

A REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING OF THE LEWISTOWN CITY COMMISSION ON SEPTEMBER 16, 2024 WHICH WAS HELD AT THE CENTRAL MONTANA COMMUNITY CENTER AND STARTED AT 7:00 P.M.

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Terry called the meeting to order.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Terry asked everyone to stand and say the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

Present were Commissioners: Day, Hewitt, Hrubes, Robertson, Spika and Terry. Commissioner Buehler was absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Terry stated that the minutes will be on the next agenda for approval as a couple of the Commissioners didn't have time to read.

COURTESIES

There were none.

PROCLAMATIONS

There were none.

BOARD AND COMMISSION REPORTS

Commissioner Robertson reported that he attended the TIF/TEDD board meeting that morning. Commissioner Robertson stated there was some discussion regarding some interest in extending the current TIF district boundaries east and south due to the possibility of development in those areas. This is a preliminary discussion and asked for some feedback from the City Commission. City Manager Phelps stated that one thing that has to be considered is the district would have to be in one jurisdiction therefore, it would have to be incorporated in the City limits. Commissioner Robertson stated it would be limited to the edge of the City limits. City Manager Phelps explained that blight would have to be identified and the percentage of the City's tax base that is already in the tax base is higher than most and finally there would need to be an agreement from the school district and the county.

Commissioner Day reported that she attended the September Park and Recreation board. Commissioner Day stated that a presentation was made by the Library Director Alissa Wolonetz asking to bring a story walk concept to the City trails. The story walk concept is being presented as a permanent frame that will exist year-round and the story will be changed out monthly. Library Director Wolonetz explained that Spika Manufacturing has agreed to build, sponsor and install these frames as part of their day of service. The frames will also allow for information panels to be posted along with the story for education and trail information. Recreation board member Luke Brandon asked that the frames not be placed along the frog pond trail areas in effort to preserve the environment. A motion was made to approve the concept of 20 to 24 frames installed along the trail between Main Street and Brassey. The Library Director will

coordinate with the Park and Recreation Director about the specific details. An agreement will be presented back to the board soon and board members were asked to send all comments and ideas to the Park and Recreation director. The library would like to submit a list of books each season to the Park and Recreation Board for approval before posting stories to the public within the community. Commissioner Day commented that the board was updated on the pool winterization, pool tarps are in bad shape and need to be replaced. Ms. Mary Keppler presented the year end report for the pool. There were lots of suggestions for the upcoming year. Discussion moved to the snack shack demo. Peak Electric did the disconnection of power. Recreation staff did some cleaning and clearing out materials. Mr. Ryan Durbin will be doing the concrete work. Lewistown Ice Skating Association (LISA) is looking at having a contractor help oversee the project. Board member Josh Stoychoff would like to see a separate tree board implemented. Mr. Stoychoff communicated the need for one and that would be helpful to access more grants and funding. Mr. Stoychoff also communicated that he has potential interested members. Commissioner Day reported that the Civic Center is still looking for a full-time employee. The fall will bring extended hours at the Civic Center. There are 130 kids signed up for youth soccer and there were 135 kids that participated in flag football. The Civic Center is looking to implement Glow in the Dark Dodgeball and a Parent's Night Out. The Civic Center would also like to provide more activities for the community. The new gym at Lewis and Clark School will take off the pressure of scheduling and staffing Civic Center activities.

Commissioner Day reported that she attended the Friends of the Trails meeting. The Friends of the Trails asked for follow up information on the following areas from the City Commission. The status of the flashing beacons and the bollards at the frog ponds. Commissioner Day asked about water at the Turner Center. City Manager Phelps answered that water line at the Turner Center has not been budgeted. The Friends of the Trails are willing to match the City with the install of the water line estimated at \$7,400. Commissioner Day reported that the Friends of the Trails has updated their bylaws and are now moving forward with their fall fund drive due to projects moving forward that were brought before the Commission. The Friends of the Trails would like to organize a partnership with the City for the needed bridge repairs on the trails. The Friends of the Trails would like to be brought into the loop with the approved story walk concept.

Commissioner Terry reported that the next Central Montana Foundation Board meeting is September 24th at 2 pm.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

City Manager Holly Phelps reported on the following issues:

City Manager Phelps reported that today was her first day back in the office and she did not prepare a written report. City Manager Phelps explained that she passed out the performance evaluation for the City Manager. City Manager Phelps stated that the performance evaluation will be the committee of the whole the 2nd meeting in October.

The City Commissioners were provided color copies of the draft of the 2024 Lewistown Land Use Plan. We are starting the public hearing process and there are copies at the Fergus County Planning Office, Library and City Offices available for the public. On Wednesday, September 18th there will be a public hearing at the Planning Commission meeting and then on Thursday, September 19th there will be a public hearing at the City County Planning Board with both groups giving their recommendations to the City Commission.

Commissioner Terry explained that the performance evaluation form is for the Commission to review and complete prior to the evaluation. Commissioner Terry stated that from 6 pm to 7 pm will be a closed meeting for the City Manager evaluation.

PUBLIC COMMENT – non agenda items

Commissioner Terry introduced Corrie Williamson, senior outreach coordinator for the American Prairie, here in Lewistown. Commissioner Terry stated that she is here as a result of the pamphlets that were strewn around town on September 7th and to give an update on the rumors and information that is circulating around town. Commissioner Terry explained that she will give some information regarding the pamphlets and what they have found out from the Montana Human Rights group. Ms. Corrie Williamson addressed the Commission stating that she is the senior outreach coordinator for the American Prairie, lives here in Lewistown and works at the discovery center. Ms. Williamson introduced Mr. Garrett Buds, the chief conservation officer, he lives here in Fergus County and works out on the PN. Ms. Williamson stated they wanted to come to the Commission tonight to check in, because she knows the Commissioners are getting phone calls, emails and there is a lot of curiosity in the community. Ms. Williamson commented that the News Argus article in Saturday's paper was excellent and covered very well what they had learned primarily from the Human Rights Network and their monitoring of the White Lives Matter Montana group. Commissioner Terry commented that her question for Ms. Williamson has a group has been identified and it is a known hate group outside of Lewistown. Ms. Williamson explained that there are members identified in this group that largely live in the western part of the state. Ms. Williamson stated that the feedback they received from members of the community on the Saturday, of Chokecherry was very positive and really encouraging. Commissioner Hrubes asked if they know if this group has been in existence for a while. Ms. Williamson answered that yes, they have been in existence for a while. Ms. Williamson commented that there is information out there regarding the group and some of the activities they have engaged in around the state. The group has done similar things in Great Falls and Livingston and a lot of their activities look like this where they show up under cover of dark and leave stickers, posters and graffiti. Commissioner Day asked if the Discovery Center will be opened back up soon. Mr. Garrett Buds, Vice President and Chief Conservation Officer for American Prairie, commented that the Discovery Center was closed temporarily out of an abundance of caution for the staff and their safety. Mr. Buds further commented that this was not done in direct response to any act or information. Mr. Buds stated that the opening of the Discovery Center is a moving target and is closed this week and not sure when it will be reopened. Commissioner Terry reported that both the Police Department and Sheriff's Office have been informed and working to get a grasp of the situation. Commissioner Terry commented that there may be a charge of littering moving forward. Commissioner Robertson read the following statement: "Hate speech and bigotry have no place in Lewistown, Montana. None. It is not who we are. It is not what we stand for. And we should not, and do not, stand for it. We have heard, universally, that the citizens of Lewistown do not appreciate some unwanted outsiders coming to our town, littering our yards and spreading hate and oppression under the premise they somehow know something about the issues in our community. We have good friends on both sides of the Save the Cowboy/American Prairie topic. If there is one thing that both sides have clearly shown, it is that this is a civil disagreement that has not, and will not, include bigotry, antisemitism and hate speech in Lewistown. Additionally, the hatred and actions of this small group of out-of-town racists have cost our local businesses many thousands of dollars in lost revenue this week, caused our citizens fear and frustration, and brought nothing but negative outcomes to Lewistown. We will say it again. Hate speech and bigotry have no place in Lewistown Montana." Commissioner Hrubes seconded that statement. Commissioner Terry commented that she has not talked to the City Manager about this but has talked to Commissioners Robertson and Day the idea of somehow, we can get this group on a littering charge of some kind. City Manager Phelps stated that she will be discussing the issue with both law enforcement and the City Attorney on what action could be taken. Commissioner Terry commented that she feels the statement made by Commissioner Robertson was a good one and could be a motion to be a statement Commissioner

Terry asked if the Commission is in favor of the statement and the unity of the Commission, please raise your right hand. Commissioner Terry stated it was unanimous. Commissioner Day commented that she hopes American Prairie feels supported by our City, and very appreciative that representatives from American Prairie were here.

CONSENT AGENDA

Commissioner Robertson made the motion to approve the consent agenda and Commissioner Hewitt seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. The consent agenda was the acknowledgement of the claims that have been paid from August 16, 2024 to August 31, 2024 for a total of \$487,320.26 and the claims that have been paid from September 1, 2024 to September 13, 2024 for a total of \$218,985.73

***REGULAR AGENDA – Resolutions, Ordinances & Other Action Items:**

1. Discussion and action on Resolution No.4170, a resolution approving an application from First Presbyterian Church for TIF Funds made to the Lewistown Tax Increment Financing District Board

City Manager Phelps explained that this morning the TIF board did discuss this application and recommended approving a grant for the First Presbyterian Church. The grant is for a portion of fencing and landscaping that is directly related to the additional partnership with a preschool that is housed in their building. The grant is a one-to-one match up to \$6,210.00. Commissioner Robertson commented the board did discuss that this building does not pay taxes, but still eligible. Commissioner Robertson stated that childcare in the community is critical and good to support the community. Commissioner Spika made the motion to approve Resolution No.4170, a resolution approving an application from First Presbyterian Church for TIF Funds made to the Lewistown Tax Increment Financing District Board and Commissioner Day seconded the motion. Commissioner Terry asked for comments from the audience and Commission. There being none the question was called for and the Clerk called for a roll call vote with all being in favor.

2. Discussion and action on approving the purchase of a 2021 Ford Edge from Courtesy Motors, Inc. in the amount of \$27,980 for the Building Inspector

City Manager Phelps commented that this vehicle has been budgeted for and staff were able to get several quotes for comparable vehicles. City Manager Phelps stated that based on the condition of the vehicle and the mileage that the 2021 Ford Edge available from Courtesy Motors is the recommended purchase. Commissioner Day made the motion to approve the purchase of a 2021 Ford Edge from Courtesy Motors, Inc. in the amount of \$27,980 for the Building Inspector and Commissioner Hewitt seconded the motion. Commissioner Terry asked for comments from the audience and Commission. There being none the question was called for and the Clerk called for a roll call vote with all being in favor.

3. Discussion and action on approving a business license for LG Electric, LLC

Commissioner Terry reminded the Commission that business licenses for electricians, HVAC and plumbers must be approved by the Commission prior to being issued a business license. City Manager Phelps explained that this company came into town to do some work with a solar panel installer that was installing some residential solar panels. City Manager Phelps stated that the application is completed and all the necessary insurance has been provided. Commissioner Spika asked if was possible to change the rules and not have to bring these before the Commission for approval. City Manager Phelps answered yes, the ordinance would have to be amended and it is on the list to be reviewed. Commissioner Spika made the motion to approve a business license for LG Electric, LLC and Commissioner Day seconded the

motion. Commissioner Terry asked for comments from the audience and Commission. There being none the question was called for and the Clerk called for a roll call vote with all being in favor.

CITIZENS' REQUESTS

There were none.

COMMISSIONER'S MINUTE

Commissioner Hrubes reported that he talked with Mr. Ed Durbin and he is going to make a list of branches that are over hanging. Commissioner Hrubes further explained that Mr. Durbin will provide the list to the code enforcement officer.

Commissioner Terry stated that she wanted to state on record how clean the Civic Center is.

Commissioner Terry asked if the City Manager has been working with DEQ. City Manager Phelps answered that yes, she received a letter recently and continues to address the issues and work with DEQ.

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Terry adjourned the meeting.

Dated this 16th day of September, 2024.

KellyAnne Terry, Commission Chairman

ATTEST:

Nikki Brummond, City Clerk