**CITY OF JOHN DAY**

**CITY COUNCIL MINUTES FEBRUARY 27, 2024**

**COUCILORS PRESENT:**

**COUNCILORS ABSENT**

David Holland, Councilor

Chris Labhart, Councilor

Eric Bush, Councilor

Edwin Newby, Councilor

Ron Phillips, Councilor

Sherrie Rininger, Council President

**STAFF PRESENT:**

Melissa Bethel, City Manager

Rob Gaslin – Contract Finance

Nick Ducote- Contract grant writer and administrator

**Agenda Item No. 1—Call Meeting to Order**

The City Council meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

**Agenda Item No. 2—Pledge of Allegiance**

The City Council stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Agenda Item No. 3—Roll Call and Attendance**

All councilors were present including the City Manager.

**Agenda Item No. 4—Amend or Accept Regular Agenda**

***Councilor Bush made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. The motion was seconded by Councilor Newby and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 5—Public Comments**

Steve Schuette: Mr. Schuette is a member of citizens for a thriving grant county, they have filed a formal grievance with the City of John Day, which the City has not acknowledged receiving. The grievance raises concerns about the City’s handling of the Waste Water Treatment Plant Project.

Jim Bay: Mr. Bay believe John Day needs to be a single team working together from one administration to the next. He stated questions are only questions and they can open doors.

Shannon Adair: Ms. Adair spoke about some comments that were made at the last meeting and expressed her concerns with the cost of the Treatment Plant. As a resident and business owner who pays taxes as well as a previous councilor that participated in this project from day one, Adair stated she will continue to express her questions and concerns until every opportunity has been taken to keep the monthly cost to end users as low as possible through as much grant funding as we can get.

Linda Gingrich: Ms. Gingrich asked if any of the councilors have talked to people at the Golf Course or Malheur Lumber regarding the Treatment Plant. She reminded council that the citizens are the people who pay the bills.

Jim Spell: At previous council meeting the online system has not worked, Spell encourages council to find a way for everyone in the room and people who are sitting at home watching the meeting have an opportunity to know what is happening at the council meeting.

Nick Green: Mr. Green would like the council to clarify what their procurement strategy actually is for engineering services. He asked council when did they award a 4.2 million dollar contract to an engineering firm to do design of the Waste Water Treatment Plant. There are requirements under the funding agreements one of those being providing notice to Business Oregon 10 days before requesting proposals from engineering services. He believes the public is completely in the dark of what Council is doing.

Leslie Stillwater: Ms. Stillwater thought with her experience she would be able to understand the WWTP project but finds herself lost in council meetings and isn’t able to follow along. She believes it is because there not enough communication from the council to the public. Citizens for Thriving Grant County would like recognition of the formal grievance they submitted. They would also like a formation of a Citizen Advisory Committee.

Jim Bay: Mr. Bay asked what the status of Canyon City’s payments in the intergovernmental agreement. He stated the citizens of Canyon City are paying their water bill to Canyon City and they are not forwarding those funds to John Day. He also asked why the City of John Day has not produced audited financial statements since June of 2022.

**Agenda Item No. 6—Consent Agenda**

Items on the consent agenda for approval:

1. Accounts Payable through February 21, 2024

***Councilor Phillips made a motion to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilor Bush and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 7—Presentation by Clarks Disposal regarding new automation**

Clarks Disposal announced they are making the transition to automatic garbage pickup. The rates will not change, the can size they will provide will be based on what residents currently have.

**Agenda Item No. 8—Approval of Contract with Rueben Law Enforcement Consulting for full audit and inventory of the City of John Day’s former police department evidence room**

The City received a $5,000 grant to do this.

***Councilor Bush made a motion to approve the contract with Rueben Law Enforcement Consulting for the audit and inventory in the City of John Day’s former police department evidence room. The motion was seconded by Councilor Newby seconded the motion and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 9—WWTP grant funding update**

Ducote spoked about the congressional request the City submitted. He has discussed the procurement strategy with USDA and Business Oregon. The City Attorney is going through everything regarding the final design engineering. As far as the funding strategy for the project it isn’t significantly different from what it was before. Ducote has recommended abandoning the previous administration procurement strategy because it would deny the City the ability to get a Clean Water State Revolving Loan, which opened the City up to a possible 2 million dollars of grant and loan at a better rate than USDA had. There are a lot of tasks that are being paid for by grant funds that are open.

Mr. Green asked a member of the Council to explain what out procurement strategy is.

Councilor Holland stated that aspect has never really been the Councils role. With there being no City Manager during that time, council hasn’t been in the loop.

Stillwater believes this is to large of a project to fall completely on the City Manager. She believes citizens should have the opportunity to be involved and help.

Councilor Labhart said that Grant County Conservatives would like to know what is going on with the Purple Pipe. Bethel and Ducote elaborated on this topic.

Councilor Holland believes it would be beneficial to have a Citizen Advisory Committee as it has been beneficial in the past.

Mrs. Schuette would like council to look back on the early vision of the Treatment Plant, look at what the plan was and why it was formulated.

**Agenda Item No. 10—City of John Day financial update**

Gaslin addressed questions that were made. He stated the City is only 2 months late on our audit as of right now. There will be an audit once the City has an auditor signed on. Gaslin presented a budget to actual report which is the first one that’s been presented in a long time.

**Agenda Item No. 11—Discussion regarding cancellation of March 12th, 2024 Council Meeting**

Council came to a consensus to cancel the March 12th, 2024 Council Meeting.

**Agenda Item No. 12—City Manager Comments**

Bethel gave an update on work that staff has been doing internally.

She reminded the citizens to be aware of their surroundings when parking for the meetings and to make sure not to block anyone’s driveways.

**Agenda Item No. 13—Mayor and Council comments**

The next regular scheduled meeting is March 26th, 2024.

Councilor Labhart asked for an update on the rest area sign, Bethel stated it is on the list of things to do.

**Adjourn:**

There being no further business before council the meeting was adjourned.

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Melissa Bethel, CM