

MARCH 6, 2017

The Regular Meeting of the Lake Benton City Council was held on Monday, March 6, 2017 at 5:30 P.M. in the Heritage Center/City Office. Mayor Bob Worth presided. Trustees Rosie DeZeeuw, Mark Dunn, David Enke and Daryl Schlapkohl were present. City Attorney Mike Cable was absent. City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen, Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert, Seth Stapleton and Cale Nordmeyer-Reps for the Minnesota Zoo, Joe Blastick-Rep for The Nature Conservancy, Sandy Dahl, Sharon Huhta, Scott Christensen, and Shelly Finzen from the Lake Benton Valley Journal were also present.

Mayor Bob Worth called the meeting to order. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited by all present.

Mayor Bob Worth then asked if anyone in attendance had an item, not on the agenda, to bring up during the Open Forum part of the meeting. If so they had two minutes to state their concern. No items were brought forward at this time.

The minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 21, 2017 were reviewed. **MOTION** by Mark Dunn, seconded by Rosie DeZeeuw to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 21, 2017. Motion carried.

CLAIMS PRESENTED AGAINST THE CITY OF LAKE BENTON:

LB GROCERY	\$ 5.55	OTTERTAIL	\$ 2,743.66
ITC	\$ 276.06	L-P RURAL WATER	\$ 3,492.80
LB HARDWARE	\$ 53.46	GOPHER STATE	\$ 4.05
LINCOLN CTY TREASURE	\$ 42.00	TODD DRAPER	\$ 32.00
PAT HAYNES	\$ 240.00	LEAGUE OF MN CITIES	\$ 90.00
MINNESOTA LIFE	\$ 3.40	CHAMBER-CVB	\$ 41.67
SOJO'S SPORTWEAR	\$ 1,522.00	LIPINSKI SMALL ENGINE	\$ 240.02
TROY NORDMEYER	\$ 32.00	ONE OFFICE SOLUTION	\$ 3,163.95
BUFFALOT RIDGE NEWS	\$ 33.00	PAM BAKKER	\$ 828.00
PLUM CREEK LIBRARY	\$ 57.55		

Discussion took place on the large heating bill at the Community Center for \$520.24 and Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl will talk with Maintenance Supervisor Todd Draper to see what can be done to control the heating in that building. Electric heat is too costly and the Council should consider putting an LP furnace in the Community Center. It was requested that Maintenance Supervisor Todd Draper talk with Thomas Electric and Thomas Heating & Plumbing to get pricing on a new furnace.

MOTION by Dave Enke, seconded by Daryl Schlapkohl to approve payment of the claims presented against the City of Lake Benton. Motion carried and the Mayor authorized the City Administrator/Clerk to make payment.

POLICE REPORT:

The Police Report for February was presented to the Council by Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert. The weather has been getting nicer out which unfortunately means that crime will start going up. At a previous meeting, citizens requested having crime stoppers around town. The community can police themselves if they keep an eye out for suspicious activity and report it.

Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert has been putting together an Inventory list of the Lake Benton Police Department and submitted it to the City Administrator/Clerk. Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert will continue to add to the list as he comes across items that should be included so the department and the City have a thorough, continually updated inventory.

There has been some concern about a residence on Fremont Street with a door being left open as well as the overall condition of the house. After working with the City Administrator/Clerk on this issue, it has come to our attention that the property owner plans on taking the house down sometime this spring.

Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert thanked the City Council, Mayor and City Administrator/Clerk for giving him the opportunity to take on the responsibility of Acting Police Chief and for the kind words everyone has said about him and making him feel so welcome. He also stated his thanks for the increase in pay, it was a blessing to hear that news and he appreciated it very much.

Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert would like the Council, Mayor, City Administrator/Clerk and the Community of Lake Benton to let him know of any ideas on how to better serve, improve, and help the community should always feel free to contact him.

Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert then explained there were not a lot of miles traveled in February as he was away on military leave. He listed the calls he took care of while he was here in February but it does not include the ICR's the County took care of in his absence.

The Council asked Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert if he would put a statement in the paper on the community working together as crime stoppers. Since spring is coming, everyone needs to keep an eye out for their neighbors. Discussion took place on an incident of stolen property from a business in Lake Benton. The same type of incident occurred in Tyler and it may be the same group of people doing this. Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert will work with the County and check the ICR's from the Tyler incident and compare it to the one in Lake Benton. **MOTION** by Dave Enke, seconded by Mark Dunn to approve the February Police Report. Motion carried.

The next item of business was a presentation by Seth Stapleton and Cale Nordmeyer, Representatives of the Minnesota Zoo in Apple Valley, MN on their butterfly release. The Minnesota Zoo has been building a breeding population of rare Dakota skipper butterflies for the past four (4) years. During late June 2017, they will be releasing 200 butterflies back into the Hole-in-the-Mountain Prairie owned by Nature Conservancy.

Seth and Cale passed out brochures and maps to the Council and audience and explained that this will be the first attempt to release the Dakota skipper butterflies since 2009. The Dakota skipper butterfly starts as a caterpillar when they are born in July and become an adult one year later. The Dakota skipper butterflies are 2 1/2 inches long and orange-yellow in color. The Minnesota Zoo will be in Lake Benton in late June to release the butterflies and monitor their population for three to four weeks. Their flight span is 100 yards and they feed on corn flowers and prairie grass.

The Council asked what caused the extinction of the butterfly between 2009 and 2012. The Minnesota Zoo scientists are trying to learn why they were disappearing, but it could be a variety of things such as prairie birds and pheasants eating them. The Council also asked what will happen to the butterflies when The Nature Conservancy has a controlled burn on the prairie. Seth and Cale informed the Council they will be working together with The Nature Conservancy and will stay in touch with Joe Blastick on their plans for controlled burns.

The next item of business was a presentation by Joe Blastick, Representative for The Nature Conservancy. Joe introduced himself to the Council and explained it has been multiple years since he has formally done this and there are new residents in Lake Benton that may or may not know much about the Nature Conservancy. Joe then gave updates on a few projects, and briefly talked about upcoming fire season.

Joe informed the Council The Nature Conservancy is hoping to do some controlled burns this year which they haven't been able to do in the past two to three years. The plan is to burn three (3) to 100 acres. The Council asked Joe what was the purpose of the fence? If it is agriculture land and used for grazing, does The Nature Conservancy have to pay taxes? When working with the Fire Departments, does The Nature Conservancy get compensated for the burns? Joe explained the budget and staff cuts did not help them progress along as quickly as they anticipated on the fence project, and no, The Nature Conservancy does not get compensated or have to pay taxes when working with the Fire Departments.

The Council then brought up the bad Canadian thistle in the City of Lake Benton with the more serious problem on The Nature Conservancy property. The west end of town in the back alley shows the Canadian thistle is still there, it's gone to seed, but it is still there. It is very frustrating to the citizens of Lake Benton and they would like to see this taken care of. Maintenance Supervisor Todd Draper talked with Joe Blastick last year regarding this issue and nothing was done. Joe stated they are spot spraying and trying their best.

The next item of business was to review/act on a policy for keys to the Library Building. Library Liaison, Trustee Dave Enke, informed the Council at the last Library Board meeting the discussion of keys and access to the Library was brought up. The Board wants to control that more and reduce the number of keys that are out. Some programs do take place outside regular Library hours, which is the reason for the certain individuals to have a key. The Board has decided to move the Summer Reading Program (SRP) into the regular hours the Library is open, leaving only two (2) entities that need keys to get into the Library after hours. The two entities include The Friends of the Library which meets once a month, and the Fiber Guild which meets once a week. It has been decided to have the two (2) entities check out a key just as the City Office does for the burn site and/or the Community Center and after the building is used, they lock it up and leave the key in the drop box. Four keys will be distributed to the Library Staff and the Maintenance Supervisor, and one key will be distributed to the Plum Creek Library System as they need to get into the Library after hours. This will reduce the number of keys needed and provide a key to those that need it when meeting at the Library. It was recommended the Library Staff create a sign out sheet with the individual's name, phone number and date the key was given out and when it will be returned.

The next item of business was to review/act on Public Employees Retirement Association – Police Officer Resolution for Cole Nordmeyer. Cole Nordmeyer began his duties as a part-time police officer for the City of Lake Benton in 2015 and resigned in November 2016. The former Council was provided resolutions to approve should any officers surpass the yearly earnings of \$5,100.00 making them eligible for PERA benefits, but voted not to pass the resolutions because the officers were not to go over the allotted earnings.

Effective November 30, 2016, Cole Nordmeyer surpassed the \$5,100.00. Per PERA requirements, the Council needs to pass the attached resolution declaring that the position meets the legal requirements for such coverage and requests the coverage for the named individual. Cole Nordmeyer will be eligible for PERA benefits should he be employed by the City of Lake Benton in the future.

MOTION by Daryl Schlapkohl, seconded by Mark Dunn to approve the Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA) – Police Officer Resolution for former part-time police officer Cole Nordmeyer. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act on paying off the tractor loan with the CD. City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen informed the Council that the City purchased a new tractor in December 2015 and received a \$35,000.00 loan from First Security Bank in Lake Benton. The City used their \$20,000.00 CD from the sale of the bar as collateral on the loan.

The City has made two payments on the loan - \$6,165.39 on July 5, 2016 and \$6,165.39 on January 5, 2017. City Staff contacted Brooks Bennett, President of First Security Bank in Lake Benton, and he told the City Staff the amount to be paid on the loan is approximately \$23,836.76 and the value of the CD is \$20,303.85. The City will need to put an additional \$3,600.00 towards paying off the loan. The Council was then informed that an additional amount of \$6,165.39 had been budgeted to make another payment on the loan in July 2017 so the funds are accounted for. **MOTION** by Mark Dunn, seconded by Dave Enke to approve paying off the tractor loan with the CD and paying the additional amount owed on the loan from the fund set up to make another payment in 2017. Motion carried.

The next item of business was to review/act replacing the existing fluorescent lighting with LED's in the Heritage Center and Community Center. City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen informed the Council that in 2014 the City took advantage of rebates offered through Otter Tail to replace the street lighting with LED bulbs. The City saved several thousands of dollars in street lighting expenses in the past two years.

Otter Tail is again offering rebates to replace existing fluorescent lighting with LED lights to assist businesses with more energy efficient and brighter lighting. The Lake Benton School, ExpressWay, Carpenter Auction and Lake Benton Grocery have switched their lighting to LED.

Maintenance Supervisor Todd Draper talked with Shaun Thomas of Thomas Electric who told him the City can save up to 40% in lighting usage per year. Shaun looked at the lighting at the Heritage Center/City Office/Museum and the Community Center and informed Todd Draper he can replace the lighting for a total of \$2,500.00. However, the City will also receive a rebate from Otter Tail for approximately \$1,500.00 which brings the cost down to \$1,000.00. The City will be able to recoup the \$1,000.00 in less than a year and continue to see the lighting expenses go down.

It was also the recommendation from Thomas Electric for the City to see how the LED lights work before purchasing new fixtures at the Community Center. **MOTION** by Mark Dunn, seconded by Daryl Schlapkohl to replace the existing fluorescent lighting with LED lights for more energy efficient lighting at the Heritage Center/City Office/Museum and Community Center for \$2,500.00. Motion carried.

PUBLIC WORKS UPDATE:

No Report

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Park and Rec Liaison, Trustee Mark Dunn, informed the Council the Lake Benton School contacted him and would like to purchase new playground equipment. The Lake Benton School is hosting a meeting next Monday, March 13, 2017 at 4:00 pm and would like Council representation. Trustee Mark Dunn and Mayor Bob Worth will represent the City Council at this meeting.

Library Liaison, Trustee Dave Enke, informed the Council the Library Board met in late February and the Library is updating their Computer Use Agreements with anyone using the computers at the Library. The Friends of the Library were the beneficiaries of the Lions Breakfast Benefit held in early February. The Friends of the Library and the Library Board are discussing ways to use the money. Representatives of the Library Board and Friends of the Library will be attending a City Council meeting at a later date to discuss the possibility of putting in a sidewalk on the back side of the Library by the patio and to the back parking lot.

Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl was unable to attend the First Responders meeting but followed up with First Responder/EMT Gary Serie on the meeting. Gary informed Daryl the County is purchasing the CAD System which will help in Fire and EMS calls in the County. Gary said the

Fire Department and First Responders can get an app for their Smart phones for \$10.00 a month enabling them to view a map on the location where they are needed. The First Responders are also looking into getting a computer for the EMS rig that will also show them the same information as the app for the Smart phone.

Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl continued to say Ron Voelker was the latest City Emergency Management Director for the City of Lake Benton. Since Ron has been gone for several years, Gary Serie said he would be willing to take over the position of Emergency Management Director for the City of Lake Benton in the case of a disaster. Gary will be available to attend the next Council meeting if the Council needs to ask any questions.

Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl then informed the Council he spoke with the DNR as well as with Minneota Police Chief Bill Bolt. Police Chief Bill Bolt told Daryl the City of Minneota contracts with the DNR to kill approximately ten (10) deer per year using archery. The individuals need to be qualified bow hunters and trained. Police Chief Bill Bolt trains five (5) to ten (10) people a year and even though the amount of deer is small, it has proven beneficial to the City of Minneota. The City of Minneota distributes the permits to the qualified and trained bow hunters and collects an administrative fee.

Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert informed the Council that he is a Firearms Training Officer with the DNR and would be willing to train children 15 years of age and older.

Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl then brought up the City's Saddle Horse Holiday event in June and inquired if Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert has officers to assist during the three day event, and should consider getting them reserved now and not wait until the beginning of June. Acting Police Chief Tony Sievert informed the Council he will speak with two POST licensed officers to reserve that weekend for the City of Lake Benton's Saddle Horse Holiday.

Trustee Mark Dunn informed the Council someone asked him to have the City install stop signs on Benton Street and Highway 14 by the School crossing. The road is a County road and Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl said he will contact County Engineer David Halbersma and see what can be done at the intersection of Benton and Garfield Streets off of Highway 14.

ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK REPORT:

City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen presented the Council with some informational items which included the sale of the Hole-in-the-Mountain Apartments. The current owners informed the tenants the new owners will not be a USDA 515 Rural Housing Project so the tenants that are currently eligible for housing assistance will need to complete an application with Section 8 to keep their assistance. The sale will take place on May 1, 2017.

City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen informed the Council there is a public hearing for Blazing Star Wind Farms, LLC for a certificate of need and site permit for the up to 200 megawatt Blazing Star Wind Project in Lincoln County. The public hearing is set for Wednesday, March 15, 2017 at 6:00 PM at the Hendricks Public School.

City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen informed the Council she received an e-mail from WRAP (Women's Rural Advocacy Program) to proclaim the 7th day of March, 2017 as a Day of Action to End Domestic Violence. **MOTION** by Mark Dunn, seconded by Daryl Schlapkohl to proclaim the 7th day of March, 2017 as a Day of Action to End Domestic Violence and approve the Mayor's signature on the proclamation. Motion carried.

MAYORAL REPORT:

Mayor Bob Worth reminded the Council of the Strategic Planning Meetings scheduled for Thursday, March 16, 2017 and Thursday, March 23, 2017 at 1:00 PM at the Hole-in-the-Mountain Chalet.

Mayor Bob Worth then informed the Council that Ralco Nutrition in Marshall is opening a new business in Balaton called Tru Shrimp which will employ up to 400 people. Mayor Bob Worth asked City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen to contact Ralco for himself, another Council member and City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen to meet with, listen to their presentation, and if Lake Benton will be a good fit in their business endeavor. The Project Manager will contact City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen to set up a date and time to meet. Mayor Bob Worth also stated that Lake Benton is not far from Balaton and we have two major highways running through our City. Trustee Dave Enke said he would like to attend the meeting with Mayor Bob Worth and City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen.

Mayor Bob Worth then informed the Council he requested City Administrator/Clerk Eileen Christensen to print business cards for the Mayor and Council members to give out at business meetings.

Mayor Bob Worth then asked the Council if anyone would be interested in doing the bed race at the City's Saddle Horse Holiday.

A copy of a letter from a citizen was distributed to the Council members before the meeting as an FYI.

Trustee Daryl Schlapkohl made a comment on the great job the Maintenance Department did on fixing the water leak on Highway 75 the previous weekend. They were there to shut the water off, contact the residents that would be affected, and worked with Double-D-Gravel most of the day on Sunday. The Council agreed and expressed their thanks for a job well done to Maintenance Supervisor Todd Draper and Maintenance Worker Troy Nordmeyer.

There being no further business to come before the Council at this time, a **MOTION** was made by Daryl Schlapkohl, seconded by Mark Dunn and carried, the meeting adjourned.

MAYOR

ADMINISTRATOR/CLERK