



Minutes
1411th Regular Council Meeting
May 10, 2023

6:00 p.m. Regular Council Meeting

Mayor Bob Poch called the 1411th regular meeting of the Coulee Dam Town Council to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call

Council members present: Kevin Black, Merv Schmidt, Dale Rey, Larry Hall (teleconference) and Keith St. Jeor.

Staff Present: Clerk/Treasurer Stefani Bowden, Public Works Superintendent Mike Steffens and Police Chief Paul Bowden. Engineer Mark Johnson of Varela Engineering also attended via teleconference.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Poch led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Input

None

Updates and Modifications to Agenda

Mayor Poch added the Ferry Avenue Sidewalk Project to the Discussion Agenda.

Consent Agenda

(m/s St. Jeor/Schmidt) to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried.

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Vouchers: Claim Vouchers and Checks:

Claim Voucher No.'s 40871 through 40899 and EFTs dated May 10, 2023 in the total amount of \$ 313,007.70.

Manual Vouchers: Claim Voucher No.'s 40870 , dated May 5, 2023 in the amount of \$300.00 , CPL4.27.23 and CPL5.8.23 in the total amount of \$336.00 .

Payroll Checks: Payroll Check No.'s 40862 through 40869 , _EFT's and direct deposits dated April 14 and 28, 2023 in the total amount of \$ 102,879.43.

Voided Checks: Check No. 40884 printing error.

Action Agenda

None

Discussion Agenda

- a. Regional Board of Mayors (RBOM) – Transfer Station Operator Longevity Pay
Mayor informed the council that the Electric City Clerk has brought it to RBOM’s attention that the transfer station operator has not received longevity pay that was promised to him. Some years ago, the Electric City Council voted to change the longevity pay schedule but the operator was told he was grandfathered in to the previous schedule. The prior Electric City Clerk and administration failed and/or denied to provide the longevity pay. The council asked if the RBOM was ever involved in that decision making. The operator is an employee of Electric City. The RBOM reimburses Electric City for the wages of the operator. The council feels this would be an Electric City issue and would like more information before agreeing to anything.

- b. Ferry Ave Sidewalk Project
A certified arborist was present to provide the council with a report on the trees involved in the Ferry Avenue Sidewalk Project. The Red Maple trees located in the planting strips of Ferry Avenue are estimated to be 50-70 years old. According to the arborist, Red Maples root horizontally not vertically which is tearing up the sidewalks and is now going after the curbs and streets. As part of the grant requirements for the sidewalk project, an arborist would have to evaluate whether the tree roots could be cut and shaved down before a new sidewalk is poured, which is what the initial plan was and what the project was based on. However, upon inspection, the arborist found the tree roots to be much too large to cut. Cutting the roots would compromise the stability and health of the tree and would put a very large liability on the contractor and the town. With a Red Maple, anytime a root over 2 inches is cut, it will cause a health and stability issue. The roots under the sidewalk on Ferry are about 12 inches. These trees are planted in a 7-foot planting strip which is not nearly enough space for this type of tree. The arborist is recommending that all trees on Ferry Avenue be removed. He stated that there may be a few of the smaller trees that could be saved but the same issue will arise again in the future when trees have more growth. It all boils down to it being the wrong type of tree in the wrong space.

Councilman Rey asked if the trees were removed, what type of tree would be suitable for that space. He suggested a small variety of trees that would be more manageable for the city crew to take care of. He suggested staying away from trees that are notorious for causing allergy issues. He also recommended not planting all the exact same tree which creates a “boulevard” look and is hard to maintain once one tree dies. Staggering trees is a better option. It was suggested to have a list of council approved trees that could be planted within the planting strips.

Councilman Rey asked about the requirement for maintaining trees as far as a historical reason. The town is classified as a "Tree City" and has to provide some functions, such as pruning and maintenance in order to maintain the status. The town also receives \$500 each year to plant new trees or hold an Arbor Day Event. Rey also noted that there is a tree issue all over town with other areas similar to Ferry Avenue. The arborist suggested budgeting each year for tree removal and replacement in those other areas, doing it on a regular cycle so it isn't as devastating and costly as doing it all at once.

Councilman Black asked what the quoted amount was to remove the trees on Ferry. The quote was around \$75,000 including traffic control and debris removal. Councilman St. Jeor feels that it would be best to remove all of the sidewalks on Ferry before removing the trees to make it easier to get the stumps and roots cleared out.

Councilman Rey asked if a few could be removed now and do the remainder later on. The arborist stated that it is much easier to remove the trees before new sidewalks are put in. There is a risk of damaging the new sidewalks trying to grind out the roots. The other issue with leaving some of the trees is that in five years, the new sidewalks will be heaving from roots again.

A major risk with cutting the roots is weakening the stability of the tree. If a heavy rain and windstorm came through, there is a great likelihood of the tree falling on a house, car, person, etc. It is a huge liability.

Discussion was held regarding the funds to pay for the unplanned expense. The Mayor suggested doing an interfund loan if necessary.

Heaved sidewalks have become a major insurance liability. St. Jeor reminded the council that the tree roots are also causing sewer line issues. The town has had numerous insurance claims for tree roots in the sewer lines. The liability with people tripping and falling on the heaved sidewalks and the roots in sewer lines is causing an issue with the town's insurance provider. St. Jeor asked "are we going to continue to service everybody's sewer lines, have a liability with broken sidewalks, or make people upset because we are cutting trees down"?

Councilman Schmidt stated that it is pretty obvious of what has to be done and said that the residents on Ferry need to be educated on this situation. The council were all in consensus that the liability is far greater than worrying about how the residents feel about losing the trees.

Mayor stated that we don't have much time to make a decision and to figure out loan and grant opportunities. The contract has been signed and construction has begun. Taking up more time will cause contract delays and additional delay costs which the town doesn't have the funds to pay for.

In hindsight, an arborist should have been contacted prior to the construction award. The engineer did not feel that cutting the roots would be an issue. Removing the trees was never in the plan and was a shock to everyone involved.

A public meeting will be scheduled as soon as possible to discuss this with the residents which will cause a couple more days of delay. Ferry Avenue resident Frank Ayars was in attendance. The council asked him for his thoughts and comments on the issue. He was not happy about the removal of the trees but understood the predicament the council was in and the necessity for the removal.

More discussion took place as to when to schedule the public meeting, tree removal company alternatives, funding, etc. Mayor Poch was concerned with causing any more delay costs since the contractor has already begun working.

Mark Johnson from Varela Engineering joined the meeting via teleconference. He explained that the sidewalks were federally funded through WSDOT. The tree removal was unforeseen and will not be covered under the grant funding. The notice to proceed was issued for the sidewalk and construction has begun so the contractor is “on the clock”.

(m/s St. Jeor/Rey) to direct the Mayor to proceed with removing the trees on Ferry Avenue, finding emergency funding and scheduling a meeting with the residents. Motion carried.

c. 6th Street Improvements Project

The Clerk read a status update provided by TD&H Engineering.

Staff, Council & Committee Report

Clerk

The Clerk and Police Chief informed the Council that the Safe Routes to School Project has been selected for WSDOT grant funding. More information will be provided when available.

The Clerk informed the Council that the Town received the AWC WellCity Award once again for the employee wellness program. Employee participation in the wellness program in 2022 earned the town a 2% premium discount for 2024.

The Annual Financial Report is almost complete. The Clerk asked the finance committee to review the report. A copy of the report will also be provided to the entire council.

Public Input

None

Adjournment

Mayor Poch adjourned the meeting at 7:13pm

Mayor 
Bob Poch

Clerk 
Stefani Bowden