

Town of Garfield
TOWN COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARING AND MEETING MINUTES
October 22, 2008

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Jarrod Pfaff called the meeting to order at 6:56 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Jarrod Pfaff, Larry Hunt, John Kuehner, Tim Southern, and Rob Watkins.
Absent: Andrew Flodin. Staff - Public Works Assistant Perry Brown, Police Officer Joe Merry, Clerk/Treasurer Annie Pillers. Public present: Brian Conklin.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Tim Southern **MOVED** the minutes of October 8, 2008, be approved as written. Rob Watkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING – 2009 PRELIMINARY BUDGET: Mayor Pfaff opened the public hearing and asked for public input. Brian Conklin asked whether a portion of the sales tax had ever been any thought of for earmarking for use for economic development? Mayor Pfaff said no, there was not enough in past to do that. Brian said he was just curious as we look at the retail climate dwindling, taking a part of that and figure out something to do for economic development for PDA or the chamber. Tim Southern said if the utility tax pays off the town could consider this. John Kuehner asked if the PDA still has some cash. Larry Hunt confirmed they had some outstanding bills they inherited and some other items to pay. He thought maybe there was about \$28,000. Annie Pillers confirmed the focus recently has been getting a community van. Mayor Pfaff closed the Public Hearing at 7:02 PM.

Mayor Pfaff noted the preliminary budget includes raises, the liability insurance increase, the proposed \$4.50 garbage rate increase. He indicated there would be changes by time the final budget is adopted. He explained both 518 (central services) and 538 were divided up as they should be. Those costs were still there but not in those sections. Tim Southern asked, for the final budget, was the council still thinking on the lines of making reserves for like Fund 401, making a 402 fund for reserves. Larry Hunt asked what the town could use these reserves for? Tim said as he understood it, because these are grouped under 401 the town can use them between all of the utilities. He said Annie thought it was different and they would need to check with the auditor. It was clarified the final budget hearing would be held November 12th and the budget finalized in December. Tim Southern **MOVED** to approve the 2009 preliminary budget. Larry Hunt seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

POLICE DEPARTMENT:

Officer Joe Merry indicated Chief Neumann was unable to attend the meeting. He provided council with the bi-monthly activity log. Officer Merry confirmed the Obama sign burning and graffiti at the gas pumps had been solved. 2 juveniles were involved and the incidents occurred in the same two nights. Officer Merry referred to a recent citizen letter of concern regarding excessive speed at both ends of town on SR 27. He suggested setting up the spare police car with the old manikin in it for a week or two at a time, noting council could solidify the request with Chief Neumann. During the 20 minutes Officer Merry worked SR 27 earlier in the afternoon, he stopped 3 cars and estimates they were driving 36 to 37 mph. Previously, when emphasis speed control was done, the average speed was down to 29 mph. Mayor Pfaff said if writing tickets was needed to address the problem, then that's what it would take. Council briefly discussed combines coming through town too fast as well. Officer Merry had contacted the owner who was very responsive and asked to be called by the Police Department if there was a problem with a driver. Officer Merry also reported a recent incident with pry marks found

on the back window of a triplex. They appeared to be about 10 days old. Officer Merry talked about barking dog complaints and typically trying to work with owners to get dogs put in. He noted in Palouse the department talks to the owner up to 3 times. The first citation is \$25, the second citation is \$100. The ordinance states even if during the day time a senior or a person working the night shift has their peacefulness disturbed, it's still a violation. Officer Merry left the meeting at 7:15 pm.

PUBLIC WORKS:

- 1 2nd Street Sidewalk - project pretty well complete. The town had a meeting with Progressive on the project costs. Mayor Pfaff asked if all the concrete had been picked up? Perry confirmed the town has picked up everything. There is still one property owner that hasn't finished with hers.
- 2 Railroad Crossing Signage – the sign at bottom of the hill on 2nd Street hasn't been put back up. Prior to the project there was a sign there. A railroad representative stopped by yesterday, noting the sign had to be put back up. Perry explained, because of the design of the wall and curb footings, there is not enough room to place the base of the sign post without busting off a big chunk of concrete. Regulations require the bottom of the sign be 9 feet above the road. However, with the sign at that height and the raised sidewalk, it will extend out where kids can bang on it and it's possible that car mirrors could hit it. Perry and the railroad representative talked about using a reflective paint on the road to indicate the railroad crossing. This might be possible because there is a "slow zone" posted further down the road at 25 mph but Perry does not have confirmation on this yet.
- 3 Recycling - 2 loads of scrap metal and 1 load of newspaper and cardboard were recently hauled off. The town got roughly \$600 from the recycler in Spokane. The white goods go to the county landfill. The town doesn't get paid for recycling the white goods, but realizes a \$95 a ton savings not paying the tipping fee. Perry confirmed the town also recycles its glass with the county. The county grinds the glass nearly into sand that is used as fill on the bridges.
- 4 Car Crushing. Rob Watkins thanked Larry Hunt for taking cars down to the car crushing site. Larry confirmed Dave Ulrick helped too. Larry noted 3 of the vehicles on the list did not make it to the site, as they were removed from town. Annie Pillers noted the county indicated once the cars get on the list and taken to the site, they become of the property of the crusher.
- 5 Water Leak. Perry indicated he found a water leak when reading the meters. He will be following up to see if it's the town's problem or the property owner's problem. Perry confirmed the meter was roughly 4 years old, but the riser and connections might be older.
- 6 Sewer line at school. The line is plugged with roots again and will have to be dredged out tomorrow morning. It's the same thing every time and happens about once a year. Perry confirmed he has dumped solution down it before and roots still grow. Even with replacing the line roots would still grow through. He also noted, even though roots get in it does not mean water is going out.
- 7 Injury. Perry reported breaking the tip of his thumb while using the bailer. He said, in general, the injury has just been a minor inconvenience with only a finger splint needed. He only missed enough work to see the doctor for the splint. He said in all his years using a bailer he did not think this accident could happen and suspects a piece of cardboard got caught and the bailer didn't latch completely. He is not worried that it will happen again.
- 8 Public Works Schedule. Dave is on vacation for the next 2 weeks. Perry is watching his hours so he can work Friday and getting everything done.
- 9 Town Meter Replacement. Mayor Pfaff asked if the town meter would be installed this fall. Perry said it was not on the schedule, but now that the line had been located it would not be too difficult. He suggested a simple ¾ inch meter as there is not high water usage at town

hall. The main use is when the chlorine is tested 5 days a week and the water is left on for approximately 15 minutes to ensure chlorine gets to the distribution system.

10 Street Sweeper. Perry reported contacting all the local places and nobody has one. He hasn't check government surplus options on line yet.

11 Winterization: Next week the park restrooms will be winterized and the closed signs will be posted. Perry confirmed he will put the snow plow on next week. He said the gravel spreader is built into the truck and is a very sufficient system, feeding gravel from the front end of the vehicle. He also said when the snow plow is on, both trucks will not fit inside the shop. The green truck will have to be left outside. Mayor Pfaff asked that the back of the trucks be kept clean. Perry said likely shovels and rakes would be left in the back of the trucks.

Perry Brown left the meeting at 7:35 PM.

OLD BUSINESS:

1. 2nd Street Project: Mayor Pfaff confirmed meeting the week before with Terry Nab of Progressive Engineering to discuss the final cost of the street project. The final cost did not change with the asphalt \$7,000 over the initial figures. Rob Watkins **MOVED** to approve Changer Order No. 3 and No. 4 and Pay Estimate No. 2 for the 2nd Street Sidewalk Project. John Kuehner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously. Rob Watkins **MOVED** upon TIB approval, the Mayor be authorized to sign the Final Updated Cost Estimate for the 2nd Street Project. Larry Hunt seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

2. 2009 Utility Rates: Tim Southern talked about going through the budget numbers with Annie. With a \$4.50 increase in garbage rates the projected loss is \$1,146, with a \$5.50 increase the fund gains \$1,854, and at \$6.50 the gain would be \$4,975. Tim would prefer the \$6.50 raise to set aside for a reserve. He talked about putting a cap on the reserve fund, like \$50,000 for truck replacement, etc., as he doesn't like taking more than needed. He talked to the council about having lived here all their lives and that it was a good place, because someone a long time ago thought that way and established reserves. If the council doesn't do something, the town won't have those reserves, and will shortly run out of money. He suggested giving to the reserves for others to be able to use. He said if the council had gone with the original \$5.50 or \$6.00, we wouldn't be having this discussion. He noted the proposed increase has not gone into effect, but is in the minutes. It was pointed out when the council discussed the garbage rate increase they were not aware of the tipping fee increase at the county landfill. Tim further suggested, in addition to the rate increase, the council consider at least a 2% increase every year starting in perhaps 2011, because that's what the Whitman County's landfill increase will be.

John Kuehner asked what fund would be used to purchase, for example, the Gator and can the reserves be used for raises. Mayor Pfaff said no, the reserves would be for equipment and come from fund 401. He said the town needs to get off the theory of balances ending at zero, it can't happen, noting it's gone on for way too many years, and funds are depleting. He said the proposed \$4.50 increase doesn't work because the tipping fees are up, liability insurance is up, and the council didn't have those figures yet when the \$4.50 was proposed. Council talked about capping the reserve at \$50,000 and if the fund hit that mark, not putting additional funds into the reserve that year. It could be put into operating. Mayor Pfaff talked with the Mayor of Oakesdale, Russ and the Mayor of Palouse, Michael, explaining that a reserve fund is planned obsolescence. When a truck needs to be replaced, the reserves can be used. Larry Hunt noted this would allow the town to avoid interest on loans. Brian Conklin said likely the town would never really hit the reserve cap, considering the annual rate of inflation. Rob Watkins said if the rates had been raised a few years ago, with a small rate increase every year or two, the council wouldn't have to raise them so much now. He said the fund just breaks even now. With a

\$6.50 increase there would be enough to start a reserve. The ordinance could be written to start a 2% or 3% increase in 2010 or 2011. Council agreed it was a lousy time to consider increases but there would never be a good time. Tim Southern reported he had talked with both Brian Conklin and Tom Tevlin. Tom would rather be hit hard once and then don't have to nickel and dime it later, making the increase last. Council reconfirmed when they discussed the initial \$4.50 increase they were not aware of the landfill increase and felt the rate increase also needed to match this. It was acknowledged that water and sewer rates needed to be considered too, taking a look at the town's entire utility package. Council will decide on water rates after the rate study by RCAC is finished in November. Mayor Pfaff talked about raising the extra can fee from \$2 to \$3 and an additional \$10 on dumpsters. This would make the town's rates more comparable. Rob Watkins suggested look at reserves on everything. The water study will show the need for reserves for replacement and upgrades. If the town looks for funding for these projects, for example, through USDA, they will require reserves and higher rates to qualify for a loan. This should be a last resort. Mayor Pfaff noted Tekoa went with USDA and their rate is \$31.50, going up \$5 a year until 2028.

Tim Southern MOVED to approve a \$6.50 increase for garbage in 2009 with a 2% increase starting in 2011. Larry Hunt preferred not to make any decision during the meeting, as he would rather see what water rates would need to be too. He would like to think about it and discuss the issue with other people. Council agreed. Tim Southern withdrew his motion. Mayor Pfaff talked about the projected costs for water projects required by the state, and that they had settled with Jim (Rural Community Assistance) on planning \$20,000 a year for projects through the water rate study. He noted this would depend upon how much was put away for water reserves and the water rate structure for basic water and the overage rate. Tim Southern said after re-prioritizing the water projects, roughly \$25,000 would have to be put away for reserves each year. Mayor Pfaff noted the state is requiring these upgrades as the town's leakage (unaccounted for water use) is at 35%. It needs to be brought down to 10%. If the water system plan had been completed by June, the town would not have had to make as many changes, new regulations came into effect in June.

Mayor Pfaff noted the council inherited this problem, but that it needed to be fixed and not pass it on. Tim Southern talked about looking ahead 10 years ago. Larry Hunt stressed the importance of being able to afford to live here. It was pointed out that the current water rates are low, and with a \$3-\$5 basic rate increase, and overage increases, Garfield would be comparable with other towns in Whitman County.

Brian Conklin agreed the rate changes needed to be done and talked about needing a way to tell the people and explain it. He said paying interest on loans is ridiculous. He wondered if the town lost its own garbage service, how many people would give up garbage service all together. He thought incremental changes were better than a lump sum and if people know the annual inflation rate increase, they can better plan.

Council agreed the rate increase ordinance needs to state clearly how the reserves would be used so there was no questions later on in time and the reserves would be used as intended. Mayor Pfaff suggested holding off on any sewer rate changes for another year. He said garbage was the instant problem right now and that water would lose \$900 next year without any increase.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Council Meeting Schedule: Council discussed changing the meeting dates for the 2nd meeting in November and December as they conflicted with the holidays. Council was

agreeable to considering changing the dates. Mayor Pfaff suggested Monday, November 24th and Monday, December 22nd unless someone objected. No objections were voiced and the motion passed. Council agreed to hold the 2nd meeting in November on Monday, November 24th and the 2nd meeting in December on December 22nd.

2. Gazebo: Brian Conklin discussed plans for the park gazebo with the council. The idea would be to use the same pad but build a new structure, keep the sides open all the way around. He has a church group willing to make it happen. Rob Watkins suggested Brian get a hold of the town in beginning stages so the word could be put out for work parties. Brian talked about the idea of also having a power pedestal a little ways out from the gazebo that could be used to plug in and set up speakers. He recently saw this in a county park and it worked very well, reducing problems with power feedback. He also talked about the idea of having an outside screen for movies. The church has a license to play movies.

3. Removal of Old Park Restrooms: Council reaffirmed the old restrooms needed to be taken torn down, noting the delay apparently has been due to the sprinkler controls needing to be moved.

APPROVAL OF CHECKS/TREASURER'S REPORT/ 3RD QTR 2008 FINANCIAL REPORT:

Rob Watkins **MOVED** to approve the following bills presented to council for payment. Larry Hunt seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Check Register: #8767-8781. Claims: \$18,801.33, Payroll: \$4,996.93 TOTAL: \$23,798.26

Annie Pillers confirmed meeting with Finance Chair Larry Hunt prior to the meeting to review the financial documents, bank reconciliations, and adjustment register. Larry Hunt noted things were in order, with a few bank errors that were being corrected. Tim Southern **MOVED** to approve the 9/30/08 Treasurer's Report, 3rd Quarter 2008 Financial Reports and the 10/22/08 Adjustment Register. John Kuehner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Personnel: Larry Hunt **MOVED** to go into executive session for personnel matters for approximately 5 minutes with no additional business to be taken up by council upon closing of the executive session. John Kuehner seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously. Brian Conklin left at 8:21 pm. The meeting reconvened at 8:28 PM.

ADJOURNMENT: Tim Southern **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 8:28 p.m. Rob Watkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Jarrod Pfaff, Mayor

ATTEST: _____
Annie Pillers, Clerk/Treasurer