

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SODA SPRINGS, CARIBOU COUNTY, IDAHO HELD JULY 15TH, 2020.

Due to the threat of COVID-19, the physical distancing requirements and the limited space in City Hall the meeting was limited to a maximum of 4 in-person attendance but open to all public by telephone conference.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 5:00PM BY AUSTIN W. ROBINSON, MAYOR.

ROLL CALL SHOWED THE FOLLOWING PRESENT: AUSTIN W. ROBINSON, MAYOR  
MITCHELL J. HART, PRES.  
JON D. GOODE  
ROBERT M. LAU  
SCOTT K. GAMBLES

EXCUSED:

ALSO PRESENT: Mark Steele via telephone Alan Skinner, Director  
Bryce Somsen Tausha Vorwaller, Clerk  
Doug Mazza Gregg Haney, Attorney  
Lorraine Myers  
Paul Gritton Justin Hansen

The invocation was given by Justin Hansen, Mayor Robinson then led everyone in the 'Pledge of Allegiance'.

The previous meeting minutes were presented for review. Councilmember Goode stated he had reviewed the minutes of the July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 meeting and noted no changes he then moved to approve as presented and dispense with the reading. Councilmember Lau seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

The accounts payable were reviewed. Councilmember Goode moved to approve the accounts payable for July 1<sup>st</sup> through July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 seconded by Councilmember Hart. Councilmember Hart asked about the payment to the Butikofer's and what they do for the City. Director Skinner stated they provided new chips for the playground and also spray for dandelions in the parks. Councilmember Goode asked what the Library expense to LCEI covered. Councilmember Lau explained it was the Libraries software system shared through their consortium. Clerk Vorwaller will report back on what is included with the membership and fees. A vote on the motion to approve the accounts payable was called. All in favor, motion carried

(SEE ATTACHED ACCOUNTS PAYABLE REGISTER FOR DETAIL)

Justin Hansen, Public Works Supervisor filled in for Recreation Director, Celeste Billman and presented a proposal for co-ed softball and moving soccer back to City Park due to a broken pump and concerns about the dry grass at Kelly Park. Mr. Hansen explained the pump failed last fall and just didn't get ordered but should be in this week. Councilmember

Goode suggested once the water gets on the grass it would probably green up pretty fast. Mr. Hansen mentioned if soccer is moved to City Park the softball would all be held at Kelly Park. The Council agreed they were comfortable with the proposal.

The Kelly Park Fish Pond code amendment was revisited. Attorney Haney reported he had not been able to get in contact with the Idaho Fish & Game (IDFG) yet to get a commitment on the fish stocking of the pond and will report back when he does.

Director Skinner shared with the Council the Idaho Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (IPDES) discharge monitoring report (DMR) template with the list and frequency of samples required. The Council again discussed the violations due to the error in online reporting and choosing the wrong explanation of why a sample wasn't taken. Councilmember Hart suggested taking the reporting responsibility off of Director Skinner and give it to Kelly Hill. Director Skinner stated it really is the Mayor's responsibility but he has been designated as the reporter. The Mayor and Council will discuss further.

A brief update on the Formation Well project was given. The Director reported all the seeding had been done and he noted the flow doubled over night due to a water leak and it handled the demand no problem. The water leak was isolated the next morning. The electricians are putting a bid together and the Director is still looking for a contractor to install the siding. Councilmember Goode expressed his excitement to have the project done even though it cost \$2 million that's better than \$10 million.

The paint is done on the new Hooper Spring cover frame and the crew is installing the logs on it. Director Skinner stated he hopes to be setting it in place by the 1<sup>st</sup> of August by grouting it to the columns and then they will place the name archway on top. Councilmember Goode asked if the supports contained metal beams. The Director stated they don't know for sure until they take it apart.

The new 220 South road construction is ready for bids. The surveyors are here setting the west property line for the curb, working on the drainage on the west end and contractors are lined up to look at the project who may submit bids. Drainage into the canal was discussed. Director Skinner stated storm water doesn't require any approvals for natural drainage. The intent is to have it done by the end of September.

The status of the Ledger Creek permit to clean the canal was reported by Director Skinner. He explained a change of staff handling the permits has caused all permits to be sent to Boise for review until they get new staff in place at Idaho Department of Water Resources (IDWR) who will be keeping lead jurisdiction. The Director will keep following up. Councilmember Hart stated the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) committed to working with the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) to get the culvert replaced under the overpass east of town which currently has no flow. The Director and Council agreed it needs to get done this fall or will be a bigger problem in the spring.

Director Skinner reported they are still waiting on the cameras for the Ender's building security system which are promised to be installed by Monday, July 27<sup>th</sup>. Councilmember Hart asked how things were going with the lease and if the lessee was being billed the monthly lease amount. The Director stated other than the compressor on the walk-in freezer he felt all was going good. The Clerk reported the lease amounts were being billed per the agreement. Councilmember Goode asked Attorney Haney about the lease review regarding the share of repair costs for the cooler. Attorney Haney will look at it.

Councilmember Hart gave an update on the Governor's call. He mentioned there is concern about the hot spots but he wants to open schools. He stated there is a growing momentum from communities, businesses and health care to require masks state wide but he is trying to address concerns regionally. Councilmember Goode noted it was a record day of over 700 new cases. The Governor emphasized there are limited deaths and severe hospitalizations. Councilmember Hart suggested continuing to monitor the situation. Councilmember Lau stated the School will decide by July 27<sup>th</sup> at the next board meeting and is still working on a plan.

Councilmember Hart asked to combine the Comprehensive Plan/Community Improvement Plan discussion with the hospital and budget discussions.

During citizen input the Mayor noted how exciting it was to have the new Library sign installed and the moose statue had been delivered.

Clerk Vorwaller asked for an official approval for the cost to replace the Kelly Park pump which will be over \$5,000. Councilmember Lau moved to approve the expenditure for the Kelly Park sprinkler pump, seconded by Councilmember Goode. Councilmember Lau asked why the City didn't use the gravity flow water instead of a pump. Director Skinner explained the pump uses the pond water instead of the City's drinking water that is treated and would cause additional low water pressure issues. The problem is with weeds and moss taking a toll on the pump and the need to put in a screening system. Bryce Somsen suggested looking at the screening on the Blackfoot River.

The Mayor and Council discussed alternatives to the annual City Picnic in light of the current health risks of large gatherings due to COVID-19. The average cost of the City Picnic was reviewed and the Council agreed to offer a \$50 to \$100 per employee meat gift based on the funds usually spent on the picnic.

Councilmember Hart expressed his frustration with the Caribou Memorial Hospital financial issue recently dropped on the community without a lot of explanation and requiring a decision within three weeks. He feels this is unfair to the citizens of the county. He reviewed some questions he put together and suggested a decision of this magnitude requires the Board and Commissioners to take more time to think it through. He pointed out the carefully thought out process put into the City's major projects including the wastewater treatment plant and the recent Formation Well project. Councilmember Lau also expressed his desire to have several questions answered and pointed out the online

survey being conducted was not valid and the feedback is not accurate because one person can submit multiple responses. He specifically asked why the only options were to donate the hospital to a non-profit and why the Commissioners had not considered using the funding available through the Idaho Hospitals Initiative Act. Doug Mazza, Caribou Memorial Hospital Board Member responded by giving some background on the financial situation the Hospital is in and explained the urgency due to already failing systems noting if any critical system fails right now they will have to close the hospital and transfer all patients from the hospital and nursing home. He reported the nursing home had lost money over the last several years, approximately \$75,000 a resident per year, which is being made up by the hospital revenue. They want to try and stay away from raising the levy and putting the expense on the county residents and explained their understanding that a non-profit facility would be the solution. Councilmember Lau shared information about the Idaho Hospitals Initiative Act and stressed his concern about the non-profit 501c3 becoming private and the community losing ownership of the facility they have supported for so many years. He also pointed out the loss of jobs if the nursing home was closed. The City Council and County Representatives discussed the issues at length. Attorney Haney agreed if the hospital was donated to a non-profit the County would not have any control and it would be a private corporation. The Council still had a lot of questions and requested to see the full engineering report and the Hospital's financials. Commissioner Bryce Somsen explained that the financial situation was not made public sooner on the recommendation of the Hospital CEO who was worried it would decrease admissions and was trying to keep a positive image for the hospital. Mr. Mazza thanked the City Council for their input and asked that they submit the questions online or in writing for the Hospital Board and County Commissioners to review. The Council discussed further the questions they have and Councilmember Hart suggested drafting a letter to the Commissioners. The Council agreed.

The Council reviewed the hearing notice to amend the current year's budget. Clerk Vorwaller explained the need to approve the notice for amendment at this meeting to meet the publishing deadline. Councilmember Goode pointed out the need to correct the loan to the Water Fund entirely from the Power Fund and moved to accept the FY 2020 budget amendment notice with the correction and schedule the hearing for August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Councilmember Lau seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. The Director and Council discussed the final costs for the Formation Well project. The only unknowns are the electrical work and siding installation. The Clerk noted if the costs end up higher than the current estimate the budget amendment can be adjusted and postponed to the first meeting in September.

A draft letter of intent to the Governor regarding the Public Safety/Property Tax Relief program was reviewed. Councilmember Lau, seconded by Councilmember Goode moved to approve the letter as presented. All in favor, motion carried.

The FY 2021 budget was reviewed. Councilmember Hart shared his view that obviously costs and revenues are uncertain right now due to the COVID situation. The City may not be hit this year but maybe next year and we need to be careful when setting the FY 2022

budget. He also suggested reviewing ways to bring in some extra revenue by holding a surplus auction and reviewing leases and fees. Councilmember Lau stressed his desire to take advantage of infrastructure grants if they become available by having the highest priority projects shovel ready. The Clerk clarified that all Department requests were included in the proposed budget. The insurance benefits were reviewed and Councilmember Hart pointed out his dissatisfaction with the Blue Cross cost increases plus increases to the deductibles and out of pocket max amounts. He suggested increasing the City's match for the Health Savings Accounts to encourage use of the High Deductible Plan (Silver) and the Council also discussed discontinuing the Gold Plan. Councilmember Hart's recommendation regarding the cost of living allowance (COLA) included a discretionary bonus of 0% to 3% based on performance for those at the top of their pay band, everyone else a 1.5% COLA with a discretionary bonus of 1.5%. The COLA could be effective either October 2020 or April 2021 based on the effects of the pandemic. Councilmember Lau supported Councilmember Hart's suggestion holding off the final decision until we see how things work out with the pandemic and see what others are doing. Councilmember Goode shared the Social Security increase would be under 1%. Utility rate increases were discussed. Director Skinner reported there are no purchased power increases in 2021. The Council agreed on a 1 ½ % increase to power rates and a 3% increase to water and sewer rates. The proposed budgeted net on several funds were reviewed. The Clerk explained the need to use down unnecessary reserves in the Recreation and Library Funds. The Council suggested just transferring the Library reserve back to the General Fund. The Police vehicle lease was again discussed. The Council agreed to leave it in the budget but all agreed they would like to try a phased approach into the lease program. Councilmember Lau stressed though that they needed to find a way to upgrade all the radios. Councilmember Hart briefly commented on a five year review of the Parks and Police Department budgets. He asked about the difference between the budget and actual in Parks. The Clerk explained it was customary to over budget salaries and projects in parks in case there was a need. Councilmember Hart also shared his observation of the Police Departments expenses over the last five years which saw a decrease for a couple of years and then an increase the last three. Overall he feels it is a conservative budget but has flexibility for the uncertainty. Councilmember Hart moved to adopt the tentative budget for FY 2021 as presented and schedule the public hearing for August 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Councilmember Goode seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

Councilmember Lau suggested a special meeting to go through the comprehensive plan/community improvement plan project tracker and prioritize which projects Director Skinner should really start focusing on and try to get shovel ready. He suggested everyone submit comments ahead of the meeting and then have a conversation. Director Skinner mentioned knowing the priority projects the sooner the better will make it possible to pursue available grants. The Council agreed to have a special meeting at 8:00AM on Wednesday, July 29<sup>th</sup>.

Councilmember Lau moved to approve entering into executive session pursuant to I.C. 74-206(1)(c)&(f) to acquire real property and communicate with legal counsel regarding probable litigation. Councilmember Goode seconded the motion. A roll call showed the

following vote:

Those voting aye:	Jon Goode	Those voting nay:	none
	Robert Lau		
	Mitch Hart	Absent:	none
	Scott Gambles		

Motion Carried.

Councilmember Hart moved to exit executive session, seconded by Councilmember Gambles. All in favor, motion carried.

Councilmember Goode moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:25pm, seconded by Councilmember Hart. All in favor, motion carried.

PASSED AND APPROVED BY THE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL THIS 5<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF AUGUST, 2020.

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Austin W. Robinson, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Tausha Vorwaller, Clerk