

TAYLORS FALLS CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

City Hall, Council Chambers

Monday, September 14, 2020 - 7:00 p.m.

The Agenda for this Meeting was posted Wednesday, September 9, 2020 at City Hall, the Post Office, and on the City's website. Copies were emailed to residents requesting such, and the Press was notified.

CALL TO ORDER

The Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Mayor Mike Buchite.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance to the United States flag was recited.

ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Mike Buchite, Ross Rivard, Larry Julik-Heine, Mary Murphy, John Tangen

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Elizabeth Nealley (Clerk-Treasurer), Jacob Vodenka-Reed (Fire Chief), Jacob Guzik (Engineer, Bolten & Menk), Juli Hobson, Denise Martin (Chisago County Press), Greg Marsten (Inter-County Leader)

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Mayor Buchite removed item #6 (Consider sprinkler system for City Hall) because no information was available from Public Works at this time. Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to approve the amended Agenda for the Monday, September 14, 2020 Taylors Falls City Council Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

ADOPTION OF CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Rivard / Tangen to approve/accept the following Consent Agenda items: Minutes from previous meetings; Staff reports; Commission, Board, or Committee minutes/reports; Consider setting the date for the Truth in Taxation Public Input Meeting; Approval of claims and payroll; and Correspondence. Motion carried unanimously.

PUBLIC FORUM

Although no one asked to speak, Mayor Buchite took the opportunity to explain how Public Forum works. He noted that included in the Council Meeting Packet, as well as available at the back of the room and on the city website is a document called Taylors Falls City Council Meeting Guidelines. This document was approved by the City Council many years ago, and Clerk-Treasurer Nealley thought it would be a good idea to make this document available to the public since many new residents have moved in since that time. The Mayor explained that the Taylors Falls City Council uses a modified version of Robert's Rules of Order. The agenda items are first discussed, and after that there is a call for a motion, a second, and a vote. The Mayor further explained that Public Forum is really intended for people in the audience to speak about items not on the Agenda. It is not a time to engage the City Council in discussion or debate. He gave an example about how the deer management hunt came about because of a resident bringing his concern to the Council during Public Forum.

STAFF REQUESTS

COMMISSION, BOARD, OR COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Resolution 20-09-01 approving proposed 2021 Budget and 2020 proposed levy payable in 2021

Mayor Buchite said that the City Council spent a lot of time and worked very hard to discuss each of the areas they are responsible for. He mentioned that he was very impressed and appreciates that each Council Member stands up for the department they represent saying this is what we need and why. This Council is finally, after 18 years of working towards it, funding all the funds so that the City can actually do all the things they intend to do without borrowing ahead. He gave the examples of street paving and the upcoming legal requirement to buy a new fire truck. The Mayor said the important questions are: What are we spending in 2021 compared to 2020 and what is that doing to the City's tax rate?

The Mayor explained that the tax rate for 2003 was 102% compared to 2021 at 59%. It has gone down even from 2020 when it was 63%. It hasn't been this low since 2001 when it was 56%. He brought out that revenue is up - and without raising taxes. For 16 out of the past 18 years the City has had decreases in City taxes.

The Mayor further discussed the budgeting process, explaining that Clerk-Treasurer Nealley had suggesting creating the budget report straight from Banyon instead of manually typing it into a spreadsheet, saving time and eliminating the possibility of errors. He explained that in December, the Council has the opportunity to leave the budget as is or reduce it (but not increase it) before the final approval. Council Member Murphy said that they had accounted for all the things actually needed. Council Member Rivard agreed, saying that this year they had been able to fund every department more adequately than he has seen in years. It took years of planning ahead to be able to do that - as a group, they've done a great job. Mayor Buchite reminded everyone that Rivard had been on the Council for 32 years. He then asked Council Member Tangen how long he had been on the Council and Tangen told him 22 years. Tangen said that they all worked together, no Council Member has an agenda and they all work for the good of the City - and it shows. Council Member Julik-Heine said it was a very smooth process and that they had concentrated on things that are a benefit to the City.

Mayor Buchite said that there were actually Democrats sitting here and Republicans sitting here. But you could never tell who is what based on the actions they are taking for the City. This Council has always said they are there for the benefit of the residents of Taylors Falls.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve Resolution 20-09-01 approving the proposed 2021 budget and 2020 proposed levy payable in 2021. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider bids for painting and ceiling repair of the Community Center

Council Member Murphy spoke and explained the two bids from Kevin Hays Construction and David Thompson for repair of the Community Center Ceiling, painting the ceiling, and painting the walls.

Motion by Julik-Heine / Tangen to approve the bid from Kevin Hays Construction to work on the Community Center ceiling at a cost of \$1,395.00 as well as the bid from David Thompson to paint the Community Center walls at a cost of \$3,624.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider asphalt repair at Community Center and Government Street

Council Members Rivard and Julik-Heine explained the report from Public Works Superintendent Kriz that there were two spots needing repair - at the Community Center parking lot as well as at Government Street. Out of five contractors contacted, only Prefer Paving was able to give a quote.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve the proposal from Prefer Paving to repair the Community Center parking lot and Government Street at a cost of \$21,100.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider Folsom Street repair

Council Member Julik-Heine explained that a severe storm had caused the shoulder along a portion of Folsom Street to wash out and that Superintendent Kriz had received quotes from two contractors - J&S Contracting and Lawrence Creek Contracting. Lawrence Creek had the lowest bid at \$3,250.00. Discussion followed.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve the proposal from Lawrence Creek Contracting to repair the slope and shoulder along Folsom Street at a cost of \$3,250.00 to come from the storm water utility fund. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider the PRC recommendation for playground equipment for the Tot Lot on West Street

Council Member Julik-Heine spoke about the recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission for a piece of playground equipment for the Tot Lot park on West Street. Discussion followed.

Motion by Rivard / Tangen to approve the recommendation from the Parks and Recreation Commission to buy playground equipment for the Tot Lot park on West Street from the company Crown of Minnesota, to cost \$2,000.00 and to be paid from the Friends of Taylors Falls Parks and Recreation fund. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider purchases using the Covid CARES Act allocation

Mayor Buchite explained the various qualifying purchases up for consideration for the Covid CARES Act allocation of \$77,148.00 that the City of Taylors Falls had received. 1) Clerk-Treasurer Nealley and Coordinator-Zoning Administrator Heth requested updated computer hardware and software for City Staff that can be used for working remotely when necessary, as well as laptops that the Staff and Council can use when Zoom Council Meetings are necessary. They also requested a phone system that can be accessed from outside of City Hall, as the current one doesn't have that capability. 2) Public Works Superintendent Kriz had arranged for an additional portable restroom and a portable hand-washing station to be set up downtown due to the Covid-19 pandemic and Kriz requested that the CARES Act be used to offset this additional cost. 3) Gene Andersen on the CERT (City Emergency Response Team) had made a request for an AED. 4) Fire Chief Vodenka-Reed had requested the following equipment: 12 medical bags, 7 AEDs, 25 hoods, a gear dryer, and 25 PPE pouches.

Motion by Murphy / Rivard to approve the request from City Staff for new computers, accessories, and software to be provided from The Bitworks at a cost of approximately \$12,111.50 as well as voice-over-internet phones at a cost of approximately \$1,000.00 to be paid from the Covid CARES Act allocation. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Tangen / Julik-Heine to approve the request from Public Works to use the Covid CARES Act to pay for the additional restroom and wash-station that was set up downtown when the outbreak began at an approximate cost of \$1,400.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Rivard / Julik-Heine to approve the CERT's request for an AED to be paid from the Covid CARES Act allocation at an approximate cost of \$1,000.00. Motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to approve the request from the Fire Department for the following items: medical bags; AEDs; hoods; a gear dryer; and PPE pouches. Motion carried unanimously.

Consider additional necessary purchases not covered by the CARES Act allocation

Mayor Buchite explained that when updating the computer system, there were additional costs that could not qualify under the CARES Act because they were things that the City would have to spend money on even if the Covid-19 pandemic did not happen. The Bitworks provided a quote for a router and security appliance, wireless access points, and a network switch.

Motion by Murphy / Julik-Heine to approve the cost of additional computer equipment provided by The Bitworks at a cost to the City of approximately \$778.00. Motion carried unanimously.

CONSENT AGENDA

Consider setting the date for the Truth in Taxation Public Input Meeting

The City Council approved by Consent Agenda to set the date for the Truth in Taxation Public Input Meeting at the regularly scheduled December 14, 2020 City Council Meeting date.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS & PAYROLL

The City Council approved by Consent Agenda payment of payroll check numbers 7837-7855 totaling \$15,804.28; as well as check numbers 31233-31310 and electronic check numbers 6302467-6302480 totaling \$162,847.11 for the previous month's expenditures.

LIAISON OR COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Mary Murphy

- said that she had been busy discussing the Covid CARES Act with Fire Chief Vodenka-Reed to see what he needed.

Ross Rivard

- said that the Planning Commission was taking time off. He mentioned that seal-coating and crack-sealing would take place in a few weeks.

John Tangen

- said that there was no Heritage Preservation Commission meeting this month. He commended Heth for his work on the HPC grant.

Larry Julik-Heine

- said that the Highway 8 Task Force had not met. He mentioned that the soft opening of the Swedish Immigrant Trail trailhead at City Hall would take place next month. He also explained that the Parks and Recreation Commission had decided to move the big yellow chair to a spot by the River Walk. They had been working for awhile on a plan to make it safer to approach on the hillside site by the Community Center, perhaps by building stairs up to it. But they decided to move it to a better location that draws tourists to the underbridge crossing of Highway 8 from the River Walk to Interstate State Park, to help prevent accidents at the intersection.

Mayor Mike Buchite

- explained that the Covid pandemic slowed things down for the City because the County extended the property tax deadline to July 15th and the City receives its tax money from the County in June. However, the City's general fund is still very strong. He spoke about some of the projects the Council is planning for the City such as the sidewalks and railings on First Street, street lights and flags on Bench Street, bathrooms at Heritage Park, and doing something with the downtown commercial property. He said that City Engineer Guzik will probably have something ready at the October Council Meeting.

- commended the three seasonal temp employees for doing an outstanding job. The City has had many compliments about the way the City looks. He also mentioned that water billing was finally in sync after a challenging year getting faulty water meters and MXUs (meter radios) replaced and programmed, and that the problem has been fixed going forward. He commended the CERT group for a great job delivering groceries and medications. He also mentioned that The Lodges now have a staff nurse, and that this will help cut down on unnecessary medical runs for the Fire Department.

- said that a few residents had contacted him to express concern for the planned changes at the Polk County Fairgrounds. Mayor Buchite contacted the Mayor of St. Croix Falls to make sure he keeps the concerns of Taylors Falls in mind before making any decisions. For example, the sounds of the tractor pull events roar through the valley. Mayor Buchite found out that they were planning to rebuild the deteriorating grandstand, build a stage for concerts, and plan to add one additional tractor pull event per year to their schedule. The Mayor of St. Croix Falls said he would keep Mayor Buchite in the loop.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Julik-Heine / Murphy to adjourn the meeting of the Taylors Falls City Council held this Monday, September 14, 2020. Motion carried unanimously.

Being no further business to come before the Council, the Meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

Michael D. Buchite, Mayor

Elizabeth Nealley, Clerk-Treasurer

APPROVED

Monday, October 12, 2020