



MONROE CITY COUNCIL MINUTES

July 31, 2023

6:00 PM

Monroe Community Center

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Sheets called the City Council meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

Pledge of Allegiance: Councilor Ritch led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call: Present: Mayor Sheets; Councilors: Cuthbertson, Lindner, Meyers, Ritch, Williams, Winther
Staff present: City Administrator Martinenko

2. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mr. Brian Greene, 260 S. 9th St, asked about the status of the speed zone changes and emergency light he requested of Council earlier in the year. CA Martinenko replied the speed zone changes are with ODOT since the City does not have a ODOT certified engineer to make the changes. CA Martinenko commented that ODOT will be changing the emergency light this Fall.

Mr. David Brandwein, 460 S 10th St, came forward to voice strong concerns over the tall grass in the area outside City limits but adjacent to the Red Hills development. Mayor Sheets commented this topic is later on the agenda.

3. **STAFF REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

- 3.1. **Sheriff's Report.** Sheriff Van Arsdale asked the Council if there were any questions about the monthly patrol log. Councilor Myers asked about the Cougar siting's and the Sheriff reported that his department was notified along with ODFW. Cara Williams talked about concerns about suspicious activities at the park along with dogs off leash. Councilor Williams said she called the non-emergency number and did not get a call back. Sheriff Van Arsdale apologized and would research that. The conversation continued about suspicious activities at the park and Councilor Williams expressed that does not make her feel comfortable and believes something should be done. Councilor Cuthbertson then commented on school starting soon and the need for speed control on Territorial Road. The Sheriff concluded with upcoming events the Sheriff's Office will be participating in during August and September. The Council thanked the Sheriff for all the department does for Monroe and the surrounding community.

- 3.2. **REAL Presentation.** Michele Eldridge, City Administrator for Harrisburg, presented on the Regional Economic Alliance, or REAL. REAL members include Harrisburg, Brownsville, Lebanon, Monroe, Scio, Tangent, Sweet Home, Halsey, and Adair Village. The purpose for REAL is to provide resources for economic development and attracting business and industry to the region. Administrator Eldridge said the core values of the group include collaboration, resourcefulness, community approachability, and initiative. The group is working on recruiting a University of Oregon graduate to help



with the economic development piece, especially for entrepreneurship, maximizing partnerships, looking at materials and resources, and finding funding sources. The REAL core group is presently reaching out to Councils to talk about the group's activities and find the needs of the communities.

- 3.3. **Economic Development Plan and Parks Master Plan.** RARE student Chris Rivera presented his final report to Council on his work over the last year. Starting with the Economic Development Plan, Chris described his work on the plan as 90% completed but commented that the tourism component was not as well fleshed out because of the need for more expertise on the topic. Chris then talked about the Parks Master Plan and the townhalls that gathered comments from citizens including the Spanish speaking events. Chris described the methodology he used and a narrative on how to use the tools he developed. The information and data have been stored on the City's server and will be made available to the Council and Committees. Chris wrapped up by describing what he feels are the key takeaways from his time in Monroe that include developing a business incubator, community engagement and preserving the history and heritage of Monroe, and community pride that includes leadership for consistent community events and activities that support the ability for people to communicate and interact with each other. The Council and City Administrator thanked Chris for his hard work and contributions to the City.
- 3.4. **City Administrator Report.** CA Martinenko commented on front office reorganization and developing protocols and procedures. CA Martinenko said a letter will be sent out in August describing the ordinances that are being watched including personal property stored on City streets and easements along with tall grass and weeds. This approach has been discussed with both the City Attorney and our Municipal Judge. The approach is progressive once the letter is sent to everyone and includes written warnings and photographs documenting the process. This is because the fines start when the notices go out and provide the Judge with more leverage to get the violation abated by the property owner rather than the City. CA Martinenko mentioned that most of the ordinances have provisions for appeal to Council and in some cases to expect that to happen.

CA Martinenko went on to describe grants that will be coming before Council in the next few months that include a \$2,000 planning grant and a \$384,000 grant for a path on the Rail easement between 6th and Kelly to Alpine Cutoff Road.

CA Martinenko concluded with the path gravel for the Red Hills Wetlands Mitigation area pathway, describing how the process will work to make a more compact surface to walk on. He expects that to happen within the next two weeks.



4. CONSENT AGENDA

- 4.1. CA Martinenko pointed out expense for repairing a jammed sump pump at the City Park along with dues for various organizations. After brief discussion, Councilor Ritch motioned to approved the consent agenda. Councilor Myers seconded. With no further discussion, Mayor Sheets called for a vote: Councilors Cuthbertson: Yes; Lindner: Yes; Myers: Yes; Ritch: Yes; Williams: Yes; Winther: Yes. Motion carried.

At 7:15 p.m. Councilor Cuthbertson asked Mayor Sheets to be excused. A quorum of the body to conduct business was not affected.

5. NEW BUSINESS

- 5.1. **Communications Survey.** Mayor Sheets reported on the results of the Communication that asked citizens how they want to receive City information. There were 20 responses with three-fourths citizens of Monroe. The top means of receiving City information is the City Facebook page followed by the City Website, other Facebook sites, and word of mouth. Councilor Lindner discussed a comment left about the City having an official response on contentious issues. The general consensus is that most serious issues have legal implications and while people want to know, the City is obligated to follow legal counsel and say little except at public meetings where there is transparency and the conversations are recorded and retained. Councilor Williams mentioned social media comments on mowing and how the City responded within a day. CA Martinenko said that was probably unintentional but a published mowing schedule would help.
- 5.2. **Daycare.** CA Martinenko reported on discussions between the City and School District on daycare options. The issue is important because there are many parents who would like to work but have to stay at home to watch their children. This is an economic issue for the community and businesses, where workers have to take time off to stay home. There are several organizations involved including Old Mill School, the School District, City of Monroe, and the South Benton Food Pantry.
- 5.3. **Long Timber Event Permit.** The Long Timber Brewing Company requested Council permission to hold a parking lot event on August 26, 2023, from 2 P.M. to 9 P.M. There would be bands and a PA system involved and requires Council permission. Councilor Winther moved to permit the event and Councilor Lindner seconded. With no further discussion, Mayor Sheets called for a vote: Councilors Lindner: Yes; Myers: Yes; Ritch: Yes; Williams: Yes; Winther: Yes. Motion carried.
- 5.4. **Dumping Debris onto Property Outside City Limits.** CA Martinenko brought to the Councils attention that the property owners to west of Red Hills have filed a complaint with the City and sent cease-and desist letters to a City property owner that dumped yard debris over their fence onto their property and another City property owner that has planted trees and extended their fence into the adjoining property.



5.5. **Water Conservation Steps.** CA Martinenko reviewed with Council the water conservation steps that are outlined in the Water Conservation Plan. The first step of the plan is to ask for voluntary compliance but each step after that becomes mandatory along with the requirement for disclosure in public media including television, newspapers, and social media. Councilor Lindner asked about water usage in summer verses the rest of the year. CA Martinenko said it about twice the amount in summer and presently it is about 90,000 gallons per day verses 40,000 gallons in non-summer months.

5.6. **Ordinance 2023-02 First Reading.** CA Martinenko presented Ordinance 2023-02 that amends Ordinance 94.03(B), that does not require a waiver for mowing tracks exceeding one-half acre in size. As explained, the current ordinance requires grass and weeds taller than 10 inches to be mowed unless the acreage exceeds one-half acre. In that case, the property owner only has to mow a ten-foot perimeter and then, only if it is adjacent to fences or residences. This ordinance would remove that waiver and require all property owners to mow their grass in its entirety. There was discussion among Council members about different scenarios but arrived at general consensus that all tall grass within City limits should be mowed due to fire concerns and not be subject to a waiver. Councilor Myer moved to accept Ordinance 2023-02 as read and move it to the next meeting for adoption. Councilor Williams seconded. With no further discussion, Mayor Sheets called for a vote: Councilors Lindner: Yes; Myers: Yes; Ritch: Yes; Williams: Yes; Winther: Yes. Motion carried.

5.7. **Resolution 2023-20 Authorizing the City of Monroe to provide funding for 50% of employee dependent medical costs.** CA Martinenko explained this requirement is from our insurance carrier; however, when the current Personnel Handbook was adopted in 2020, this was omitted even though there was an earlier resolution adopting it. This resolution gives staff the authority to make the necessary coverage entries with the insurance carrier. Councilor Lindner moved to approve the resolution and Councilor Ritch seconded. With no further discussion, Mayor Sheets called for a vote: Councilors Lindner: Yes; Myers: Yes; Ritch: Yes; Williams: Yes; Winther: Yes. Motion carried.

7. **OLD BUSINESS:**

7.1. **Graffiti and Vandalism.** The Council discussed graffiti and other vandalism. It was noted that while the City Park has ordinances that prohibit graffiti and other vandalism, the rest of the City does not. Ordinances from other cities were looked at and discussed. CA Martinenko said he would bring examples to the Council at a future meeting.

7.2. **Fire Mitigation and Disaster Planning Update.** The Council discussed fire planning and defensible space within the City of Monroe with Chief Barnes of the Monroe Rural Fire District. He commented that he was not as much concerned about grasses as he was about "one hundred" and "one thousand" hour fuel sources such as trees and shrubs,



particularly to the west of Monroe. Otherwise, he feels the town itself is pretty defensible. He further explained that Senate Bill 72 provides him with more funding for summer time help to provide rapid response. That being said, Chief Barnes explained that any measures to keep property cleaned up and free of fuel sources will help in any fire situation. He commented that an emerging issue is the creep of the urban interface into the countryside where there are abundant fuel sources. Councilor Lindner asked about trees next to houses. Chief Barnes replied that it is more the type of tree that is a concern, such as pine or cedars, as opposed, for example, a maple tree and for a variety of reasons, any tree within City limits is not as big of a risk. Chief Barnes discussed recent fires and contributing factors. Councilor Ritch brought up discussion placing another fire hydrant in the north end of town and Chief Barnes agreed that would be of help. Councilor Myers talked about evacuation routes, particularly from the west side of Monroe and the areas of elevation where Chief Barnes said would be the most in danger. Chief Barnes concluded with mentioning the Fire Wise committee that is tackling much of these same issues. The Council thanked Chief Barnes for his service to the community and his time to help Council understand the issues.

- 7.3. **Water Infrastructure Next Steps.** Mayor Sheets mentioned that he has been in contact with Representative Gomberg's office and while the bill authorizing the \$1.3M for Monroe Water System improvements has not been signed, the good news is that it is not on the governor's veto list. CA Martinenko went on to explain he is working with the State revolving water fund to come up with the remaining dollars for the infrastructure project in the event the Federal dollars from the Congressional Discretionary Spending ask does not come through. This would add approximately \$3.50 to each water user utility bill but could be made up through the consumption part of the existing fees. CA Martinenko went on to describe projects to add a sprayer/mixer to the water reservoir to reduce THM components and allow more water storage and an additional hydrant on N 9th to allow flushing of the distribution system where we take one of our samples. This would also provide better fire protection to that area where the closest hydrants are on Ash Street. This would cost between \$15,000 and \$30,000, depending on the water lines installed.
- 7.4. **Camping Ordinance.** CA Martinenko led a discussion about City easements around town and restrictions such as schools in relation to camping for people experiencing homelessness. The Council agreed there is a need to establish the boundaries for existing easements where no formal streets exist.
- 7.5. **1135 Project.** CA Martinenko updated the Council on the 1135 project and mentioned the next step is the construction phase of the project actually being funding after October 1, 2023. While the project appears to be headed toward the Corps accepting the dam removal, the actual dollars to fund the project may take several years as it did to fund the feasibility study. CA Martinenko also updated the Council on Water Intake



funding and that a recent visit by the Oregon Water Enhancement Board resulted in our project being #2 on their list out of 7 for their consideration later in the year.

8. CITY EVENTS

8.1. Mayor Sheets provided an update of July events including Christmas in July and the taste of Tri-County and also described upcoming events including the First Responder's event and BBW Competition in September.

9. OTHER BUSINESS:

9.1. Councilor Lindner asked about hiring and a personnel update. CA Martinenko said that September would be a good time for that to happen and asked Councilor Lindner for a compensation study since inflation rose significantly since the last study and we did not budget for a COLA increase in this year's budget.

10. ADJOURN: Mayor Sheets adjourned the meeting at 8:48 p.m.

Approved by Council Action on August 28, 2023

Mayor Dan Sheets  Date: 8/28/23

Attest: 
Steve Martinenko, City Recorder