**CITY OF JOHN DAY**

**CITY COUNCIL MINUTES APRIL 23, 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 & administrator

Doug Argo- Contract Engineer

**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.

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

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

**Agenda Item No. 5—Public Comments**

Shannon Adair: In the March 26th minutes there was a statement regarding the budget. Adair believes the way it was stated without backup is irresponsible to the public. In the future she asks that only specific statements are made. Adair asked if there is going to be a response to the grievance letter that was sent.

John Rowell: Mr. Rowell would like to thank the city council, city manager and employees for all of their patience and hard work.

King Williams: Mr. Williams asked about the suspension of the URA. He said it seems to have been done without the consideration of the ordinances, by-laws or agreement associated with the URA. Williams said there are legally binding agreements that were signed by everyone which are not being followed. He asked if the City is having their budget adequately funded for a class action lawsuit.

Heather Swank: Swank would like to thank the City Council for watching out for the financial security of the City.

Jim Spell: Mr. Spell addressed public comments that are made at Council meetings. He would like to see Council start answering the publics questions and concerns.

Josh Walker: Mr. Walker said he was surprised by the URA suspension announcement that went out. He asked why there hasn’t been a URA meeting scheduled to actually discuss this and go through the process so that the public is aware. He stated there are a lot of people out there that are affected and concerned by this.

**Agenda Item No. 6—Consent Agenda**

Items on the consent agenda for approval:

1. Accounts Payable through April 9, 2024
2. Minutes of March 26, 2024

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

**Agenda Item No. 7—Hope 4 Paws presentation and donation request**

Paul Smith gave a presentation on some of Hope 4 Paws 2023 highlights. Smith asked Council to consider a donation of $1 per person (per city population) but any contribution would be appreciated. Councilor Labhart declared a conflict of interest because he is on the board of Hope 4 Paws.

Council came to a consensus to work this donation into the budget.

**Agenda Item No. 8—Approval of Agreement for Grant County Farmers Market to use the “Pit Stop”**

***Councilor Holland made a motion to allow Grant County Farmers Market to use the “Pit Stop”. The motion was seconded by Councilor Bush and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 9—Approval of draft RFP for Water and Wastewater Utility Rate Study and SDC methodology update**

This is a study that needs to be done periodically. It is likely that water and sewer rates will go up, how much they increase will be determined by this rate study.

***Councilor Bush moved that Council directs the City Manager in publishing the RFP for the rate study. The motion was seconded by Councilor Phillips and passed unanimously.***

**Agenda Item No. 10—Ducote Consulting update**

Ducote gave an update on the Treatment Plant. The biological opinion from USFWD was received regarding the sewer plant. With that being finished Ducote will be able to finish his overall environmental assessment. The Purple Pipe Project is currently on hold. No end user agreement has been negotiated for the western run of the Purple Pipe.

Councilor Holland believes negotiations with Malheur Lumber would be more beneficial than running the Purple Pipe East. Councilor Holland asked Argo if there would be adequate funds if the pipe were to go all the way to Malheur Lumber. The tank was moved to the Waste Water project. With the tank being taken out, Argo stated that there should be adequate funding to get down to Malheur Lumber.

The grant will expire at the end of this year. Ducote needs to know if council wants to go out to bid on this project without an agreement from Malheur Lumber. Councilor Holland and Bethel will meet with Malheur Lumber and DEQ before next meeting to try to come to an agreement.

The City has a City Manager so Ducote retracted his recommendation for a Citizen Advisory Committee.

1. 241 W Main building; EDA/Cybermill discussion

The City has been awarded the $65,00 Broadband Technical Assistance Grant from Business Oregon. Ducote suggests the City reach out to the broadband project consultants to resume the broadband engineering, legal and administrative work.

If the City uses EDA grant funds for reimbursement of the Cybermill purchase or for the renovation and construction, then there will be a 20-year lien activated on the property. If the City decides to remove the Cybermill from the EDA project, Ducote stated that Richard Moore from EDA was fairly confident that EDA would allow the City to use those funds for the broadband project. Didget McCracken gave a presentation regarding the Cybermill building at 241 W Main Street. It would be helpful for them if the City no longer had ownership of this building. The sooner this can happen, the sooner they can work on finishing this project. Bethel will move forward on getting a clear direction on how to proceed, then bring it back to Council.

**Agenda Item No. 11—Gaslin LLC financial update**

Gaslin gave a financial update on the City and the amount of cash the City has as of today. There have been unexpected expenditures which have been very large. The obligation that the City knows of coming up are debt services before June 1st, back invoices from projects that were closed out years ago, ongoing URA applications, and Caselle which is the new software the City is changing to.

Bethel elaborated on the URA and wanted to make it clear it is not a suspension on the URA but a pause until after budget is finished and the City is more aware of where they are financially.

There is 25% remaining in the budget. There are a couple new over expenditures which need to be addressed during this year’s budget process. Council needs to appoint Budget Committee Members and the calendar needs to be approved.

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

Bethel attended a small city meeting for the LOC in Sumpter which was well attended. She reminded Council May 14th is going to be a huge meeting. She thanked the City employees for all of the work they do. The City is getting ready to switch to Caselle and will be starting that within the next couple months.

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

Heather Rookstool: Rookstool brought up a statement that was made by Myers at the last Council meeting about a payment that was not made due to the fact it sat on the Mayors desk. Myers wasn’t present at the meeting to retract that statement so she asked where he was at.

Councilor Rininger reminded everyone to have their facts straight when they make public comments because it does go on record. She also thanked Bethel for all of her hard work.

Councilor Labhart stated that Senator Wyden announced that Grant County was awarded over 3 million dollars in forest receipts.

Councilor Holland wanted to reiterate on the publics questions and concerns that have been brought up not being answered. He asks that the publics questions and concerns be answered.

**Adjourn:**

There being no further business before council the meeting was adjourned. The next regular scheduled meeting is May 14, 2024

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Melissa Bethel, CM