

City of Tekoa
COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
Monday – October 21, 2024, 6 P.M.
Tekoa City Hall

- I. CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Schulz called the meeting to order at 6:03 P.M.
- II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:** Mayor Schulz led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL:

MAYOR SCHULZ: present
CM MANDI PRINCE: present
CM MARGIE JAEGER: present
CM PETE MARTIN: present
CM MIKE HALE: present
CM SHELLY AUSMUS: present
CM DAVE TYSZ: present

- IV. NEW COUNCIL POSITION INTERVIEWS & APPOINTMENT:** Mayor Schulz explained the process of selecting questions for the prospective council applicants. There was discussion re: the process. CM Ausmus suggested an executive session for 10 minutes to select questions.
- V. EXECUTIVE SESSION:** Mayor Schulz called executive session At 6:05 P.M. for 10 minutes for the council to decide on the questions they would like to ask the potential council appointee. Mayor Schulz adjourned executive session at 6:15 P.M. Mayor Schulz explained the process for interviewing applicants and called applicants in the order they were received by the office.

Dan Thomas introduced himself as a local who has been interested in serving for a long time. He believes the new sewer plant and paying for insurance for employees are the most pressing issues for the city. Dan believes the current number of hours covered by Whitman County Sheriff's department are not enough. He let the council know he feels comfortable expressing his opinion in meetings. Dan said he would abide by the new ethics policy and help craft it. He said the sewer plant process should be reaching an end, but he would need to be educated about the current status. Dan also expressed that he had heard things about how the council and city have performed, but prefers not to say anything about that as those are rumors.

Reid Smith introduced himself as having been in the Air Force and bounced around a fair amount. He and his wife loved Tekoa and the PNW and decided to make it their home after waiting for an appropriate house to come on the market. He has been interested in joining the city council since moving here, and now seems a good time to do it. He thinks, after attending meetings for months, the biggest issue facing the council is the difficulty in getting along as members. Reid thinks the level of policing is sufficient. He would like to be able to have the Sheriff's deputies closer, sooner. Reid expressed he can speak to issues that need to be addressed. He agreed to abide by the ethics policies and rules and regulations and would add his opinion to their crafting. Reid said he understands the need to keep our waterways pure, but he doesn't know exactly what is needed now for the sewer plant. Reid

said the performance of city hall and council is good, but there seems to be some friction, and he would like to see that buffered out.

Cheri Currier introduced herself as a long-time resident (since 1989) and a postal retiree. She said it is important to her to make sure the voices of the town people are heard and issues that people are expressing are put on the table. She wants to include everyone. Cheri thinks the biggest issue the council is facing is that things aren't put out on the table. People need to go to the people they have problems with. She believes that because of the care center the remainder of the town does not have adequate police coverage. Sheri said she usually listens to the facts before jumping to a conclusion, and she will approach difficult subjects if she feels comfortable. She may wait if she needs more time to address issues. Cheri said she will follow procedure and voice her concerns. She commented that sewer rates will have to go up, but people are "crunched" with the cost of everything. She knows the sewer needs to be worked on constantly but doesn't know "the whole" of the sewer projects. Cheri thinks there have been a lot of knee-jerk reactions. She didn't think the mayor should have allowed an investigation re: employee/council relations.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Mayor Schulz called for an executive session for 5 minutes at 6:33 P.M. to discuss prospective council member qualifications. The mayor adjourned the executive session at 6:40 P.M. The voting was as follows:

CM Prince voted for Dan Thomas
CM Hale voted for Reid Smith
CM Jaeger voted for Cheri Currier
CM Tysz voted for Cheri Currier
CM Ausmus voted for Dan Thomas
CM Martin voted for Cheri Currier.

VI. AGENDA MODIFICATIONS: None.

VII. OCTOBER 7, 2024, COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES: CM Ausmus would like the New Business statement by Doug Palmer speaking about former mayor John Jaeger and house-buying scuttlebutt removed. The mayor said he would let it stand but the council could override that. CM Ausmus moved to strike that sentence. The motion passed unanimously. CM Tysz moved to approve the minutes and CM Martin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS, PUBLIC HEARINGS AND CORRESPONDENCE:

A. PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE: Doug Sienknecht came to thank the council for their prompt and smooth process in getting the sewer line installed on the new easement on Triple D Centennial Farms land. He is very pleased with how it went.
John Jaeger: spoke re: his past property purchasing and how he would talk about it to anyone that has questions. He called attention to the ethics policy and said he thinks the investigation of council behavior was a sham. He then apologized as he didn't realize that there had been a finding. There was discussion about written findings. CM Martin said there was no written finding. John Jaeger asked about the basis of findings. The mayor responded ***The investigation made by AWC determined the council had not harassed the employees* and that the attorney said even though the complaints weren't actionable, that didn't mean the behavior wasn't objectionable. CM Ausmus spoke about the investigation process she had been through and her understanding of the circumstances. She thought it was very confusing. John Jaeger suggested that there be a written complaint process. CM Martin said that once a complaint has been worked out, it becomes public. He made comments about his experience. The mayor relayed his understanding of the circumstances, and the attempts made to deal with it. If there appears to be a threat of legal action,

the city is under obligation to inform the risk management company. The mayor gave an example of an ethics ordinance. **The mayor said the council had harassed the staff in the past and still were.* He said there was a lot of room for improvement all the way around. Atty. Hanson suggested it would be best to stick to the agenda and not revisit this. CM Tysz asked whether he can ask questions and if that is ok. Atty. Hansen explained the separation of powers and to stick to that. Todd Jenson gave a container update about various containers in town.

**Italics added and approved by the council at the 11/4/2024 council meeting.*

***Italics added and approved by the council at the 12/2/2024 council meeting.*

- B. COMMUNITY GROUP UPDATES:** CM Ausmus reminded everyone about the Empire Theatre “Wheatstalk” Music Festival this Saturday, from 2-10 P.M.

IX. UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

- A. WATER METER ORDINANCE CLARIFICATION:** This will be discussed at the next meeting.
- B. SALARY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:** CM Hale said he would like to see the council approve the stipend raised to \$625/mo. CM Tysz spoke about stipends related to healthcare. He was concerned about the employees getting harmed in their retirement by the stipend vs. insurance. There was discussion about best options. CM Tysz moved to accept the \$125 dollar stipend raise this year. CM Hale seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- C. ETHICS POLICY:** CM Martin spoke about the need for establishing ethics guidelines. He went over some of the proposed Ethics Policy. CM Hale would like to have the attorney go over the guidelines. CM Tysz had some questions about executive session. Atty. Hanson suggested that we move on and he can answer questions later.
- D. TEMPORARY OFFICE HELP:** Mayor Schulz let the council know that the office needs more help until a deputy clerk can be found and trained. He would like the council to approve more hours for this week. There was discussion about getting another person to work for up to half time at up to \$22-25/hour. CM Ausmus moved to approve additional help for up to half-time at \$22-25/hour. CM Hale seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.
- E. DOG TAGS:** CM Ausmus would like to do a little more research and come back to the next meeting with some suggestions.

X. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. TINY HOMES:** CM Ausmus would like to look again at the packet Steve Haxton had presented and have Atty. Hanson look at it and see what he thinks. Clerk Evans-Teague will get it to Atty. Hanson and it will be on the agenda for the next meeting where he is present.
- B. RUHL PARK TRANSFER TO PARKS & REC. DISTRICT:** Connie Marsh spoke about how Ruhl Park was presented to the City of Tekoa. It was thought it had been passed to the Tekoa Parks and Recreation District. That did not happen at the same time other parks were transferred to the Parks Dist. She noted the Parks Dist. would like to ask the city to issue a quit claim deed to the Parks Dist. for Ruhl Park. Heidi Turnbough presented the figures for maintaining the park since 2018. The Parks District requested that the city reimburse the Parks for the W/S/G bill as a credit. Connie Marsh explained the need to get the park quit-claimed to be able to install grant-funded equipment. There was discussion. CM Ausmus moved to quit-claim Ruhl Park to the Park and

Rec. District contingent on attorney review. CM Martin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. **NEW WELL:** CM Tysz noted that the water supply coming from the Line St. well is very sulphury smelling. He would like to see if the city could get a grant to put in a new well where there is not a sulfur bed and that we would need to talk to Matt Morkert from Century West about this. Steven Thomas spoke about the well procedures. There was discussion about using different wells to lessen water from the sulfurous well and the challenges therein.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REPORTS:

- A. **MAYOR’S REPORT:** Mayor Schulz let the council know he had been approached about people buying a couple of city buildings. He has had some market analyses done and will get them to the council.

B. STAFF REPORT: Clerk/Treasurer

- A. **COUNCIL REPORTS:** CM Hale let the council know that the Port Commissioners approved of the match help. He also reported on the end of the 3rd quarter budget. CM Tysz spoke about the need to raise water rates over time. CM Ausmus spoke about the meetings with Atty. Jennifer Robinson as being good and healthy and that everyone is learning. She would like to have regular reports from Public Works and our Code Enforcement Officer; even written reports would be fine. CM Martin spoke about his time at county meetings and encouraged people not to interpret what happens in meetings personally. He has spoken with the Parks and Rec. Dist. re: the interpretive panels. He is still working on placing them. CM Martin let the council know the Tekoa Golf Course lease demands full liability in all seasons of the year. In addition, the structural engineer suggested taking the Tekoa Golf Clubhouse down instead of remodeling it.

XII. MAYOR AND COUNCIL NEW BUSINESS AND NEW INITIATIVES:

XIII. APPROVAL OF VOUCHERS AND CLAIMS: CM Tysz moved to app, Ausmus, unanimously.

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION: None.

XV. CONTINUED PUBLIC COMMENTS: None.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT: CM Martin moved to adjourn the meeting. CM Tysz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mayor Schulz adjourned the meeting at 8:24 P.M.

APPROVED:

Roy Schulz - Mayor

ATTEST:

Eliza M. Evans-Teague– Clerk/Treasurer