

Town of Twisp

Council Minutes – 04/25/23

Mayor Ing-Moody called the meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

Council Members present: Mayor Ing-Moody
Mark Easton
Alan Caswell - Remote
Katrin Auburn
Hans Smith
Aaron Studen

Council Member absent:

Pledge of Allegiance

Council Member Caswell led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Request for Additions or Deletions to the Agenda

Public Comment Period: Up to Three Minutes

Isabelle Spohn:

Ms. Spohn commented on the HAP with two major points. She pointed out that the survey was going to be sent to Twisp and Winthrop residents but did not include the rest of the Methow Valley. She believes that the entire Valley should be asked to participate as the HAP effects everyone. Her second point was that Twisp needs to develop anti-displacement strategies, as well as extend the moratorium to fulfill the goals that were set. She stated that she is concerned the Town is not including the needs of the whole of Methow Valley. She commented on the Orchard Hills fire ingress and egress. She understands that they have hired a fire marshal to assess the entrance and exits. She asked if there would be an onsite visit before coming to a conclusion.

Paula Mackrow:

Ms. Mackrow commented that she lives in Twisp and is here to witness the ongoing deliberation on nightly rentals. She reinforced her belief that the community should reduce the number of short-term rentals, and encouraged an extension of the moratorium. Ms. Mackrow stated that Council Member Auburn has mentioned zoning ordinances need to be looked at. She stated that Twisp is a tight knit town, and the Town needs to maintain residential housing stock, and remember fire danger. She lives at the end of a dead-end street and has experienced what it takes to get people off that block. She stated that she believes there is an inadequate amount of time for the fire marshal to review the plans and come up with a conclusion.

Jenn Tate

Ms. Tate stated that she has worked on the Airbnb issue with different towns. From her perspective if she was unable to put in the two units above 1908, the restaurant would not have

happened. She stated that she supports having some nightly rentals, as a landlord it makes more sense than long term rentals.

Anne Cummings:

Ms. Cummings has lived in Twisp for nine years. She is concerned about the idea of defunding the Police Department. She stated that she is worried safety is being overlooked. The Council and Town must work to keep community members safe. Ms. Cummings stated that every town around Twisp for one hundred miles either has a police department or they contract with a police department to monitor the community. She noted RCW and the requirement that 911 call response may be limited if response is through contract versus one's own police department. Ms. Cummings stated that if something were to happen to a citizen the Town would be liable for a negligent act due to not providing law enforcement. She notes that Twisp would be the only one without a police department and that crimes would increase with criminals choosing to target the town; something to be considered.

Barry Stromberger:

Mr. Stromberger commented that he understands that the nightly rental moratorium can be extended. He urged the Council to move quickly and meet the RCW requirements. He stated that he is willing to help with any process that a citizen could do to meet the deadline. Mr. Stromberger urged the Council to add more planner hours, as well as increase permit and code enforcement personnel. He volunteered to work on the Finance committee. He commented that Council needs to look at zoning codes and the terms "overnight accommodation" and "overnight rental" are two different things. Town should only allow nightly rentals in commercial zoned areas.

Mark Edson:

Mr. Edson commented that at the last Planning Commission meeting he cornered Planner Danison on title 18, which protects existing land uses, and asked him "Are you going to guarantee that this new OHPD is not going to place any undue adverse impacts." Edson claimed that Planner Danison's answer was "That's not my job". Mr. Edson said he asked whose job it is to enforce title 18. He asked if it is just verbiage that is cast out into the wind. Mr. Edson then said that this bleeds into how the town would be protected without a police department. He stated that over the winter he saw many drug deals go down at the park and questioned what would happen when there is no police department.

Mayor's Report

Mayor Ing-Moody responded to Anne Cummins assumptions to clarify that there are no plans to defund the police and that the town is not interested or considering eliminated law enforcement. She stated that more information would be shared to clarify that misperception when the council discusses those particular agenda items.

Staff Reports

Public Works Director Denham reported that last week there was a county wide flood prep meeting in Okanogan. The report shared there revealed that even though we are at 104% snow capacity, the ground is quite dry so as it melts it is being absorbed and they do not expect much river fluctuations. Director Denham also reported that his staff is working on park cleanup, as well as pool preparation. The pool manager has started and is working part time right now. They are working on staffing and getting used to the job. There will be more updates on that soon. The chipping drive starts on Monday and goes through Tuesday. With how popular the chipping drive has become it may be extended to a three-day

event. Director Denham stated that if you want chips to call the public works assistant to make arrangements. He also reported that he found out late Friday we were not selected for the SR 20 sidewalk, but he will be looking at alternative solutions such as reducing the speed limit from Blue Star to the bridge or create a crossing somewhere.

Officer Sheehan reported that three weeks ago Officer Purtell resigned, and his last day was Thursday last week. Following Chief Budrow having left to become Sheriff in January, he now remains as the only police officer left. He stated that he talked about the possibility of losing the Police Department back at the council retreat and was very clear verbally and in writing that at the end of May he would also be leaving the Police Department. He reported that he has not yet turned in a formal resignation. He said that in an email he sent a few weeks ago, he had offered that if the Town would cash out his vacation he would keep working until the end of May; but he shared that he was told the Town was not interested in making a policy change to cash him out. He stated that his last working day will be Thursday or Monday and that after that there would be no Police Department. He claimed that he has been asked by citizens for a good answer and is hoping Council has a good response.

Commission/Committee/Board Reports

Council Member Auburn reported that the Chamber had a successful Sip and Chat at the 1908, where a lot of businesses showed up. The Chamber voted in Mark Dean as director. She reported that the Art Walk is coming up.

Council Member Caswell reported that he attended the Tree Board meeting and Arbor Day was the main discussion. The event took place on the 15th. The Tree Board was able to give away many trees. He also reported that the Planning Commission swore in Art Tasker as a new commissioner. The Shoreline Master Plan update was postponed to the next meeting since the main topic was the Orchard Hills Planned Development public hearing.

Council Member Smith reported that he attended a Finance Committee meeting since the last Council meeting. He said they discussed the issues with the Police Department and started looking at methods that will hopefully work to retain a Police Department. In reviewing the situation more comprehensively he shared that there was discussion to not change policy to cash out any vacation. They discussed methods on how to expand planning operations, i.e., increase hours or staff and states they will continue discussing options moving forward. He also reported that Public Safety met regarding the Police Department issues and came up with a few ideas such as contracting with the county or potentially other opportunities. He said the committee is obtaining and reviewing information and options.

Council Member Easton reported that TERC met and discussed the sign code; the Creative District was also discussed with the new interim Director of Methow Arts who will be meeting with the Mayor to go over what needs to be done with grants and responsibilities in more detail.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Action: Nightly Rentals

Mayor Ing-Moody stated that the Town does currently have a moratorium in place but that will be expiring in May which is why this has been put on the agenda for the Council to have further discussions on the topic. She said that she spoke with the Town's attorney about the potential of extending the moratorium and found that it is allowable if it is needed and can be extended up to six more months. There is some expectation that the work being done on the Housing Action Plan will bring some clarity on next steps even though the plan will not directly focus on nightly rentals.

Planner Danison has created an inventory of all the permits that the Town gave for nightly rentals and has also given suggestions on how to address it per the zoning codes. He shared that the strike outs are items not in our code. He has also provided a spreadsheet of all the applications received for nightly rentals since 2010. There have been fourteen applications in total within the past 13 years, with only eleven having been issued permits; four are in compliance, two do not have a current business license, and five properties have changed hands. There are three nightly rentals in residential zones, and they are located on Burgar Street, 2nd Avenue, and at the end of Twisp Avenue. There is a house that rents one room out in the Painters Addition, Jenn Tate has one downtown, and there is also one by the PUD downtown.

Council Member Smith stated that it would be prudent to have Commissioner Battle come and discuss Planning Commission's new priorities. He fully supports extending the moratorium but does not want to wait another six months before getting recommendations on verbiage.

Council Member Easton agreed with Council Member Smith and feels the moratorium should be extended. He is confident that everything that needs to be done will be done within the six months of the extension.

Council Member Auburn said that she does not believe that Town has an overabundance of nightly rentals operating at this time but addressing it and laying out the plan now would be beneficial for everyone. She had a conversation with a valley resident, and they have a long-term rental that costs them thousands of dollars to have a tenant removed and then to repair the house. She shared that it can be very costly to rent to people and believes a balance may be needed.

Council Member Studen stated that he does not believe the moratorium is a permanent solution, but he does support the extension of it. He said that he would love to see the conversation turn to what can be put into place as an ordinance. Council Member Studen encouraged those who have commented to keep providing their input. He said that to get everything done, the Town should work in stages and get something on paper in the next six months, which then can always be changed later; he believes but getting something completed for now is better than later.

Mayor Ing-Moody thanked the Council for their comments. She stated that while the Council does have time at the next meeting, the timeline does expire in May and there will need to be a public hearing if we are to extend the moratorium. Once it is passed the Council will pass this onto the Planning Commission to get their input on the Nightly Rental Code.

Council Member Studen made a motion to extend the moratorium. Council Member Easton seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously.

Discussion/Action: Interlocal Agreement Twisp/Chelan County – Fire Plan Review

Planner Danison presented an agreement to the council for their review. At the Council retreat Planner Danison brought up some issues including the need to contract with a fire marshal to do a review of plans and make suggestions/recommendations on the Orchard Hills Planned Development for the Town. He said that it took him months, but he has been able to contact a fire marshal; the Chelan County Fire Marshal is willing to do the work. He estimates that it will take him five hours to finish. The contract that was drafted says that the cost is not to exceed \$1,000 so there is a little wiggle room if more time is needed. Council discussed that it may be important for the fire Marshal to plan a visit on-site; Planner Danison stated that he will be asking him to come and do an on-site visit.

Council Member Studen pointed out that the contract states not to exceed \$500 not \$1,000.

Council Member Smith made a motion to adopt the interlocal agreement as presented with the change in language not to exceed \$1,000 and to include a site visit. Council Member Easton seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion/Action: Planning Commission Member Redistribution

Mayor Ing-Moody stated that it has been brought to the attention of the Council that there are Commission members whose terms will expire at the end of the year. With that happening there is the possibility of changing positions from at-large to in-town. At the last appointment there were two very qualified people interested in the position but only one in-town position was available. The Commission used to have more in-town positions but due to being unable to fill those positions the code was changed to have more at-large positions. With the increased interest it seems reasonable to change it back. She stated that this could have waited until later as the terms do not end until the end of the year but noted that if someone were to step down between now and then, it seemed like a good idea to bring this up to the council sooner rather than later.

Council Member Auburn stated that she thinks it is a great idea to put it back into the hands of Town residents. She also said that it is wonderful there is more interest from residents, she reminded them that there is going to be a possibility that you will have to recuse yourself from certain topics.

Council Member Smith made a motion to have a minimum of three in-town positions and two at-large positions. Council Member Caswell seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Discussion/Action: Police Department

Mayor Ing-Moody stated that it has come to her attention that an incorrect statement was made at the Winthrop Council meeting which she would like to correct. She stated for the record that the Town does not have a desire to disband the Police Department. She stated that she personally values the Police Department and echoes the earlier sentiments of Ms. Cummings. She shared that Twisp has been without a Police Department in the past and that the Town does not desire to go back to that. She voiced the current reality of where we are today; since Chief Budrow was elected as Sheriff the town has been moving forward to find a replacement Police Chief, however, despite traditional methods the Town has been unsuccessful in that pursuit. The climate for finding and replacing officers is very challenging today, with a shortage of qualified and experienced officers and strong competition

between agencies for good ones. There is a lot of need in our community, but we are not the only community suffering right now. There are more than one police officer position open in larger towns that can pay more than Twisp can; even Okanogan county continues to look for officers to fill open positions. The Finance committee has met to discuss how we can make our offer more attractive. The Public Safety Committee has already decided to improve the offer by adding a sign-on bonus of \$10,000 which matches regional trends, and we still have not had any applicants for the position as there is a policing shortage. She was sad to see Officer Purtell leave the Town and wishes him well. With Officer Sheehan intending to leave at the end of May, she believes it will be challenging with our budget especially with revenue and expenditure projections already set for this year; making it difficult to make offers much more attractive. She stated her knowledge of state-wide costs for policing, which is not going to be getting any less expensive and that our community needs to be prepared to recognize what that would mean for us to maintain a strong agency. Currently, any changes to the police budget would require taking funding away from another fund in the general fund. Mayor Ing-Moody said that this topic on the agenda is to enable transparent conversation on viable options as there is every intention to maintain our own Police Department.

Council Member Smith stated that Public Safety met and came up with a few options, two of which are contracting and hiring. Town could contract with the county specifically to perform chief duties in the interim which will maintain having our own Police Department, but this would not be a long-term solution. Town has already been engaged with the County to discuss what that contract would look like. He stated that hiring has not been very successful due to needing to increase wages and incentives to bring more interest to the positions. To do so there would need to be fund redistribution in the general fund or possibly downsizing the department to cover the costs. Council Member Smith also stated that he would like to have a Public Safety Committee meeting and invite residents to come and speak about any options available. He would also like to meet with Winthrop's Council to discuss the possibility of working with each other.

Council Member Auburn asked if the officers are unionized why the Town is not in negotiations with Teamsters. Mayor Ing-Moody said that while the Town is not going to open any negotiations the Town will entertain one being brought forth. Officer Sheehan interjected to shout across the room that he was told there would be no negotiations. Mayor Ing-Moody corrected his statement to say that she had said that the Town had no reason and therefore would not be requesting an opening of negotiations since a contract had just been reached less than a year ago, the annual budget set with the full dollar amount requested by the officers having been met, but that the union could have brought forth a request to open the contract themselves. She stated that she was actually surprised that the union did not make such a request, which the town would have certainly considered. Officer Sheehan followed up with an interjection believing that he understood it to be that the request would not have been considered; Mayor Ing-Moody stated that that would be a misunderstanding as the town would have at least considered hearing the request.

Council Member Easton stated that he sits on the Finance Committee and that they discussed maintaining one open position officer position for now, which would provide some money in the current year's budget for a better offer for the Chief position, then when looking at next year's budget see what can be done to fund a three person department again.

Mayor Ing-Moody stated that law enforcement is not getting any cheaper and the Town will need to ensure a way to sustainably pay for it moving forward.

Officer Sheehan interjected to state that money is not the issue. Councilmember Auburn responded that that is not what she heard, in which Officer Sheehan stated that she had been deceived; Councilmember Auburn answered that it was from an officer that it was indeed about the money.

Mayor Ing-Moody reiterated that she understands that the council would like to make a formal request for a meeting between the Twisp and Winthrop councils to discuss the potential for the two towns to work together on future policing needs despite Mayor Ranzau expressing her lack of interest for such a consideration.

Discussion: Resolution #23-705 – Capital Facility Plan 2024-29

Director Denham went over the Capital Facilities Plan for 2024-2029 and any changes that were made from the previous CFP. Council Member Smith asked if there are any timeline incentives for prioritizing Glover Street work right now in terms of grants. Director Denham stated that there are many agencies that have infrastructure money but depending on who we will want to go through determines how to prioritize as there are deadlines. Council Member Smith stated that those would not help with the surface work and asked what would be done for that. Director Denham stated that street improvements would be through TIB, who are interested in providing funding; he will be at the TIB board meeting next month on the 18th so it would be best if he had the go or no go before attending to make that request. Council Member Auburn asked what would happen to funding if the project was pushed off for a year. She also asked if any of the grant monies allowed for subcontracting so some stress could be taken off Public Works. Director Denham responded that there is a big risk in waiting while there is grant money this year, next year there could be either more or less money available – it is yet unknown. He also said that yes Town has been subcontracting but Public Works will always have to oversee the projects. Council Member Studen questioned if Glover was redone recently. Director Denham stated that Third Avenue was repaved but not the main part of Glover Street.

Discussion/Action: Ordinance #798 – Intent to Annex Twisp into Ok Co Fire District No. 6

Council Member Smith made a motion to approve the annexation of Twisp into Ok Co Fire District No. 6, Council Member Auburn seconded. The motion was passed unanimously.

Discussion/Action: TranGo/Twisp Ground Lease Renewal – 2023-24

Clerk Kilmer stated that the contract was changed to be a two-year lease to discontinue it being annual. He also stated that the rent has been the same for almost ten years. Council Member Auburn stated that since it has not been changed for ten years it needs to be raised. Council Member Studen stated that it should be raised to adjust for inflation and suggested \$300 but that he would also like to do research on what other Towns pay. Clerk Kilmer stated that the contract does not need to be executed until the first of June so there is time to do research and discuss the raise of rent with TranGo. The Council will research and decide on a new rent amount then present it to TranGo.

Consent Agenda

- Accounts Payable/Payroll
- Minutes

Vouchers audited and certified by the auditing officer as required by RCW 42.24.080, and those expense reimbursement claims certified as required by RCW 42.24.090, have been recorded on a listing, which has been made available to the Town Council. The following voucher/checks are approved for payment by a majority vote on this 25th day of April 2023.

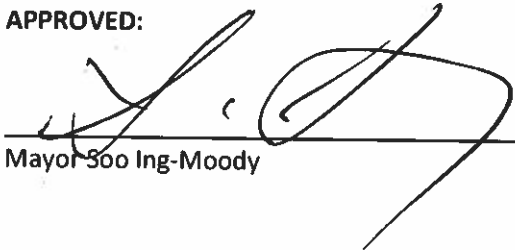
Accounts Payable	EFT Trans 807, 818, 821	\$5,620.72	04/25/23
Accounts Payable	Checks #37778-37804	\$109,321.78	04/25/23
Payroll	EFT Trans 780-788	\$11,178.47	04/25/23

Council Member Smith moved to approve the consent agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Council Easton and passed unanimously.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Ing-Moody adjourned the meeting at 8:13 pm.

APPROVED:



Mayor Soo Ing-Moody

ATTEST:



Clerk/Treasurer Randy Kilmer