

Town of Richey Council Meeting
Approved
Tuesday, November 12, 2024—Town Office/Fire Hall
6:00 p.m.

Open Meeting and Pledge of Allegiance: The Town of Richey Council Meeting was called to order at 6:04 p.m.

Roll Call of the Council Members and Guests

Mayor – NaDean Brown

Councilmembers – Jonathan Barnhart, Tammy Clinton, Debra Gibson,

Absent – Preston Ulrich

Interim Clerk/Treasurer – Kelsey Crockett

Public Works Director – Chance Senner

Guests – Loraine Whiteman & Brandy Schipman

Consent Items*:

Approval of Minutes of the Previous Meeting(s): The minutes from 10-8-24 were approved with a motion from Councilmember Gibson, 2 nd by Councilmember Barnhart with tract changes. All in favor, motion carried.

Council agreed to approve the draft minutes for Tuesday, October 22, 2024 for the On-site visit with Great West Engineer.

Phase 2 Water Project Scope and Sequence and Paving. Councilmember Barnhart carried the motion for approval of the On-site visit with Great West Engineer Meeting.

Councilmember Gibson seconded the motion and the motion was carried as all in favor.

Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett presented that bank reconciliation wasn't completed yet because she was still trying to get all the nuances of how the Town of Richey entered and accounted for all revenue and expenditures and the mailed statements have not come into the Town mail yet.

A motion was made by Councilmember Gibson to approve the rest of the Consent Items of Monthly Payroll, Claims, and Journal Entries. Seconded by Councilmember Clinton with all in favor. Motion carried. It was also Motioned by Councilmember Gibson and seconded by Councilmember Barnhart that the Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett would email all council when bank reconciliation was completed. With all in favor, motion carried.

Correspondence: None

Public Comment: None

Council Reports and Concerns: None

Mayor's Report: Mayor Brown referred the Town Council to the attached Mayor's Report, which was provided to the Council in the Council Packet.

Public Works Report: Chance Senner updated the Town Council on recent and ongoing public works activities, including periodic testing of the Town's water, installing new meters and checking all curb stops. Providing assistance as needed on the water main replacement project. Mayor Brown and Public Works Senner took the pickup in for maintenance and were told that it needed front end work. The work was completed by Mavrick Auto at a significant savings from

the estimate from HKT Auto. The plow truck was also sent in for maintenance and diagnostic to Truck Suppliers. Wiring issues were repaired along with a recommendation to connect two commercial batteries to the plow truck. Public Works Senner stated that bulk water plant had been winterized. Public Works Senner and Mayor Brown were going to put out grass seed in all areas that were dug up from the water project and the paving.

Committee Reports: None

Clerk's Report – Financial Reports: Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett presented a few different options for all Councilmembers to look at from income statement to Trial Balance Revenue vs. Expenditure because Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett stated that Trial Balance Revenue vs. Expenditures is what is used when completing all Town reports such as the Annual Financial Report.

Old Business:

1. Water System Improvements Project & CIP

Mayor Brown asked for public comment and discussion on agenda item #1. With none, Water Improvement CIP was approved with a motion from Councilmember Clinton and seconded by Councilmember Gibson and motion carried all in favor.

Phase 1 final draw requests and close outs

Approval of all Final draws for phase 1 was approved with a motion from Councilman Gibson and seconded by Councilman Clinton and passed by all in favor Councilman Gibson, Clinton, Barnhart and Mayor Brown.

- i. Phase 2 draw requests: RRGL #6 of \$3497.00 & \$978.75, MCEP #7 of \$128,245.57, MCEP #8 of \$211,754.43, SRF #1 \$4,509.50 & \$475.00
- ii. CIP final draw requests and close outs

Approval of all Final draws were approved with motion from Councilmember Gibson and seconded by Councilmember Clinton. Motion passed with all in favor.

a. Discussion on contracting with Wharton on additional street paving Spring 2025:

Mayor Brown presented that Wharton will be working in Glendive in the Spring of 2025 so that may be a good time to contract with them for additional paving to save on travel and mobilization cost. Mayor Brown also stated that the Town was very fortunate to get the trenches paved this fall with weather concerns. Council agreed that the topic of additional paving will be addressed in the spring with Mayor Brown staying in contact with the paving contractor. No current action required.

2. Discuss and possible action on contracting with the Dawson County Sheriff's Department

Loraine Whiteman expressed concern about private citizens having to be law enforcers or having to call and tattle-tail to the Sheriff's Department about questionable activity around town. Loraine felt that it is good to have a law presence around town. Brandy Schipman agreed with the same concerns.

The discussion of this contract was tabled till Councilmember Ulrich could attend the meeting to give his input. This was set by a motion from Councilmember Barnhart and

seconded by Councilmember Clinton and all in favor to wait till Councilmember Ulrich had a chance to make his position known.

3. Discussion and possible action on purchase of a plow for the Town pickup or Skid-Steer.

Public Works Senner presented to Council about purchasing a Town snowplow for the pickup or the skid steer. Public Works Senner recommended the snow pusher for the skid steer because it would not only be more cost effective, but it would also be easier to maneuver the only concern he had about using the skid steer was if he was gone that no one else knows how to operate the skid steer. Public Works Senner still recommended the snow pusher for the skid steer even with the concerns because it would be easier for him to use for snow removal over the pickup. Council agreed to use Gas Tax funds to purchase the snow pusher as it was set in the budget and pay it out of 2820-430200-940. With no further discussion or public comment, Councilmember Clinton motioned to allow Public Works to purchase the snow pusher for the skid steer and pick the type of attachment that works best. Councilmember Barnhart seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

New Business:

0. Action on Gibson Building Permit:

Mayor Brown presented the documents for the Gibson Building Permit. With no further discussion or public comment, a motion from Councilmember Barnhart to approve the building permit and seconded from Councilmember Clinton. Motion carried with Councilmember Gibson abstaining from the vote.

0. Request for utility services for overnight camping at Richey Community Park and discussion on park permit and fees:

Discussion on the development of a new Request for Park Services Form to use rather than the Special Event Form. By using the Special Event Form there would have to be Council approval before anyone stays in the Town of Richey's public park. With no further discussion and or public comment, it was proposed to table the matter to talk more about utility connection costs. Councilmember Gibson made this motion and Councilmember Barnhart seconded the motion. With all in favor, motion carried.

0. Discussion and action on Town RO Plant Road access easement for Jon and Crystal Bachelor. I didn't get what was motioned and 2nd and all in favor about this?

Mayor Brown referenced the email from Troy Jensen, the land surveyor, that was included in the Council's packet. The WTP Easement Exhibit showed the easement access on the RO Plant Road to Bachelor's property. Councilmember Clinton motioned to approve the Easement Access and to have the Town Attorney draft the document. Councilmember Barnhart seconded the motions. Motion carried with all in favor.

0. Discussion and possible action of contracting with Troy Holzworth for I.T. services:

Councilmember Gibson motioned to approve the Troy Holzworth I.T. contract with as needed recommendations by the Town attorney. With no further discussion or public comment Councilmember Barnhart seconded the motion. Motion carried with all in favor.

0. Discussion and possible action of Town Clerk job opening and review of job applications

Mayor Brown presented to Council to two job applications that were in the Council's packets for discussion. Councilmember Gibson raised questions about Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett's prior tenure with the Town of Circle. Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett clarified that the State of Montana audit found no evidence of misconduct or any errors in her work. Then Councilmember Gibson suggested that she had heard otherwise. Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett reiterated that there were no findings of wrongdoing, affirming her record is unblemished and emphasized her commitment to transparency. Councilmember Gibson then questioned Interim Clerk Crockett about her preference for remote work and inquired where her children would be during work hours. Interim Clerk Crockett replied that her children would be at home but assured her that they would not interfere with her work. She emphasized that she has successfully worked remotely for five years without any issues related to her children's presence, noting that this matter was only now being raised by Councilmember Gibson. Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett expressed concern about her professional reputation and self-worth, suggesting that Councilmember Gibson's comments had cast an unfairly negative light on her integrity based only on rumor. She concluded by stating that if the conditions of her remote work, including her children's presence, posed a concern, she would willingly withdraw her application step aside to allow the Town to hire another candidate. Councilmember Clinton stated that she didn't see a problem that she thought she got more work done working remotely than she would have gotten done in an office with other distraction example people coming into the office just to talk. Councilmember Barnhart also stated that as a whole they may need to look into more flexibility to make the job more enticing to other applicants. Councilmember Barnhart also stated that if looking at job applications for experience and ability one applicant stood out from the other applicants. The Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett concluded to Councilmember Gibson that if she intended to act with prejudice and spread falsehoods about her, the Interim Clerk/Treasurer would withdraw her application. Interim Clerk/Treasurer stated she didn't need this job she was merely applying because she was asked to.

After the discussion about Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett Councilmember Clinton stated that this was a good segway into addressing a letter written from Mayor Brown to Former Clerk Senner that was shared to her by former Clerk Senner. Councilmember Barnhart stated he had also read the letter. Councilmember Clinton addressed the Council with concerns regarding the letter sent to former Clerk/Treasurer Senner. Expressing concern that Mayor Brown's tone was overly harsh and that this approach may have contributed to Mr. Senner's decision to leave his position. Councilmember Clinton further noted that, while Mayor Brown has maintained a cordial working relationship with Interim Clerk/Treasurer Crockett, she is concerned that a similar situation may arise. The Mayor explained to the Council that the letter was an informative Letter of Expectations about job roles, not a Letter of Reprimand, and the letter does not go into the employee's personnel file. She also stated that it is the Chief Executive who oversees the employees and conflicts arise when Council members cross over into that role.

0. Discussion and action to update bank signature cards

Motion made to table by Council Member Barnhart, Seconded by Council Member Clinton. Motion carried with all in favor.

Adjournment: Councilmember Barnhart motioned to adjourn the meeting, Councilmember Clinton seconded the motion, and the motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 p.m.

* * *

Public comment is listed on the agenda for individuals to discuss any public matter not otherwise specifically listed on the agenda. If any individual desires to speak about an item specifically listed on the agenda, time will be allowed and identified by the Mayor as "Any public comment?" when the item comes up for discussion and/or action.

* * *

ATTEST: _____
Chance Senner, Deputy Clerk

APPROVED: _____
NaDean Brown, Mayor