREEWATER GOVERNING BODY

Damien Reino At Large, Position 1
Steve Irving - Council President At Large, Position 2
Wes Koklich 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****May 13, 2024**

The Council of the City of Milton-Freewater met in regular session on May 13, 2024 in the Albee Room of the City Library, 8 SW 8th Avenue at 7:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Lewis Key, Councilors Brad Humbert, Steve Irving, Jose Garcia, Damien Reino, Wes Koklich and John Lyon.

Staff members present were: Assistant City Manager/City Recorder Leanne Steadman and Public Works Superintendent Brian Steadman.

Guests and citizens present were: Patty Key, Arlen Calley, Donna Sheridan, Paul Seaquist, Tammy Seaquist, Krista Gannon, Emily Holden, Cindy Timmons, Steve Timmons, Rick Piper, Emily Halseth, Randy Reese, Emily Martin, Kenneth Jenkins, Ryan Westman, Robin Sanchez, Tim Sanchez, Tina Kain, Destiny Jensen, Laurie Bubar and Tracy Martinez.

Representing the news media were: Sherrie Widmer of the Valley Herald and Sheila Hagar of the East Oregonian.

CONSENT CALENDAR ITEMS:

The consent calendar items consisted of:

- Council minutes from April 8, 2024
- Accounts Payable March 30th – April 17, 2024
- Accounts Payable April 18th – May 6, 2024

Councilor Irving motioned to approve all items on the Consent Calendar. Councilor Lyon seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS ITEMS:**REQUEST FROM RECREATION COMMITTEE TO DISCUSS THE 2024 POOL SEASON AND YMCA SERVICE AGREEMENT**

Recreation Committee Chair Ryan Westman presented the committee and several community members concern of the YMCA proposed delaying opening of the pool until June 17th and closing August 23rd, the proposed closing time of 6:00 p.m. instead of 8:00 p.m., and the cleanliness of the pool and the quality of service. Mr. Westman listed the committee recommendations as opening date no later than May 27th and closing no earlier than September 6th, closing time no later than 8:00 p.m., that the council stipulate the YMCA staff implement daily and weekly maintenance checklists and direct city staff to work with the YMCA to develop lists that address the community's cleanliness and quality of service. The recreation committee letter was shared with the YMCA and their response to the committee's recommendations were that the proposed 2024 pool schedule was due to school schedules and the timing of the last day of school for closing, meaning that there are insufficient staff available to serve the pool earlier than June 17th. As for addressing cleanliness, the YMCA proposed

that the city augment the YMCA staff's routine basic cleaning and restrooms supply stocking throughout the day with a deep cleaning no less than twice daily. Alternatively, the city may elect to take all responsibility for the restroom routine maintenance and supplies and reduce the YMCA's budget accordingly. Mr. Westman conveyed the sense that the YMCA was offended by the committee's letter and quality of service they were providing. In closing he shared the YMCA was requiring the city council's commitment to the YMCA be in writing of their approval of the plan for 2024 season or withdrawal from the agreement if they didn't receive that. He said the YMCA was appreciated and everything they do for the community and the city council for doing so much for recreation in the community. He said they simply meant to bring the concerns of the community to the council as what they considered minor recommendations.

Councilor Humbert asked why wasn't these concerns addressed at the February 6, 2024 recreation committee meeting.

Mr. Westman stated he believed it was an oversight. The YMCA presented the information at the meeting in February. He said he missed the scheduling portion and so did the others. It came up at the April meeting and that's when the date caught their attention. At the time, he said the YMCA had addressed the cleanliness and staff issues.

A brief discussion ensued regarding the meetings and timing of the letter listing concerns.

Councilor Koklich asked if there was another alternative besides the YMCA for running the pool.

Assistant City Manager Leanne Steadman stated the city used to advertise and hire the lifeguards, but it kept getting harder and harder to staff the pool and that was the reason why the city partnered with the YMCA to take the services over.

Councilor Irving stated that if the city doesn't contract with the YMCA, the pool will be closed for the season. He said he understands the staffing problem and especially getting lifeguards.

A discussion ensued regarding the minimum wage in Oregon versus Washington and what other aquatic centers are paying.

Karen Hedine, CEO of the YMCA stated she appreciated the opportunity to work for the city. They are dedicated to the community and the Y is never threatening to leave. She believed they were trying to be very transparent and available. She stated the biggest issue this season wasn't the willingness to not be available on Memorial Day weekend, it's that the school has changed their schedules. Milton-Freewater School gets out June 7th and Walla Walla schools get out June 13th. The Y hires 15 years old and older with some seniors being available, many of the other lifeguards and swim instructors are 15 plus, and they are not available until June 13th. After June 13th then they take a couple of in-services days at the pool with the opening on June 17th. Other surrounding pools are not opening until after Memorial Day as well with the exception of Walla Walla Memorial Pool which is opening partial days over Memorial weekend, but they have some adult lifeguards and college students that go back. The shortage of lifeguards is nationwide not just in Milton-Freewater. Hedine stated the Y is paying the Washington State minimum wage because the kids would not take the jobs in Milton-Freewater if they could make more money at Memorial pool, which Memorial takes a lot of the lifeguards. She stated the Y trains all lifeguards according to the American Red Cross at a cost of \$250 per person. The Y is going to try something new by providing comment cards at the pool. The hours of operation were proposed not fixed and they were open to ideas of scheduling to fit the community's desire.

A discussion ensued regarding the cost from last year to this year and there were several suggestions to the hours of operation for the schedule for lap swim, open swim, water aerobics and swimming lessons.

Hedine stated the available schedule will come down to available staffing and the Y's first priority is safety. She stated she believed that building a partnership with the school district is crucial, future lifeguards are often students, and she has been in contact with Milton-Freewater School Superintendent Aaron Duff who has been very receptive to her idea.

A discussion ensued regarding kid camps and the grants the Y has received for the camps and swim lessons for the pool.

Councilor Humbert motioned to accept the YMCA's 2024 pool schedule of June 17th through August 23, 2024, which remains contingent upon successful staffing, accept the proposal for city staff to provide daily deep cleaning of bathrooms to augment the YMCA's staff's routine cleaning throughout the day, and affirm that the pool's in-water safety be the primary duty of the YMCA. Contingent upon the funding of the 2024/2025 fiscal year budget. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2539 – APPROVAL OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH CITY OF PENDLETON FOR SMALL BUSINESS ASSISTANCE GRANTS FOR COVID RELIEF FUNDS THROUGH BUSINESS OREGON

Assistant City Manager Leanne Steadman presented an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the City of Pendleton for Small Business grants for COVID relief funds through Business Oregon. She stated the city partnered with the City of Pendleton for a county wide grant program offering small businesses grants. The grant was through Business Oregon and was for \$500,000. There has been a total of 15 businesses helped, with two of those being from the Milton-Freewater area. The non-profit third-party administrator of the grant is Euvalcree out of Hermiston and they discovered that they had not secured intergovernmental agreements with the cities for whom some grants have been made. This was being remedied with the request to authorize the IGA.

Councilor Humbert stated this was not a new grant and that it had been brought to the council before.

Steadman concurred, saying the grant began in 2021/2022 and that the council had been made aware of the opportunity.

Councilor Humbert motioned to adopt Resolution No. 2539, Resolution Authorizing Signature to Intergovernmental Agreement with City of Pendleton for the granting of CDBG COVID 19 Small Business Assistance Program funds. Councilor Irving seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

ADJOURN TO EXECUTIVE SESSION

The council adjourned at 7:55 p.m. to an executive session pursuant to 192.660(2)(i) to review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the chief executive officer of any public body, a public officer, employee or staff member who does not request an open hearing.

Council returned to open session at 8:42 p.m.

Councilor Humbert motioned to recommend to the new city manager to extend the assistant city manager position into the 2024/2025 fiscal year for a period of time to allow the new city manager to make a decision on how he wants to address that position due to shortage of department heads at the city at this time. Councilor Reino seconded the motion which passed with Councilor Lyon being the dissenting vote.

Paul Seaquist asked if that will be extended to June 2025.

Councilor Humbert stated he made a recommendation to allow that position to continue into the new fiscal year 2024/2025 so that the funds are available to extend the position to allow the new city manager to decide how he wants to run his departments. To give him the liberty to extend the position and come back to the council after his probationary period and make his recommendation on what he wants to do with his personnel. Councilor Humbert stated he wanted to give the new manager the opportunity to run the city at his direction.

Emily Holden asked if a timeline could be set so the citizens will know when to show up to give feedback to the city manager about their beliefs.

Councilor Humbert stated a timeline could be set, but it wouldn't mean anything because per the City Charter it was not the city council's decision. The only decision the council could make would be to eliminate the position from the budget and then there wouldn't be an opportunity for the new manager to make. His motion was affording the new manager to make his own decision by giving him the funding.

Robin Sanchez asked if the Assistant City Manager was a new position.

Councilor Irving stated Linda Hall was assistant city manager for a period of four to five years.

Steadman stated Ms. Hall was appointed assistant city manager October 2001 and the new manager, Delphine Palmer was hired November 2001.

Councilor Humbert stated City Manager Palmer decided to keep the assistant city manager position and kept Ms. Hall as her assistant city manager over her tenure at the city and retired in 2007. He said the new city manager may decide he doesn't want an assistant city manager but the city needs to have coverage in the interim. If the budget was cut now then he is being hampered on being able to be successful in his new position.

Mayor Key said Ms. Steadman was assistant city manager now and it's going to take the new manager awhile for him to get his feet on the ground and she'll be helping him while he does that.

Councilor Humbert stated the city was down an electric superintendent and city planner and Ms. Steadman was taking on a whole lot of other positions, and he wouldn't ask one of his own employees to take on a whole bunch of extra work without being compensated for it.

Mayor Key stated Ms. Steadman was taking on those other two department head positions beside the assistant city manager position.

Councilor Humbert said he wouldn't ask his own employees to work overtime and not get paid overtime.

Paul Seaquist stated, she's getting paid and not working for free.

Councilor Humbert stated if the position was eliminated now, then the decision for the new manager is being taken away from him for him to make his own decision on how he wants to run the city.

Councilor Humbert made a motion to hold a second meeting in May to specifically discuss the budget. Councilor Irving seconded the motion.

The meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 28th at 7:00 p.m., Monday is a holiday due to Memorial Day.

OPPORTUNITY FOR CITIZENS TO APPROACH THE COUNCIL WITH ISSUES NOT ON THE AGENDA

Kenneth Jenkins – asked who was paying for the drop box that has been dropped off on NE 2nd Street.

Steadman stated the city was paying for it.

Mr. Jenkins stated the city has cleaned that property up multiple times and it keeps reappearing, he asked if there was a plan for that not to continue to happen. He suggested putting a lien on the property. He presented a picture of property on N. Main, saying it was a new encampment that was starting. It has him concerned with the investments he has in that portion of town. He said there has to be a way to stop it from happening.

Councilor Humbert made a recommendation to start using the code that allows the city to take the property from the landowner. If they have squatters on their property, and have been given permission to live on the property with filth and unhealthy environments, he is going to give the recommendation to the city management to start condemning the properties. He said the Milton-Freewater Water Control District, which he is a board member of, just did a river cleanup and he wants to keep the progress going.

Mr. Jenkins said he would appreciate that.

Councilor Irving stated he believed part of the problem was satellite ownership of new businesses that aren't keeping up their properties. The code enforcement wants to do a good job, but felt he was being restrained and he should be able to give one warning and then give a citation.

A discussion ensued about placing cement blocks in problem areas.

Mayor Key stated there was a lady that lived on the property that was allowing for others to stay there.

Ryan Westman stated the lady that used to live there, no longer lives there since January. He said there was no funding to abate properties like this and was unsure if there was anything that could be done in the upcoming budget year that would allocate funding for properties like this.

Councilor Humbert stated to start taking the properties and sell the property at auction.

Emily Holden asked where would that be documented in the budget so there was money for the attorneys to take the property.

Councilor Humbert stated the cleanup of the property would be more expensive than taking the property.

Steadman stated those funds would need to be in the City Attorney budget.

Paul Seaquist said thank you for getting the speakers working. He reported graffiti on the storage units on NE 5th, corner of Elizabeth and NE 5th on the fence, on the Senior Center, NW Steel on the building and across the street on the concrete wall.

Steadman asked Mr. Seaquist if he had called these locations in to dispatch.

Mr. Seaquist stated it wasn't his duty, it was the code enforcements duty to be able to see it.

Steadman reported she had received at least one invoice from Fry's of someone who utilized the new program of free paint supplies.

Mr. Seaquist stated it's getting worse. He referred to the Valley Herald edition on April 12th stating that Chief Shurtz stated that to his knowledge no property owner has ever been fined by the city.

Steadman stated there was a work session prior to the city council meeting on April 8th and at the end of the meeting Chief Shurtz asked if there were suggestions by council or citizens of changes to the ordinance to email those to him. To her knowledge there were no suggestions other than those made during that meeting.

Emily Holden asked what good was changing the ordinance if no one was ever fined.

Councilor Lyon stated the ordinance was clear that they would be fined within a certain number of days.

Mr. Seaquist said there needs to be teeth in the ordinance and Milton-Freewater can't look like Portland. He then moved on to the police station, asking if the council had been through the building with a magnifying glass.

Councilor Humbert stated he has.

A discussion ensued regarding the repairs needed that were listed in the police station update that was provide by Project Manager Linda Hall at the April 8th council meeting.

Mr. Seaquist stated the project update listed that the concrete floors were damaged during construction and asked who was paying for them to get fixed. He stated the floor wasn't level to begin with and now has ripples in it. He said the tax payers voted for this building and voted for a first class building and that's what he expects it to be.

The council agreed.

Mr. Seaquist asked that there be an independent audit of all the funds. He asked if the new city manager was going to be involved in the hiring of the next city planner and electric superintendent.

Steadman reported that both these positions were posted with first review dates in mind with the new manager coming on board and being involved from the beginning since both these positions will directly report to him. The electric superintendent first review is June 6th and June 13th for the city planner position.

A discussion ensued regarding the process of recruitments.

Mr. Seaquist volunteered to be on the interview panels. He also recommended the council go back to weed abatement done by city crews and a lien be placed on the properties.

Councilor Lyon asked what was the council going to do about the graffiti issue. He asked if the graffiti ordinance was going to be enforced or to just abolish the ordinance.

Councilor Humbert stated to enforce the ordinance.

Councilor Reino stated to get aggressive with the ordinance that is already in place.

Councilor Lyon stated he wanted to work with the new city manager on Mr. Seaquist suggestions.

Councilor Reino asked who will get charged for the graffiti on the Senior Center.

Councilor Humbert stated the Senior Center would be the one receiving the fine.

Councilor Lyon asked going forward what is going to change.

Councilor Humbert stated you can make a motion to the Assistant City Manager to enforce the code.

Councilor Lyon asked who can write the fine.

Councilor Humbert stated the police or code enforcement. He suggested a letter go out in the utility bills stating that the graffiti code was going to be enforced.

A discussion ensued regarding how the fine would be assessed, where criminal cases were handled and what the recourse was for the perpetrator.

Tim Sanchez suggested changing the graffiti code.

Councilor Humbert stated the Police Chief asked for input on changes to the code, but other than those received at the meeting, there have been no comments. He stated the code needs to have some teeth in it for it to work.

Mr. Sanchez suggested the meetings be in Spanish and try and get the Spanish community involved. He said it was happening at the school board meetings also. When he asks Spanish people to attend a council meeting, he said, "they are scared to come and they are afraid they are going to lose their jobs".

Councilor Garcia stated he has tried to recruit people and get them to come to a council meeting but they just give excuses why they can't attend.

Mr. Seaquist asked what was the council's position on the police station, were they just going to accept it the way it is or do something about it. He shared some of his opinions on the building.

Steadman stated there was a final punch list and it was 216 pages, which had things ranging from clean up needed to touch of paint and it also listed the foyer concrete and carpet that Mr. Seaquist referred to. She shared these items were being shared by the architect either on May 10th or May 13th. There was still one connection from CenturyLink that was needed for the 911 dispatch center. She said none of the 216 punch list items would stop the police department from moving in other than the connection for dispatch.

Sheila Hagar asked if the general contractor has been issuing a check for the liquidated damages.

Steadman stated it has been withheld from their pay applications.

Councilor Humbert stated once a final punch list was received as a contractor, it's usually the case to come up with a schedule for addressing the issues which is given to the city or owners representative.

Tim Sanchez – 102 S. Main Street, asked if the city of Milton-Freewater had a sex offender registry.

Councilor Humbert stated the State of Oregon runs that program and it's online and public information.

A brief discussion ensued.

Steadman suggested Mr. Sanchez stop into the police department dispatch center after the meeting and inquire about a list.

COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilor Irving announced the Milton-Freewater Farmers Market starts May 15th and runs through September, every Wednesday from 4:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. at Orchard Park.

Councilor Koklich stated that he serves on the Umatilla County Economic Development Board and they meet twice a year. The funds allocated by the board comes from lottery money. He reported several Milton-Freewater businesses received grants.

Tammy Seaquist thanked everyone for their time.

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Lewis S. Key, Mayor