

Town of Oakesdale
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
for
March 3, 2025

- I. **CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Dennis Palmer called the council meeting to order at 7 p.m. He led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- II. **ROLL CALL:** Mayor Dennis Palmer, Bill Auvil, Shon Eck, Claudia Louk, Bruce Palmer and Randy Robinson. Also present were Mary DeGon, Clerk/Treasurer and Keith Cooper, Town Marshal.
- III. **INTRODUCITON OF GUESTS:** Kris Johnson, Kim Anderson, Pete Baljo, Jack Fanning and Frank Sabo.

Jack requested the addresses for WA State Fish & Wildlife and WA State Department of Ecology. He is trying to get answers to his property being flooded from Spring Creek at 4th Street & Bartlett Street. Mayor Palmer said he would get Jack those addresses and wished him good luck. Councilman Bill Auvil tried to explain DOE wants a biofilter for the creeks. Unfortunately, the biofilter chokes out the creek at the south end of city limits. Council explained they have dealt with DOE in the past when this exact situation of rain on frozen ground with snow caused a major flood around eleven years ago. Jack said he wants to place concrete barriers around his property to prevent the flood water from his house and shop. The flood waters went through his shop and under his house.
- IV. **APPROVAL OF PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:** Council members reviewed February 18, 2025 minutes. Bill Auvil made the motion to approve the minutes as written. Claudia Louk seconded the motion, all council members voted yes – **motion passed.**
- V. **TOWN MARSHAL REPORT:** Keith Cooper gave his department’s report for February 2025. There were seven cases ranging from parking problem, warrant arrest, traffic hazards, utility problem, assault and abnormal behavior.
- VI. **PUBIC WORKS REPORT:** Mary gave the Public Works Report for February 2025. We continue to discharge the lagoons with weekly samples to the lab, monthly water samples, plowed and sanded streets, dealt with the flood, repaired damaged bridge approaches, graveled washout streets and repaired the hydraulics on the bucket truck. In the process of rebuilding the access road to the grinders at the lagoons. Continue to clean sidewalks and streets from flood debris.
- VII. **OLD BUSINESS:**
 - A. **WIFIBER FRANCHISE AGREEMENT** – Mary did reach out to them asking if the revised agreement was ready to present to council and it was not.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

A. FLOODING AFTERMATH – THE GREAT FLOOD OF 2025 – On Sunday, February 23, 2025 the Town flooded from a natural disaster of rain on frozen ground with several inches of snow. Claudia Louk called Mary around 5:30 a.m. to report the flood in the downtown area. We had staff on scene by 6 a.m. Fire Chief Dylan Doneen notified the volunteer firemen that help was needed sand bagging. Pam dumped the sand from the plow truck at the dead-end of First Street between the fire station and the old fire station. Sandbags were available by the bundles. Councilman Shon Eck and wife Dee had drinks, sandwiches and snacks available to volunteers at the fire station. Whitman County Emergency Management Director, Bill Tensfeld, was on scene in the afternoon and brought more sandbags. Several citizens came out to help fill the sandbags and any other way we may need them. Roger Hager, Will Johnson and Aaron Davis provided their time and tractors to help build berms on Steptoe Avenue to control the flood waters. We used gravel at first to help guide the flood waters down the street and then had to switch to using all the snow we had piled up around town from the last snow storm. Town staff and firemen helped sandbag the businesses. We continue to clean-up sidewalks, streets and bridges from the aftermath of the flood waters. The library building was breeched by the flood waters even though both entry doors had been sandbagged. Cleanline Carpet Cleaning came out the next day and provided the needed restoration to the floors. Whitman County staff came to look at the flood damage and thanked us for taking care of it so quickly. No books or furniture was damaged due to the quick thinking of the librarian, Sanya Pope. Mary reached out to the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) asking for emergency funds to repair the damage to the streets and bridge approaches. Several photos and videos of the flood were emailed to our Southeast Regional Manager for TIB. We also sent pictures of the aftermath condition of the streets. They will be out here on March 11th to inspect the damages. Mary reached out to Brian Wilson, Whitman County Operations Manager, trying to understand how Whitman County declaring a state of emergency affects the Town of Oakesdale. Brian stated, “The State of Emergency declaration is only county wide, approved by the commissioners. At this time, it is not Washington State approved. Our governor would have to approve the state of emergency at the state level. We’ll see if that happens. What the State of Emergency declaration does is allows agencies or municipalities to more easily access resources to fix the damage. We don’t have to go out to bid to hire contractors and we aren’t limited to a dollar amount as to how much we can spend on material from a single source. This would otherwise be a much lengthier process (weeks). The emergency declaration does not allow you to ditch in McCoy Creek through town or at the end of town unless its repairing damage caused by the flood, no improvements are allowed. Ditching through or at the end of town is an improvement. The conservation district and Department of Ecology is where you might get some answers.” Mayor Palmer did contact Casey at Pine Creek Conservation concerning the choked-out channel south of town from the lagoons. The whole reason the flood waters can not flow out of town. The creek channel is all silted in and choked out with grasses. Our lagoons did not breach during the natural flood disaster. Our

Certified Sewer Operator, Steve Bremer, and our DOE Permit Manager were notified of the event and we were not able to discharge that one day due to all electrical had to be shut-off due to the electrical panels being under water from flood waters. The access road to the grinders was washed out. All lagoon sheds were under several feet of water. A question was asked if we can help prevent this in the future or how can we be better prepared. You can't predict mother nature and there is nothing you can prevent when you have heavy rains on frozen ground. Mary & Pam have discussed where we could store several pallets of sandbags already filled and ready to go. It was noted that after several years, the bags do become weak and rot.

IX. COUNCIL MEMBER'S BUSINESS:

BILL – None

SHON – None

CLAUDIA – She thanked the staff, firemen and everyone else who helped during the flood.

BRUCE – None

RANDY – None

X. TREASURER'S REPORT/APPROVAL OF CHECKS: Council members reviewed the Treasurer's Report, Check Register and Receipt Register for February 2025. Bruce Palmer made the motion to approve paid checks #29401 - #29417 in the amount of \$4,783.85 for claims and \$11,904.18 for payroll totaling \$16,688.03 from February 19, 2025 through February 28, 2025. Son Eck seconded the motion, all council members voted yes – **motion passed**.

XI. ADJOURNMENT: Claudia Louk made the motion to adjourn the council meeting at 7:28 p.m. Randy Robinson seconded the motion, all council members voted yes – **motion passed**.

MAYOR DENNIS PALMER

ATTEST:

MARY DEGON, CLERK/TREASURER