

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
OCTOBER 14, 2014 6:30 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

A Council Workshop was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Mayor Mark Mace at 6:30 p.m. on October 14, 2014.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

<input type="checkbox"/> Emelie Eaton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doug Poehls
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bruce McGee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Herr
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Dickerson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scot Stokes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Nelson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Mountsier

OTHERS PRESENT:

Rick Musson, Police Chief

Jean Kerr, City Judge

Public Input (three-minute limit)

There was no public input.

Executive Review:

- Resolution – Accept MDT Highway Traffic Safety Grant

Chief Musson stated that the city has applied for the grant for a number of years, and the grant runs from October through September. The \$10,000 grant reimburses the city for traffic overtime shifts for traffic related stops, including DUI's. The department is currently short-handed but will do its best to fulfill the obligation of the grant.

Mayor Mace asked for an update regarding the number of police officers in the department.

Chief Musson explained that one officer was not replaced last year because of the lack of money. In August, another officer went to boot camp in the Navy Reserves and then another officer left to go back to work as a paramedic. Since December 2014, the department has lost three people, but officially is down two people. Two positions were offered to applicants recently, but one applicant had already accepted a position in Billings. Justin Bickford, who has been a Police Reserve, has been hired as a new officer and is scheduled to be appointed and sworn in at the council meeting on November 4th. A new list of Consortium candidates came out today, so the Police Department will send out letters and begin the interview process to fill the second position. The second officer should be hired in December or January.

- Discussion – Council Meeting on November 4th (Election Day) and Council Workshop on November 11th (Veterans' Day)

Doug stated that the council has always met on those nights and he did not see a problem unless another council member had an issue.

There was no further discussion. Mayor Mace stated that the dates would remain on the schedule.

- Council Issues:
 - Discussion – LMC 10.48.070 Parking time limits

Chuck stated that he brought this forward due to the following section in Laurel Municipal Code:

10.48.070 Parking time limits applicable to all streets. (MCA § 61-8-356)

- A. No person shall park a vehicle for longer than five consecutive days at any time upon a street or highway within the city.
- B. If the vehicle is moved after the five days, it shall not be reparked anywhere within one hundred fifty foot radius of the previous parking place.
- C. Any vehicle parked longer than five consecutive days on a street in the city shall be removed and sold as an abandoned vehicle in accordance with the provisions of MCA Sections 61-8-356 and 61-12-401 – 408.

Chuck stated his concern that there are a lot more recreational vehicles, including flatbed trailers for ATVs and 4-wheelers, 5th Wheels, motorhomes, etc., in the city now. He suggested extending the timeframe from five days to 14 days because people might not go camping every week. He also suggested changing the wording that “any vehicle parked longer than five consecutive days . . . shall be removed and sold as an abandoned vehicle . . . “ He stated that a vehicle is not abandoned if it is licensed and insured. The police department has been very lenient with the current ordinance, but they could crack down on it. Chuck has had constituents say they are concerned because they are afraid that if people can park fourteen days, they will park vehicles in front of other people’s houses. He suggested that the verbiage could allow parking for fourteen days at their current residence, not across town or in the IGA parking lot. Since there are not a lot of parking storage places within and/or immediately outside the city limits, people would be able to park their RV’s or trailers during the camping season. Chuck’s concern is to come up with wording that will not be as harsh if it is not followed.

Chief Musson spoke about the practical sense of the ordinance. No person shall park a vehicle for longer than five consecutive days. State law allows 48 hours for removal of a vehicle on the interstate system or the highway system outside of city limits. State highway within the city falls under the city’s jurisdiction. If a trooper marks a car that broke down, they want it removed within 48 hours, by State law. Chief Musson stated that State law and LMC are the same wording, except for the 48 hours versus five days. He explained that the law has to do with junk vehicles, and nothing to do with an RV or pickup that is parked for six days. This is what is called the practical part of the law, in his opinion. The police department does not threaten to tow or write tickets for a motorhome, camper or vehicle that has been parked in violation for a few days. The department tries to be practical when removing vehicles from the street. When camping season and hunting season are over, the officer makes a sweep through town and starts writing letters. With a previous letter-writing campaign, all but two people complied. The department is not looking for vehicles that have been parked for more than five days, but they are looking for abandoned vehicles. If the five-day timeframe is changed to fourteen days, the timeframe for removal of a vehicle would be too long. If a resident complains about a car that has been parked in front of his house for fourteen days, the police department has to mark the tire on the car and be able to testify that it did not move for another fourteen days. That becomes 28 days or more. Chief Musson stated that extending the time would not do any good for enforcement. The department rarely impounds vehicles and the County is called to haul junk vehicles that are truly abandoned.

Chief Musson stated his opinion that the five-day timeframe should not be changed. People should not be afraid that their vehicles will be towed away. Most of the parking issues are dealt with on a complaint basis.

There was a lengthy discussion regarding parking issues on the south side of Laurel, a question whether or not the officers talk to the complainants, the need for ordinances to be written the way they should be enforced, the current lack of manpower in the police department, the suggestion to add language to LMC regarding parking recreational vehicles, the LMC requirement to move the vehicle 150 feet to insure that the vehicle was running, the suggestion to have a committee review the issues in LMC 10.48.070, and junk vehicles.

Chief Musson stated that tweaking the language regarding moving a vehicle 150 feet could be considered, but the five-day timeframe is important because it allows action quicker. Once the department finds out about the problem, action is taken care of sooner than in fourteen days. The department responds to every complaint received but cannot always find a parked vehicle that has been there for two months.

Doug stated that he would put the review of LMC 10.48.070 on the Emergency Services Committee agenda for future discussion, but probably not until next spring.

- Discussion – Swimming pool (Scot Stokes)

Scot mentioned that the Park Board recently discussed the swimming pool. The city has to put \$15,000 of repairs into the pool to get it ready for next year. The pool is grandfathered in right now, but if rehab and repairs are done, it will have to be made compliant with current standards. It would cost \$150,000 to get the pool up to par. Last year, the city lost \$45,000 on the pool. This year it needs \$15,000 of repairs and then possibly will lose \$45,000 again. Scot stated the Park Board's questions about putting more money into the pool or just shutting the pool down. Since the park levy was not approved, there are no funds available.

Tom stated that he could not see shutting down the pool, as it is a source of recreation for a lot of youth that have a dwindling amount of activities available. He questioned if some entity other than the city would be interested in managing the pool.

Scot stated that it is surprising how many people do not use the pool.

Chuck stated that it has been said that the largest amount of people that use the pool come in from Billings. The city has been paying the YMCA to run the pool and their contract could increase next year. The public's response was against the park maintenance levy to provide funds to fix the pool. He stated that the city lost \$45,000 on the pool last year and cannot keep throwing money away without some kind of support.

Mayor asked Scot if the Park Board has thought of asking the public if they would rather not have the pool.

Scot stated that the Park Board discussed shutting the pool down or doing a levy for the pool. The pool was built in 1930, is very outdated, and will cost a lot of money to fix. The city will either have to put a lot of money into repairs or close the pool.

Tom asked about the money that was endowed for the pool, where the money has gone, and if it could be used for a spray park or for maintenance of the current pool.

Doug asked that the Park Board find out information about the cost of the rehab of the pool, the money lost last year in running the pool, a determination if Billie Riddle's endowment money could be used for a spray park, and the initial cost to build a spray park.

Jean Kerr stated that she contacted Harvest Church, which built the Oasis in Billings. The project was based on a lot of people making pledges in their church. She stated that non-profit organizations can write grants and suggested that the Laurel Revitalization League be contacted to do so. She has talked to both of Billie Riddle's nieces, who recall that Billie wanted to have a new pool. Since it was an irrevocable trust, it cannot be changed upon death. If people donate money to a non-profit with a tax exempt number, the donor would have a tax write-off. She suggested that the pool project should be "outside of the box" and that a non-profit agency should work on it. She spoke regarding two previous Pool Committees that worked on the swimming pool issues. Jean stated that Harvest Church deeded the Oasis to the City of Billings because they did not want the liability. The City of Billings has the liability but the church still wanted to make sure that it was being run properly, so there is a contract between the two entities.

Scot stated that the Park Board would like the council's input regarding shutting down the pool.

Tom suggested that Scot talk to the council members individually.

- Status of the underpass rehab project (Chuck Dickerson)

Mayor Mace explained that the project is tied to the Federal Highway Transportation Bill and is scheduled after July 1, 2015. He talked with the Maintenance Director for the State today and was told that the project will go out for bid this fall and a contract will be accepted with the condition that the project be completed before school starts in 2015.

Chief Musson attended the recent meeting with MDT, along with the CAO and Public Works Director. The project will start after July 4th, will take 30 days to complete, and will be worked on 24 hours a day. There will be some noise issues downtown and a big traffic issue. The city will work with the State on traffic control devices for a better four-way stop at Fifth Avenue and West Main Street. Chief Musson has recommended that MDT consider a permanent four-way stop at that intersection, as well as review the speed limit issue on West Main from 35 mph to 25 mph.

- City Leases/Lease Task Force update

The council received copies of a memo from the City Attorney regarding having the staff prepare and negotiate the leases with the various clubs and/or groups and then present the leases to the council for final approval.

- Update on 2011 Yellowstone River flooding event

There was no discussion.

Other items

Tom requested discussion regarding LURA on the next council workshop agenda. He stated that according to the charter, LURA is supposed to supply the council with two reports every year. One report should detail their fiscal activity for the prior year and the second report should detail their

proposed expenses and projects in the next fiscal year. For the last six years, he has never seen a report from LURA. Since LURA is currently in control of almost half a million dollars of funds through the TIF District, he would like to know what they are doing with it.

Rick thanked the city for allowing him to attend the League of Cities and Towns Conference last week. While at the conference, he saw paperwork for pool grants, road grants, railroad crossing grants, park trail grants, etc. He will look into the information further.

Review of draft council agenda for October 21, 2014

There were no changes.

Attendance at the October 21, 2014 council meeting

Tom will not attend the council meeting.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Recognition of Employees

- Nancy Schmidt – Library Director 19 years of service on October 17th
- Joel Sauter – Police Officer 17 years of service on October 11th
- Fred Gregory – Police Officer 7 years of service on October 15th
(Military Leave of Absence as of August 26, 2014)
- Justin Baker – City Shop 2 years of service on October 9th
- Fred Lyons – Library 1 year of service on October 28th

Mayor Mace stated appreciation for the employees of the City of Laurel.

The council workshop adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Cindy Allen
Council Secretary

NOTE: This meeting is open to the public. This meeting is for information and discussion of the Council for the listed workshop agenda items.