

City of Tekoa

COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, May 1, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Roy Schulz called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Councilpersons* present at the meeting were Dave Tysz, Shelly Ausmus, Mike Hale, Pete Martin (came to 2nd half of meeting), B.J. Sperber, and Mandi Prince. Clerk/Treasurer Eliza Evans-Teague was present, as well as additional attendees Brad Chandler, John Jaeger, John Spendlove, Deb Spendlove, Steve Haxton, Mike Ausmus, Troy Wilson, Heather Bloom, Richard Kelly, Levi Prince, Mike Ausmus, Carolina Silva, Gloria Rasmussen and Lydia Fletcher.

*In following paragraphs, Councilperson(s) will be abbreviated as: "C."

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE: Mayor Roy Schulz led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. SWEARING IN OF NEW COUNCIL MEMBER PRINCE: Mandi Prince was sworn in as the newest member of the Tekoa City Council.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE: C. Ausmus mentioned opportunities to speak are 3 minutes, unless they are on the agenda.

John Jaeger commented on the deputy clerk position and the garbage billing funds that go into funding that position. He also commented that in the year beginning 2024 Labor and Industries estimates will require salaried positions to pay \$69,264.00 and the following year, \$70,884.80, so on and so forth, with sharp increases in coming years. John commented about how he thinks that all hourly employees will want to be paid more according to the scale the salaried clerk is paid on. He would like the city council to consider the people on fixed incomes for the sewer plant costs.

A. COMMUNITY GROUP UPDATES: None.

V. CORRESPONDENCE: Mayor Schulz read the resignation letter from Brandon Schneider. C. Ausmus addressed the letter from Brandon Schneider and explained her position about how things had happened and she feels that the mayor should have **notified her of the contents of the Schneider letter beforehand, not that she said the mayor should have only presented the letter to her*, before presenting the letter at the council meeting. The mayor defended his behavior about asking her to resign. Steve Haxton came forward to speak on the subject of C. Ausmus and her behavior toward employees. C. Ausmus defended her position. C. Hale moved to accept Brandon Schneider's resignation. There was no second and no vote. The mayor said he had accepted Brandon Schneider's resignation.

**italics represent changes requested and approved by Tekoa City Council.*

VI. CONTINUING BUSINESS:

- A. CODE: CHAPTER 1.08-COMPENSATION:** C. Hale explained the updates he is proposing to the council re: Chapter 1.08-Compensation. C. Hale moved to accept the updates. C. Tysz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- B. SALARY VS. HOURLY WAGE DISCUSSION:** C. Ausmus iterated that she had spent some time talking with her **financial* director at the library, **Shirley Cornelius*, and submitted the L and I salary threshold implementation schedule, **which will eventually be 2.5x minimum wage*, for salaried workers. She mentioned that it is affected by the Consumer Price Index. She suggested that most small businesses are rolling their salaried positions to hourly. C. Ausmus moved to change the city clerk position to an hourly position not to exceed 40 hours/week, without the council's approval starting December 1, 2023 with the council setting the possible overtime allowance in the new year. C. Sperber seconded the motion. There was discussion about how to accomplish this with the differences in office staffing vs. maintenance staffing hourly controls. C. Tysz commented about talking with other clerks. There was some additional discussion about salaries vs. hourly wages. C. Tysz, C. Prince, C. Sperber, C. Ausmus voted yes. C. Hale voted no. The motion passed.

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VII. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. TROY WILSON RE: HOUSE DECISION APPEAL:** Troy Wilson spoke about due process re: his rental home on Sophy St., and that he doesn't think the city followed their process correctly and is just milking him for permit money. He asserted that there are no real issues. He mentioned the roof leaking and pulling a permit to get the roof inspected and further inspection commencing because of that. Troy spoke about having to pull a permit to repair the support structure of the home about how the notification process went between him and the building inspector. Troy presented the city code and asked if the board for unfit buildings was convened. The board did meet and agreed with the opinion of the building inspector re: the unsafe state of the building. Troy asked about the process and said he was unaware of the issues until now, and that no one had notified him. The mayor explained that when the board went inside, the upstairs had a visual sloping and when they walked along the floors, they were beyond spongy; they were giving way. Troy stated that the home was mortgaged in the early fall of 2022, and these issues were not noted in an appraisal. Troy Wilson and Heather Bloom stated that they believed the process was circumvented. Heather read the RCWs. C. Tysz said he would like to see the notice lifted. Heather Bloom believes that it is personal and accused the deputy clerk of influencing the building inspector to condemn the house. C. Sperber talked about previous unfit building issues and processes taking longer. The council discussed the issue. The mayor asked the clerk to clarify what the attorney had said. She reported that because of the issues found during the inspection and report of the roofer to the building inspector, the attorney said the city now knew about significant issues and had a duty to enforce its ordinances. C. Martin agreed that the Do Not Occupy sticker should be removed. C. Ausmus made a motion to remove the sticker. C. Tysz seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.
- B. OPEN COUNCIL POSITION APPOINTMENT PROCEDURE:** C. Ausmus would like to establish a new order for council vacancy appointments. She moved that all vacant posts be advertised in the newsletter and at the post office and other usual public places. Applicants will then have two weeks to respond by the 14th of the month and then they will

be invited to interview at the next appropriate meeting. There was comment from the mayor about the process, and specifically as it has happened this past process with available people early in the announcement period. C. Sperber seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

- C. MEETING ORDER:** C. Ausmus circulated a different council meeting agenda order. She would like to see a roll call for council persons, have minutes approved early and have a single opportunity for discussion, liaison reports, etc. C. Ausmus moved to approve the new order of meetings. There was discussion. C. Hale would still like to have two opportunities for public comment. C. Ausmus changed her motion to include a second public comment as well as the previous suggestions. C. Sperber seconded the motion. There was discussion. The motion passed unanimously.
- D. INSURANCE BENEFITS PROPOSAL:** C. Hale brought the spreadsheet explaining how wages would be affected through 1% increase in wages vs. a \$100/month increase in healthcare premiums, which amounts to approximately a 1.7% increase. There was discussion. C. Sperber moved to table the discussion until the next meeting. Tysz seconded the table motion. Unanimous.
- E. STREET BUDGET DECISIONS:** Eliza Evans-Teague presented some figures regarding the cost of paving projects. C. Sperber brought up some questions about varying paving methods. The mayor will work to answer the questions before the next meeting and bring these answers back to the council.
- F. GOLDENROD CEMETERY PERPETUAL ENDOWMENT:** C. Tysz brought up that the council votes on the cemetery board representative. He thinks that the mayor should step down, and the council should appoint a new representative per the recent information gained re: the endowment rules. C. Ausmus thinks the mayor should step down. Gloria Rasmussen mentioned the cemetery committee will be meeting with Ted Rasmussen to go over the different aspects of their duties. Gloria Rasmussen explained that when there is turnover in the committee, understanding of processes is lost. C. Tysz moved to have C. Martin be cemetery representative. C. Ausmus seconded the motion. C. Tysz, C. Ausmus, C. Martin, C. Sperber and C. Prince voted yes. C. Hale abstained. The motion passed.

VIII. REPORTS:

- A. MAYOR'S REPORT:** Mayor Schultz called for a replacement liaison for Parks and Rec. C. Sperber volunteered. The mayor also reported on proposed Ramsey St. paving work and the difficulty of accomplishing this now without a third maintenance person.
- B. CLERK/TREASURER REPORT:** Eliza Evans-Teague reported that the 2022 .09 grant has been extended. She also reported that the 2023 .09 grant has been awarded at \$28,000 from the .09 commission for the sign project and that the remainder of the money needed for the project will have to be confirmed.
- C. COUNCIL REPORTS:** C. Tysz reported that he had burned a couple of piles. He complained that the employees should do what the council says. He plans on burning again tomorrow if the weather is good. C. Ausmus met with a panel from the Tekoa Care Center. She reported that they appear to be working hard to abate the issues raised by the community. She

reported that they are interested in helping the community and gave their monetary pledge for radios to the ambulance and to help clean up after Slippery Gulch. She also said Tekoa Care Center is trying to monitor things better. Bruce McGuigan offered to put the picnic table together. She asked for COLA numbers to be corrected in the next newsletter. C. Ausmus reiterated that she thinks the mayor reading Brandon's resignation letter was to make her look bad. The mayor responded that the reason he read the letter was for transparency so that people didn't think he resigned for other reasons and that reading resignation letters is normal policy. He agreed he was upset because this resignation put the city behind an entire year in replacing a maintenance position and had cost the city a lot of money. C. Martin reported that it looks probable that the trailhead development will get funded, and the WA State Parks Dept. wants to pay the local Parks and Rec. to do the maintenance of the trailhead. A contract should be forthcoming for discussion at the next Parks meeting. Bicycles from the school were donated to the Trestle Trail committee. The intent is for the bicycles to be used for free. C. Martin reported he went on the honor flight for veterans. C. Hale reported that the airport grant application will be about two weeks out. C. Sperber would like to have big decisions that are made by the Code Enforcement Officer and the Building Inspector be reported to the council. The mayor will try to have decisions reported to the council. C. Prince asked about the ambulance funds promised by the Tekoa Care Center. C. Tysz asked about the information re: candidate positions. The clerk will send the position information to the council.

D. COMMENTS FROM THE AUDIENCE: Brad Chandler commented on the necessary presentation of public records and that the resignation letter was a public document. He also noted the suppression of Tekoa Facebook and the Tekoa Forum. He said we are quickly entering into a place where public information is being suppressed. Richard Kelly commented on the issues facing the council. C. Tysz said that the council does not tell the employees what to do. Richard asked about the progress on the Keegan building so he knows what is going on. Mayor Schulz let Richard know what is happening there and what the council decided. Richard also encouraged the council to release the Wilson property. Richard was pointing out that employees have only so many hours a week and the council shouldn't have them doing the same task multiple times.

IX. CONSENT AGENDA:

A. A. APRIL 17, 2023, & APRIL 19, 2023, COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES: C. Ausmus moved to add a list of clarifications to the minutes for April 17, 2023, and April 19, 2023, as follows:

April 17th: clarification of 5-10 million dollars for a ballpark figure for the proposed sewer plant (from Matt for Century West) and that Matt said the individual sewer rates could go to over a \$100/mo. but could possibly be less and that we would know more when we got there. In addition, C. Ausmus submitted that the minutes from the council reports should read that she was surprised that the vacant council position had not been put in the newsletter as discussed at the last council meeting, and that was the reason for postponing the selection of a new council member. Also, the minutes should include that C. Rambo and C. Sperber stated that they expected the position to be in the newsletter and neither had seen any signs in town. The clerk responded that the council vacancy had been posted in five places.

April 19, 2023: add that C. Tysz said there was no collusion and C. Rambo added that she had not changed her vote and found it disturbing that the mayor accused the whole council of

wrong-doing. Also, Mayor Schulz stated that while they were there, the council needed to address another item. Ausmus asked if they could do that since it was a special meeting. The mayor proceeded.

C. Ausmus also asked if the city newsletter would be corrected (5.9%, not 5.4% for COLAS for 2022). C. Martin seconded the motion. C. Ausmus, C. Martin, C. Sperber, C. Tysz and C. Prince voted yes. C. Hale abstained.

C. Ausmus moved to accept the April 17, 2023, and April 19, 2023 council meeting minutes. C. Martin seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

B. ADJOURNMENT: C. Sperber moved to adjourn the meeting. C. Martin seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Mayor Schulz adjourned the meeting at 8:22 P.M.

APPROVED:

Roy Schulz - Mayor

ATTEST:

Eliza M. Evans-Teague– Clerk/Treasurer