

Town of Oakesdale
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
For
October 2, 2023

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Dennis Palmer called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmember Claudia Louk led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Dennis Palmer, Bill Auvil, Al Evans, Claudia Louk, Bruce Palmer, and Randy Robinson. Also present were Mary DeGon, Clerk/Treasurer; Keith Cooper, Town Marshal and Brad Sullivan, Public Works Director.
- III. **PAUL KIMMELL, AVISTA:** Since our state has a push for electric transportation, Avista is trying to install Level 2 EV chargers in the surrounding communities – especially those along the Scenic Byway. Avista created a program a few years ago, Rural Access Initiative, to offer communities a Level 2 EV charger free of charge with free installation and maintenance. The Town will be responsible for the energy charge. The average cost is \$30 per month. Towns and Cities have adopted a Public Benefit Resolution to cover the reason for the extra expense to the budgets. Avista is willing to help the Town set up an QRP code that would charge the customer for their energy used to charge their car, so the Town could be reimbursed for the energy bill. As a growing number of EVs take to the roads of Eastern Washington, Avista is working to provide a low-cost, reliable network of charging infrastructure throughout the region. The installation of public Level-2 chargers in small towns within our service territory enables early EV adoption by many residents who otherwise could not or would not drive electric cars. Moreover, communities that install a Level-2 charger greatly improve their environmental image. A charger attracts EV drivers, too, who will stop and visit Crossett’s, while their EV charges. That is a big step in the right direction for rural and economic vitality. The charging station will have two ports available to use. The location was discussed and the first suggestion was over by the little gas station on the southside on Steptoe. It’s easy to be seen from HWY 27 traffic going through town. Visitor Kris Johnson said that was a stupid idea, at least that is what she has heard other people say, and wondered why it couldn’t be located at the park? Council members had some good questions for Paul, and he will need to get back to us on those answers. He will email the Town with the data council was requesting.
- IV. **CASEY LOWDER, PINE CREEK CONSERVATION DISTRICT:** Pine Creek Conservation District is a special purpose district governed by five elected board members and focus on natural resources conservation including habitat, soil health, water quality, and energy efficiency. They are funded by the WA State Conservation Commission and can seek fund from any government agency or organizations. Recently they did receive funding to support community wildfire resiliency. They are looking at hiring a person to conduct home ignition zone risk assessments, home and community ignition zone defensible space projects (fuel reduction, forest health improvement, demonstration projects), education and outreach about wildfire resiliency (public workshops,

events and newsletters) and assisting communities with Firewise USA program. Casey listed what projects they are already working on in Oakesdale; “Beaver deceiver” is a pond leveler and tree protection with wire located near the baseball field to relieve flooding issues, Oakesdale office renovation, Trout in the classroom at the Oakesdale Schools, and Oakesdale floodplain project (water level monitoring up-stream and down-stream, preliminary engineering consultation, and exploring funding opportunities.

V. **INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS:** Kris Johnson, Shon & Dee Eck, Pete Baljo, Frank Sabo, Paul Kimmel with Avista and Casey Lowder with Pine Creek Conservation District.

VI. **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:** Council members reviewed September 18, 2023 minutes. Al Evans made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Bruce Palmer seconded the motion, all council members voted yes – **motion passed.**

VII. **TOWN MARSHAL REPORT:** Officer Keith Cooper gave council members his department’s report for September 2023. There were nine cases ranging from driving while suspended, 9-1-1 hang-up, welfare checks, domestic dispute, overdose, animal problem, traffic offense and Town code violation.

VIII. **PUBLIC WORKS REPORT:** Brad Sullivan gave council members the report for September 2023. Projects completed included:

- Bridge repairs completed on the bridges located on Washington and Idaho Streets per recommendation from the Whitman County Bridge Inspector.
- The orange sweeper has been repaired and ready for spring
- The ditch on 7th Street between Rednour & McCoy Streets has been cleaned out and rock added.
- New lights installed at the City Shop
- Replaced the water meters on Rednour and Roberts Streets with the new digital read meters.
- Replaced missing or broken street signs throughout Town.

Brad listed the up coming projects they hoped to get done before November.

IX. **OLD BUSINESS:**

A. **2024 BUDGET** – Mary reviewed the changes to the budget since the last council meeting. AWC Trust has announced their 2024 premiums and plan changes. There will be no premium change for the dental or vision plans and a 4.1% increase in our medical plan coverage. A few other line items have been adjusted such as fuel and heating fuel expenses and the water project. Mary thought by the end of this year the water project would be closed out. But, our engineers, TD&H Engineering, said the retainage will not be paid out until we have the signed releases from LNI, DOR and ESD. These agencies are running about six months behind processing the releases. Mary had to add \$134,000 to the budget on the revenue and expense side in the Water/Sewer Fund 401. Randy Robinson asked if we have discussed employee raises for 2024 yet since he has missed a few meetings and was not sure. That has not been discussed yet. Mayor Palmer asked for a committee to discuss what cost of living increase should be recommended to council for next year. Randy Robinson and Bill Auvil volunteered to be on that committee

and will report back to council at the next meeting. Kris Johnson asked if a public person has ever been part of that committee – the answer was no.

- B. CELL TOWER UPDATE** – Chris Ellis informed Mary last week that the Oakesdale Cemetery received a contract from Verizon Wireless to put a cell tower up there.
- C. 2024 MAIN STREET AFFILIATE** – Council members reviewed an email from Jonelle McCoy with the Main Street Program and the team is excited to welcome Oakesdale to the WA Main Street network as a 2024 Affiliate. During their review, Oakesdale’s pride of place and sense of opportunity for strengthening the whole community through revitalizing our historic commercial core came through clearly!

X. NEW BUSINESS:

- A. ELECTED OFFICIAL’S ESSENTIALS WORKSHOP** – AWC will be hosting an elected official’s essential workshop on Saturday, December 9th from 8:30 am to 2:30 pm streaming it live at satellite locations amongst the state. The closest workshop location for us is Fairfield. Bruce, Claudia, and Bill were encouraged to attend since they are the newest members and have not been to this workshop before. Mary will get them registered when registration opens on October 11th. Mayor Palmer would also like to attend to get a refresher.
- B. RESOLUTION NO. 2023-424 1% PROPERTY TAX FROM WHITMAN COUNTY** – Randy Robinson made the motion to dispense with the reading of Resolution No. 2023-424 increasing the amount we receive in property taxes from Whitman County by one percent. Bill Auvil seconded the motion, all members voted yes – **motion passed**. Randy made the motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-2024 increasing the actual levy amount from Whitman County by one percent which shall be \$557.21. Al Evans called for question and asked to explain why he always votes no on this increase. Bruce Palmer seconded the motion, four council members voted yes and one council members voted no – **motion passed**.

XI. COUNCIL MEMBER’S BUSINESS:

RANDY -None

BRUCE – None

CLAUDIA – None

AL – None

BILL – He asked where the Building Inspector is at with the house on the corner of Steptoe and Third St? A Correction Notice was issued to the home owner months ago to bring the house into code compliance or demolish the house. The first meeting with the Building Inspector was for not as the home owner did not show up. The Building Inspector has tried rescheduling the meeting with no luck of messages being returned. We may have to condemn the property and we will need to review the procedure with our attorney.

XII. TREASURER’S REPORT/APPROVAL OF CHECKS: Council members reviewed the Treasurer’s Report, Check Register and Receipt Register for September 2023. Randy Robinson made the motion to approve paid checks #28710 - #28741 in the amount of \$10,350.35 for claims and \$6,874.34 for payroll totaling \$17,224.69 from September 19, 2023 through September 28, 2023. Bill Auvil seconded the motion, all council members voted yes – **motion passed.**

XIII. ADJOURNMENT: Randy Robinson made the motion to adjourn the council meeting at 8:13 p.m. Claudia Louk seconded the motion, all council members voted yes – **motion passed.**

DENNIS PALMER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

MARY DEGON, CLERK/TREASURER