

**MINUTES
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
MARCH 14, 2017 6:30 P.M.
COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

A Council Workshop was held in the Council Chambers and called to order by Council Vice-President Tom Nelson at 6:30 p.m. on March 14, 2017.

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Emelie Eaton	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Doug Poehls (6:35 p.m.)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bruce McGee	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Richard Herr
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Chuck Dickerson	<input type="checkbox"/> Scot Stokes
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tom Nelson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bill Mountsier

OTHERS PRESENT:

Heidi Jensen, CAO
Bethany Keeler, Clerk/Treasurer

Public Input

Irv Wilke, 1017 Seventh Avenue, reported on the Laurel Rod & Gun Club's recent turkey shoot in Riverside Park.

General items

- Appointments
 - Laurel Ambulance Service

DJ Poolet, the EMS Captain, introduced Jacob Haan and Sharla Steele. The appointments will be on next Tuesday's council agenda.

- Park Board

The appointment of Phyllis Bromgard will be on the next council agenda.

Executive Review

- Countywide EMS Consolidation

Heidi stated that Brad Shoemaker would join the discussion regarding the letter for the countywide EMS consolidation via speaker phone, as he also had a Rural Fire District meeting to attend.

Brad thanked the council for taking the time to put some discussion and thought into this issue.

Heidi explained that Brad was available to answer questions regarding the letter of intent asking the County to further investigate the districtwide ambulance service. The city is not committing any resources or money or signing on the dotted line. The city is just asking the County to go forward to see if this is even a viable possibility for Laurel. To meet the April 1st deadline, the council needs to discuss the letter tonight and then vote on whether to allow the mayor to sign the letter and send it to the County to ask them to investigate.

Emelie asked which came first, a request from Laurel or a request from the County to Laurel with regard to Laurel participating in this.

Brad was not entirely sure. The Rural Fire Council, which includes Laurel's fire chief Brent Peters, approached him as a whole right after he started his position. He stated that it was probably more the eastern side of the County in the Worden area. The Rural Fire Council wanted to look at this on a countywide level to see if it was even possible, which led to asking if Laurel would like to be included.

Emelie asked if it was correct that the County does not currently have funding to make this project go forward.

Brad agreed that is correct.

Doug said that the Emergency Services Committee met last night and does not have an issue with looking into this. The committee constructed a letter that stated some of Laurel's concerns. The committee would like to look at the possibility of three ambulances on the west side, whether fully-paid, volunteer, or a combination. The committee is concerned with being able to cover 100 percent of the calls. Some of the scenarios the committee discussed last night make it impossible for one ambulance to cover 100 percent of the calls. The committee would like the County to pursue looking at multiple ambulances on the west side, whether they are staffed at fulltime or a combination of fulltime and volunteers. Also, Laurel is thinking of starting an ambulance district.

Brad asked if Laurel would potentially start a district independent of the County district.

Doug answered that the committee does not know yet. The city needs to see some figures from the County, but at some point the city needs to look at the dollars and cents of it.

Brad explained that, in order to look at the dollars and cents, the boundary lines need to be set. So the question is if he should look at it with Laurel in or with Laurel out.

Doug replied that the city needs some information on both of those scenarios. He is not opposed to getting more information, which is needed before the city could ever commit to this.

Heidi stated that everybody understands that, but the council needs to send a letter asking the County to look for more information before the April 1st deadline. The city is not committing to anything and everybody understands there are a million questions and there will have to be a lot of meetings to answer them. The question is if Laurel is even interested in being part of the district. If so, Brad will figure out the boundary, the dollars and the resources and then present the information to the council.

Doug had nothing specifically against a letter of interest.

Brad stated that the question is really if the council even wants him to take his time to include the area around Laurel.

Heidi acknowledged that there were a lot of head nods in favor of that. She thinks there was a lot of confusion about resources being expended, which is not the case at this time.

Brad stated that the County is not asking for funding or anything from Laurel except to know if the city is interested. The County wants to know about any options that the City of Laurel wants considered, such as having more ambulances on the west side of the County with one fulltime, 24-hour and one additional 12-hour or 40-hour/week ambulance. This is the time to submit whatever options the city wants to see numbers on.

Tom stated that the Emergency Services Committee last night approved a motion to make a recommendation to the council just as Brad stated. The committee had requirements and types of service it wanted included in the letter.

Emelie asked why there is a time limit, if this is just a letter saying that the city wants the County to pursue getting more information and more options, and why does that tie the city in to the scenario of time limits until a mill levy can be passed.

Brad explained that there is a timeline associated with it because a million questions could be asked a hundred times if they leave it open. The County intends to take the letters received to formulate an RFQ, put the RFQ out for potential bidders and then build the numbers. Brad stated that deadlines are what make projects actually move forward as opposed to simmering on the stove. The deadlines are in place so the process continues, not to push anyone into making a decision.

Emelie questioned how the city could make any decisions whether or not to go through with it without any answers.

Tom explained that the answers will be available when the RFQ comes back and the County knows the costs associated with Laurel's needs and the needs on the east side in the Shepherd, Worden, and Huntley area. Those costs will then be plugged into the amount of taxable members of the county that are available to support the levy to find out what the cost would be for each of the taxpayers. Then the discussion will start regarding affordability for taxpayers, if something can be changed, and any options available to achieve the end.

Brad stated that Tom's explanation was correct. The County cannot determine how much it will cost a taxpayer until they know exactly which taxpayers will be in the service area and what service will be provided. They have to figure out the service level and the boundaries to find out how much it will cost, and then they will present the numbers for cost per household to the council to make a decision.

Tom stated that everyone seemed to understand the process, so the city will get the letter to the County in the requisite time.

Heidi stated that she would send the Emergency Services Committee's information to Brad, as well as the draft letter that will go before the council next week.

Brad thanked her and encouraged anyone to call or email him with questions.

Doug proposed that Heidi draft a letter for next Tuesday's council meeting that includes the list of recommendations from the Emergency Services Committee.

- Resolution - SID No. 111

Heidi explained that, prior to Shirley Ewan's retirement, she and Bethany went through the SID's and found an error in SID No. 111. The error was an input error into Black Mountain that happened seven or eight years ago prior to any of the current staff. The amount of the SID, the time of the SID and the interest rate of the SID were put in incorrectly. A majority of the properties have already paid off the SID and some properties continue to make the payment on their taxes. Dorsey & Whitney, the bond counsel was contacted to find out how to fix the issue. No one seems to know what happened, but it appears that it was an input error into Black Mountain.

Heidi stated that the city cannot reevaluate the people that already paid off the SID. People that were still paying on the SID could be reevaluated, but that was just a small portion of the SID. The amount that would be received from those properties is very incremental in comparison with the remaining balance of \$66,000. Since SID No. 111 is in the TIF District, the city asked the LURA board members if they would help the city pay off this SID, as everyone in the district benefited. While the SID was created before the TIF District, the property is still within the TIF District. The SID was an infrastructure improvement for sidewalk improvements and none of the properties in the district had paid the full amount of their share. Everyone was in a financial gain really at that point. LURA was not pleased with this, as the board does not want the TIF District to be a slush fund for errors of the city. Heidi explained to LURA that it could be paid incrementally out of the General Fund, not in one lump sum, and the interest would keep compounding. LURA had a lot of discussion and held a special meeting to consider it. Understanding that staff was trying to fix the error and that the benefits of the SID were in the TIF District, LURA voted to have the TIF District pay off the full remaining amount of SID No. 111 with TIF District dollars.

Bethany said that bond counsel and the city attorney were consulted, and the attorney agreed that it did not break any rules or regulations for the TIFD to pay the \$66,000. The choices are for the TIF District, which has over \$1 million, or for the hurting General Fund to pay for it. Staff does not want to ask the taxpayers who are still paying on the SID to pay the full amount, as everyone was under-assessed. The property owners paid off their SID in good faith, which is why the city cannot ask them to pay the full amount. The remaining principal is \$66,000 and the amount of money that will be collected in 2017 and 2018 will pay off the interest. That is why the TIF District would only pay the principal. The SID was supposed to go until 2026, but the city will only collect assessments of \$4,854.73 through 2018. There is a huge gap between the assessments and the balance of the SID.

There was discussion regarding the property owners that already paid off the SID, the property owners that are still paying on the SID, and the need to keep the original assessments for all property owners.

Bethany and Dorsey & Whitney think the assessments were incorrectly entered into the Black Mountain Software at a much lower value than they should have been. Every property was under-assessed, which is the reason for the huge gap, but the original assessments will remain. Bethany has checked to make sure all the other SID's are correct, and she also asked the auditors how and why this mistake was missed.

Emelie understands that LURA is upset with being asked to pay for this, but it is a good solution to an ugly problem since the SID was an infrastructure project within the TIF District.

Heidi explained that LURA did not take it lightly. LURA is very respectful of the TIFD funds and is working diligently to do good projects in the TIF District. LURA will not be a slush fund for errors of the city.

Bethany stated that the original value of SID No. 111 was \$162,000 for a 20-year term.

Tom researched the issue and found that SID No. 111 was discussed at a special council meeting on December 17, 2004, and at a regular council meeting on December 21, 2004. Apparently, there was some grant money available that was tied to the SID project. At the meeting on December 21, 2004, Alderman Mace made the motion to approve SID No. 111. There was then discussion and Alderman Poehls mentioned that the SID document said that "the special assessment for the cost of the improvements shall be payable over a term not exceeding 15 years." A 12-year term was discussed at the special council meeting on December 17th. Now Tom is told that the term should have been 20 years. He stated that Morrison-Maierle was at both meetings and told the council there was a 12-year term on this bond. He does not know how much Morrison-Maierle had to do with this or should have been responsible for this. SID No. 111 is in the TIF District, but Tom would not want to tell his fellow council members of the council that those sidewalks would have been paid by the TIF District anyway, but it appears that the consensus is that is most likely what would have happened. Hopefully going forward, the council will pull the reins back and get things right when there are questions about times and bonds or any issue.

Bethany stated that the 12-year term might explain why the payments were entered at 24 instead of 40. The final paperwork for the bond clearly spells out the details. She suggested that the information might have been entered prematurely and not changed when the final documents were received.

Bruce is glad that Bethany has verified the other SID information, but he is concerned about what might be lingering out there. With the help of LURA, the city will escape a bullet of \$66,000 to the General Fund. He asked that LURA be thanked for the help and informed that the council does not intend to treat the funds in the TIF District as a slush fund for emergencies.

- Resolution - Contract with the Billings YMCA

Heidi explained the annual contract for the Billings YMCA to operate the municipal pool. The YMCA will operate the pool for the same amount as last year, which is \$47,600. The past few years have run much smoother under the direction of the YMCA and everyone seems to be happy with the service they provide. The pool will be painted prior to being opened this season.

- Council Issues:

- Update on 2011 Yellowstone River flooding event

Heidi informed the council that the contractor is back in the river. The hole has been re-dug and dewatered, the pumps that were submerged for many months fired back up and they pumped the water out of the hole. The hole only has about a foot of water in it, but that is not of great concern until they are actually doing something in the hole. The contractor hopes to start pouring concrete on Friday and then have it cure and keep moving forward.

Heidi asked for an updated schedule at today's construction meeting, so that should be provided next week. Most of the pipe has been laid. Gas and power will be installed tomorrow. The city did a small service agreement with a contractor to dig a trench from the existing gas and power lines on the

west side of Red Bridge Road to get them across the road and to the control building prior to the frost leaving the ground. The trench has been dug. The city's hydro-excavator was used to make sure there was no damage to the gas line. MDU was onsite today and will be onsite tomorrow for the tie-in. Yellowstone Valley Electric will then put their power line on top. The contractor has an agreement with the McCoy property to borrow electricity for the control building, so it will be nice to get power to tie the generator up and get the power going. The computer specialist, Clint Camper, will then start working on the communication between the control building and the water treatment plant, which is part of the contract the council recently approved for use of the Greeno tower.

The contractor should provide an updated schedule next week. The original April 1st date for substantial completion was for the contractor's safety to be out of the river before runoff and before the ditches get turned on April 15th. The contractor will probably run out of contract days and ask for an extension. As long as they are safe and the runoff is not too high, Heidi does not see a reason not to grant the extension, as everyone wants to see this project completed.

Heidi will submit a grant application for a grant that is similar to a TSEP Grant. The city did not get a TSEP Grant through the 2017 legislature for the lowering of the intake in the river, which is a condition of our CORPS permit. The legislature, as part of the infrastructure bill, has created a subgroup to review additional infrastructure projects that were not funded with the TSEP Grant. Two grants applications will be submitted, one for the sedimentation basins and one for lowering the intake.

Other items

There were no other items.

Review of draft council agenda for March 21, 2017

There was no discussion

Attendance at the March 21, 2017 council meeting

Richard might not be able to attend because he has jury duty on Monday.

Announcements

Bill stated that he missed the Emergency Services Committee meeting yesterday. He asked regarding the disposition of the 900 calls that were mentioned by the fire chief how life-threatening they were.

There was confusion regarding the 900 calls. Tom explained that the committee was told there were 951 emergency calls in 2016.

Bill asked how many of the calls were life-threatening calls, how many were superficial, and how many calls there were that people refused to take any medical treatment.

Doug stated that the same questions were asked last night. It does not make any difference if it is life threatening or not, they are going to respond. For example, if they are called out to somebody who stubs their toe, they are not trained to diagnose whether or not that toe is broken or whether the toe is just stubbed and bleeding a little. They are trained to treat it and get the patient to a doctor. They do not say whether or not it was an emergency. The concern if the first call is for a stubbed toe and the second call is for a heart attack and there is not coverage for the heart attack. That is why the committee is asking for 100 percent call response and why three ambulances might be needed on the

west side of the County. They do not track how many calls are emergent, but they told the committee that 137 calls had to be referred for mutual aid.

Bill asked what happens if there are four calls instead of three. They still could not make 100 percent coverage.

Tom explained that the police, fire and/or ambulance still respond and investigate a 911 call even if someone calls back to say it was a kid playing around or response was not needed. Calls have increased for things that do not necessitate an ambulance for transportation, but that is their function. The committee has determined that three ambulances would be necessary in the southwestern end of Yellowstone County in order to take care of the needs of the county and the city. The committee knows that two ambulances are necessary to take care of the city's needs. Once an entity has expended its ability to serve with its equipment and personnel, then mutual aid comes in and takes those calls.

Doug stated that the ambulance often transports someone to the hospital in Billings and then gets called out before they get back, so they return with lights and sirens to another call. Hopefully, four calls would not come in within three minutes of each other.

Heidi suggested not to tell the county that Laurel wants three ambulances, as it is part of their investigation to determine how many ambulances are needed. The wording in the letter could be something other than a demand for three ambulances stationed in Laurel.

Doug suggested requesting the minimum number of ambulances required to respond to 1,000+ emergency calls.

Heidi said that sounded more reasonable than dictating the number, because the letter of intent is for them to investigate how many calls there were, how many calls were missed, and how many calls are predicted.

Tom stated the need to impress on the County that one ambulance was not enough and that Laurel wants them to look at a mutual aid contract with the City of Laurel. He stated that there would be many discussions throughout the next year.

Emelie stated that there was some confusion yesterday because there was no Public Works Committee meeting. She announced it at last week's council meeting, but no notice was not sent out. The Public Works Committee might not meet in April either, but a notice will be sent out.

Recognition of Employees

- Jason Wells 19 years of service on March 18th Police Officer
- Christopher Erb 8 years of service on March 11th Laurel Library

Tom recognized Jason Wells for nineteen years of service and Christopher Erb for eight years of service to the City of Laurel.

The council workshop adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Council Workshop Minutes of March 14, 2017

Respectfully submitted,

Cindy Allen

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.

A summary of the Emergency Committee Meeting of 3/13/17 for a recommendation to the City Council meeting on 3/14/17 to consider participating in proposed Yellowstone county wide ambulance service.

Upon hearing the comments from ambulance personal, interested parties and Brent Peters the Fire Chief.

The Emergency services Committee passed a motion to recommend to the Laurel City Council the following.

- That it is only in the interest of the citizens of Laurel and the surrounding Laurel community, provided.
- That city of Laurel needs are provided for with in participating in a county wide ambulance service, and those needs are.
- A plan with a minimum of 3 ambulance's stationed on the Western side of the county in and near Laurel.
- Those ambulances are staffed by or a combination of paid full time, and volunteer staff so that 100% of calls for ambulance service are provided to citizens.

The reasons for these requirements are simple and as follows.

- It will do the Laurel and surrounding residents in the area absolutely no good to have less in ambulance service then is presently in place, because the ever increasing call volume for ambulance services.
- The Laurel ambulance service is presently in the process of improving services.
- One of the goals for undertaking such a large scale project to provide ambulance service should be to grow and improve services not provide less in service which is believed to be what only one ambulance stationed in Laurel would do.

After careful consideration it is the conclusion that the above cited requirements are in the best interest of the city of Laurel and all those served by Laurel Ambulance both present and future.

Sincerely on Behalf of the Emergency Services Committee,

Bruce McGee
Ward 2 Alderman