

**Town of Garfield**  
**TOWN COUNCIL**  
**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING**  
**June 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 - 7:00 PM**  
**405 W California**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Pfaff called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

**ROLL CALL:** Mayor Pfaff, Neal Leon, Josh Kelnhofner, Terri Linderman, and Cande Hasenoehrl  
Staff: Cody Lord – Clerk/Treasurer, Public Works: Shon Clark. Absent: Tom Tevlin

**INTRODUCTION OF GUEST:** Marti Masten

Marti said he would like to spend a little time with each council member and find out why they joined the council.

**APPROVAL OF MEETING MINUTES:**

Cande Hasenoehrl **MOVED** to approve the minutes of the Regular Council Meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Neal Leon seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**POLICE REPORT:**

Marshal Handley is currently on vacation and will submit a report at the next council meeting.

**PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:** Shon Clark for Public Works

**Water**

Public works has been repairing some water leaks in town. Two repairs have been completed in the last week.

**Sewer**

The sewer line on Main Street has been lined and the service lines reconnected. There was one area of infiltration that will need to be repaired.

**Garbage**

Everything going well.

**Streets**

Shon has been repairing some pot holes around town.

**Park**

The valve they installed last year at the park has failed and it is leaking again. They will begin digging on this next week to fix the issue again.

Cande said there are several properties along 4<sup>th</sup> street that have vegetation blocking the sidewalks and causing a hazardous issues for people wishing to use the sidewalks. Kids are having to walk on the highway since the sidewalk is not passable. Mayor Pfaff said the town would send a letter to all the adjacent landowners and ask them to take care of the issue. Cande suggests giving them a 30 day notice and if not taken care of, the town will start writing citations. The mayor advised to send a courtesy notice first and hope the residents will comply. Neal Leon said there is a manhole in town that may become an issue once the snow plow is back to work. Shon said he did notice the manhole cover is a little high so they will go and address this before too long.

#### **OLD BUSINESS:**

- **Suspended Terminates and Late Utility Fees**

Mayor Pfaff asked the council if they would like to continue to suspend late notices and fees for late utility payments or would they like to return to normal billing procedures? If returning to normal procedures, it wouldn't be reflected on the June billing, as that has already been completed. Neal said he would like to see it carried through another couple of months and Cande also said she would like to see them continue until the end of August. Josh Kelnhofer and Terri Linderman were okay with this decision.

- **Snow Blade for 1-Ton Truck**

This item is on the agenda to just make the council aware that the public works department is going to start looking for a snow plow and will start to collect information on the cost of one.

- **Employee Medical Benefit Opt-Out**

Mayor Pfaff said he would like to revisit the VEBA or HSA (medical opt-out) conversation and see what the thoughts were. Cande provided council with a spread sheet showing surrounding Whitman County towns, and the COLAs they provided, their offering or non-offering of a VEBA or HSA (medical Opt-out) and also if they have an annual step program. Most towns did not offer a medical opt-out program and the two that did, allowed for a line item on an employee's paycheck. No town had an annual anniversary step raise program. Cande said she would like to make a motion to remove the annual automatic step program from being given in the future. Mayor Pfaff said this is an entirely different conversation and needs to be had at a different time. He said he knows it is not a perfect program but it was put into place to address the low wage issues the town was having at the time.

Neal asked what the \$800 annual step program was based on and Mayor Pfaff said they used some of the surrounding community/county offerings, along with State and Federal step programs and they took the average in an attempt to bring salaries more in line with where they actually needed to be and have it based on years of service with the town. Cande said that the town doesn't get the funding that the county or cities get. Mayor Pfaff explained the town runs in the black and has had a surplus every year that they have granted this step program, there was a lot of planning and thought that went into the program and he would like to have a different discussion to explain the logic of why it was put into place.

Terri Linderman asked who would be taking the medical opt-out program and Cande said everyone would be eligible for the opt-out. Cande said the county only allows the medical opt-out for full time employees that work a total of 40 hours a week, so based on this, Cody and Joe would not be eligible for the medical opt-out. Mayor Pfaff said many employers and the state consider full time and eligible for benefits at 32 hours or more a week. Josh Kelnhofer said that when he started his position he had 100% coverage and now he just is offered an HSA. He said that if his wife had better insurance than his he could opt-out but would get nothing for doing so.

Neal asked if a person leaves the town, can they cash out their medical opt-out accounts? No, when an employee leaves it goes with them, the town doesn't cash it out. Basically, it acts like a credit card that they can continue to use on medical expenses until the funds are gone. Neal wonders if it is possible to do like a percentage, say 50/50 and Terri said yes it can be a percentage towards a VEBA or HSA or an addition on your paycheck. Neal also wonders why if the town offers good insurance and the employee elects not to take it, then possibly they shouldn't get anything. Mayor Pfaff said the county uses it as a tool to attract qualified candidates and to help prop up the wages they pay. Shon Clark said if he received two job offers and one allows an opt-out program for medical, then that may be a deciding factor for some candidates. Neal would like to take some more time to think about it and Mayor Pfaff said they could table the discussion for the time being and do some more research.

- **Interlocal Agreement for WWTP Operator**

Mayor Pfaff presented the Inter-local Agreement that Palouse sent over and explained council had already approved the details of the Inter-local Agreement and the only difference was the language to address an emergency situation. Cande Hasenoehrl **MOVED** to approve the contract with Palouse to provide a temporary Level II Operator for WWTP. Terri Linderman seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- **Apollo Solar and Radio Read Meter Proposals**

Mayor Pfaff talks about the details of the solar array project that Apollo is proposing. The old proposal had a total project cost of \$668,000 and the new proposal is scaled back to \$390,000 with a 7.5-year payback, so essentially cutting everything in half. The second sheet of the proposal is for the replacing of all water meters in town with ultrasonic radio read water meters. If the council elects to move forward, Apollo would send a crew down to replace 10 to 15 meters and test them for accuracy. As part of their performance audit, they will come down and do this free of charge to the town. Apollo will incur the cost until the grant is funded for the project. Apollo projects we will save about \$28,000 a year and have 5% reduced water system loss. Shon and Mark both believe this number will likely be higher since the town's meters are much older and therefore not as accurate.

Cande asked what is the cost to stick in a new meter at a new home and Mayor Pfaff said the town charges the customer \$1,000 for a new connection. \$800 of that cost

goes towards materials to put in the connection. Cande mentions that Endicott is currently putting in a new system and it would be great to maybe send Mark or Shon up to have a look and see how it has benefited Endicott. These meters would have a life span between 15 and 20 years. Josh said if the town is losing money year to year and it's over the 5% projected, he could see it as a benefit rather than going back to old mechanical meters. There will also be some cost savings in the amount of time it takes to read the meters since these will now be radio relayed directly to town hall and consumption will be collected 12 months of the year. These devices will also allow for easier identification of water leaks for property owners.

Cande reminds council the main reason for the Gator purchase was to make it easier to conduct water meter reads and there was a loan taken out for the purchase of the Gator. She is open to having a look at the program and seeing if it will save the town money. It will require that the town come up with \$67,000 and the program will only be funded if the grant and the town's portion are approved. The net revenue will be about the same. Cande said another thing the town has to keep in mind is what will be happening in the future with the sewer plant. Mayor Pfaff said that will likely take another grant and loan to make that project come together. The good thing about doing the meters this way is the whole system gets updated with meters at the same time. There will be a company that does the installation for the town.

Terri Linderman asked Shon how long it takes to read the meters and Shon said it is usually a full day of work. He thinks eventually all municipalities will be moving to this system and also adds if the town elected to do it themselves, it would cost too much and take too much time meaning Garfield wouldn't be able to afford it. Cande asked how long the loan terms would be and Mayor Pfaff said it would be a ten-year program. Cande thinks Shon and Mark should have a conversation with Endicott and see how their program is going. Josh Kelnhofer wonders if they will pull 15 meters from the same area or will they pull different locations and sizes so we have a good sampling of the meters in town. Mayor Pfaff said they would have a good representation of all meters and ages of meters. Cande is in favor of letting them pull the meters and install the new ones and see what they come up with for numbers and savings. Council agreed this was a good way forward.

Mayor Pfaff said the State Auditor's Office will be conducting their exit interview soon and two members of the council are able to come to the exit without having a quorum issue. There will be some issues that were identified over the last couple years and hopefully the town can address them and move forward. Neal asked if more than 2 council members are allowed to attend and Mayor Pfaff said it becomes more difficult so it is not advised.

**FINANCIAL:** Approval of checks

Cande Hasenoehrl **MOVED** to approve payment of bills. Josh Kelnhofer seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Payroll: Checks 14324-14327 PLUS EFTPS  
Claims: Checks 14328-14334

Total = \$10,522.38  
Total = \$29,639.40

Total of Payroll & Claims = \$40,161.78

**ADJOURN:** Cande Hasenoehr MOVED to adjourn the meeting. Neal Leon seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously. The council meeting was adjourned at 7:58 pm.



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Jarrod Pfaff - Mayor

**ATTEST:**



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Cody Lord - Clerk/Treasurer