

**Stevensville Town Council Meeting Minutes for THURSDAY, MARCH 24, 2022
7:00 PM 206 Buck Street, Town Hall**

CONDENSED MINUTES

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Mayor Gibson called the meeting to order, councilmembers Barker, Brown, Michalson and Wolff were all present.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

3. Public Comments (Public comment from citizens on items that are not on the agenda)

4. Approval of Minutes

NONE

5. Approval of Bi-Weekly Claims

a. Claim #17536- #17619

Mayor Gibson: introduced approval of claims.

Councilmember Michalson: make a motion to move.

Councilmember Barker: 2nd.

Mayor Gibson: Mr. Michalson made a motion, Ms. Barker 2nd. Public comment? Seeing none, council comment?

Councilmember Wolff: 17536, postage machine lease, is see the breakdown for police department, fire department I don't know what those others are, could you give us those?

Pam Sosa: that is going to be water department, wastewater and airport.

Councilmember Wolff: and the C.

Pam Sosa: court.

Councilmember Wolff: is this one machine and everyone uses it? Or are their different machines?

Pam Sosa: it is one machine.

Councilmember Wolff: since Mr. Kruse is here, I was looking at the sewer testing and this is a side thought and I am not sure if you are doing this right now. A lot of communities are doing Wastewater, COVID testing as a public testing. I don't know how pricy that is, but it does let you know about infections in your own community.

Steve Kruse, Public Works Department: that is not currently in our town tests, I can look into the additional cost.

Councilmember Wolff: I would be interested; I think that it is a public health concern. Down under police department, it has concealed armor. 17602, is that like bullet proof vest?

Pam Sosa, Finance Director: yes, it is.

Councilmember Wolff: on page 2 graphics installation on the wrecked fire truck is \$427. 22 and this is part of this MMIA claim on the wrecked truck.

Pam Sosa: yes, it is.

Councilmember Wolff: so that might be partially reimbursed or all of it.

Pam Sosa: yes.

Councilmember Wolff: we have Stevensville Hardware, NAPA for some things. I don't know if they are preferred providers and there is a discount?

Pam Sosa: I do believe that NAPA does give us a discount. And they we just have an account with the hardware stores.

Councilmember Wolff: it would be nice to have the ability to see if we could get a discount. Under New Fields we have a preapplication meeting was this a one-day meeting? Who was all involved?

Steve Kruse: it was the mayor and myself, it was progress billing, it was for the work done prior for mapping for the water rights issue.

Councilmember Wolff: nice to see the \$11,894.11 in claims total versus the prior claims report.

Councilmember Michalson: 17611,HDR, \$1309.00 The other one is for HDR. 17603. In three months, we have paid over \$24,000 what are the reports that are actually coming.

Steve Kruse: miscellaneous task order, \$1300.00 was to help me complete an application. The other one was for the booster station.

Pam Sosa: Preliminary engineering report, booster and development.

Mayor Gibson: Steve, we have cut back on some things too, right?

Steve Kruse: yes, we are. The mayor and myself had a meeting with HDR to go over the ARPA grant and that process and costs. And what we agreed to at that meeting that all spending with the exception of the \$10,000 miscellaneous task order.

Mayor Gibson: any further discussion, seeing none. Jenelle, will you call for the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Michalson: aye.

Councilmember Wolff: aye.

Mayor Gibson: motion passes.

6. Administrative Reports

NONE

7. Guests

NONE

8. Correspondence

NONE

9. Public Hearings

NONE

10. Unfinished Business

a. Discussion/Decision: Resolution No 415a, to Incorporate Donated Land into the Boundaries of Stevensville River Park

Mayor Gibson: introduced unfinished business item a.

Councilmember Michalson: make a motion.

Councilmember Brown: 2nd.

Mayor Gibson: motion and 2nd. Public comment? Any questions from the council?

Councilmember Wolff?

Councilmember Wolff: I have a real problem with this piece of land, I thought that it was an expansion of the land on the east side, but it does not it is on the west side. I am concerned of the embankment. If you were going to develop this for fishing, you are going to run into problems with the highway. This is a small piece of land, I don't even see parking, it would take town money to take care of this.

Mayor Gibson: Mr. Kruse. Just your opinion. To my knowledge we have done nothing in five years to maintain that land.

Steve Kruse: to my limited knowledge the town has not done anything.

Mayor Gibson: my opinion, after going to see this property, my personal opinion. I don't really see what use it is to the town and like Councilmember Wolff said I only see a liability; it is a steep bank, and it looks like it goes into the river. That is my concern.

Councilmember Michalson: I went back to the original minutes of this meeting, there was no public discussion or council discussion it just went to a vote. My question would be according to the county's resolution, Mr. Michalson recited the resolution. The town had five years to develop this, and nothing was done, I don't even know if anyone knew we had this. Vicky was this brought up?

Vicky Motley: yes, it was brought up at park board meetings and a lot of it had to do with the land upfront was being limited. So, the county gave that to the town to give access to parking and no we have not done anything with it and at about that time Capp's sold, and Fish Wildlife and Parks got involved. I think that it is a viable piece of property for the city. Thinking long term, you have access to the west side of the river and that gives us possible opportunity to grow and improve their financial statement to business going out there.

Mayor Gibson: my biggest concern is the liability, I was there it is just a steep bank, yes there is a little gravel spot. That is just my opinion. If there is any other public comment, please come up and sign.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicky Motley: originally Park Board was looking at it from a parking standpoint versus developing it into actual access into the river. You could use it for overflow parking, the way that the river has been lately we have only increased traffic out there. Even it is only for parking, I think that it could do a lot for the town. Just that connecting piece on the west side of the river. Not saying that you are going to do anything, consolidation or how that looks, if you turn that away now you might not get that opportunity and have definitely shut down that growth for Stevensville. I am not a proponent of Stevensville growing, but I think we need to keep those options open.

Mayor Gibson: thank you, I want to ask Steve Kruse one more question along those lines. When you and I looked at this, how much do you think there is for parking.

Steve Kruse: I agree, the way that it sits right now you have the shoulder of the road, I don't think that you can park there.

Mayor Gibson: along those lines, Steve and I met with FW&P today and correct me if I am wrong, there is another piece of land on the other side to Fort Owens and they planted about 200 plus trees and they want to put some water tanks in there to water those trees and also, we talked about parking and there are a lot of parking places taken there. But there is also a trail there and we are going to have a further discussion about how we can designate that trail for people too, that is on the other side.

Councilmember Brown: I think that the town should keep that piece of land. Myla just donated a chunk to FW&P about a year ago the town also has that River Park north of FW&P is. So, in the future it would be nice to see FW&P and maybe the town of Stevensville working together to make a bigger and better plan for the tracks of land down there. There is trails down there that are not very well maintained, I walk them with the dogs. So, I think that it would be in the best interest of the town to keep that piece of property, if we give it back to the county then in the future, they are working with three entities to try to develop anything. Besides that, how many subdivisions have gone in around town, have we seen any of the cash in lieu of for the parks that are not being developed inside the subdivisions outside of town. We don't see any of that money at lease we have a piece of property and try to develop with another agency.

Mayor Gibson: any further discussion? Seeing none, Jenelle will you call for the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye

Councilmember Brown: aye

Councilmember Michalson: no

Councilmember Wolff: no

Mayor Gibson: motion fails.

11. New Business

a. Discussion/Decision: Approval to Purchase Interpreters and Meters for Public Works

Mayor Gibson: introduced new business item a.

Councilmember Barker: I make a motion to approve.

Councilmember Michalson: 2nd.

Mayor Gibson: there is a motion and a 2nd. Jenelle, can you please read the correspondence.

Jenelle Berthoud, Town clerk: read the correspondence from Mr. Harris. (This will be included in the minutes)

Mayor Gibson: in my response, Mayor read his response back to Mr. Harris. (This will be included in the minutes) Mr. Kruse I would like you to get up and report how many meters you have replaced, how many we need and the issues with software.

Steve Kruse: thank you, tell you a story or ask questions. So, of you probably know more about this than I do. What I discovered that is in 2011 the town of Stevensville switched over to AMI, to the tune of 800 plus meters at that time. When I started working for public works and the first time that I did a meter read it came back with 147 meters that did not read so we made it a priority to change that, at that point my goal was to change that 147. It was pretty difficult during the COVID shutdown to make appointments; people did not want strangers in their house other people maybe weren't in a rush to call us back to put in a new meter that reads accurately in your house, so it was slow going. Over the course of the year, we have put in 60 new meters, 43 meters left and 8 interpreters to do. The disturbing thing about this about 142 did not read we put 62 new meters in and each time our do not read number is going up. Last month it was 172 did not read we put 60 in and when we go out and read meters, part of that report says 48 new meters stopped reading, then I started looking into these meters that are all from 2011. The 10-10 warranty is for 10 years, replacing it at another 10% per meter for the next 10. In my mind it is a known issue, we are talking to our supplier. The town is close to replacing 900 meters, anticipating and planning forward budgeting a pretty good chunk of money to replace meters. If a meter does not read, the customer will pay the flat rate, we have some people that have paid the same rate in February as in August. Our huge water loss problem I can not tell you what that is, until the meters read correctly. I am going to push really hard with Master Meter.

Mayor Gibson: if you were to approve this, we will come back for a budget amendment. It needs to be done and that is my opinion.

Steve Kruse: they have been waiting for interpreters for 2 ½ months. We have our name on 40 that were ordered 2 ½ months ago.

Mayor Gibson: any further discussion, seeing none. Jenelle will you take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Michalson: aye.

Councilmember Wolff: aye.

Mayor Gibson: motion passes.

b. Discussion/Decision: Proposed Language Change to Utility Billing Policies & Procedures

Mayor Gibson: introduced new business item b.

Councilmember Barker: I move that we propose language change.

Councilmember Wolff: 2nd

Mayor Gibson: motion and a 2nd. Public comment? Seeing none. Any discussion from the council?

Councilmember Wolff: I basically see three changes, billing cycle, utility billing clerk and 5 more days instead of the 20th it is the 25th. I guess it is only two things.

Shelly Block, Utility Billing Clerk: it is actually 30 days, they are going to get that additional grace period. It is received versus when it was mailed. With this language it is a little more clear that the money has to be received in our office so that we can apply it and do the billing correctly.

Mayor Gibson: any further discussion? Seeing none, Jenelle will you take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye

Councilmember Brown: no

Councilmember Michalson: aye

Councilmember Wolff: aye

Mayor Gibson: passes 3 to 1

c. Discussion/Decision: Resolution 457b, Resolution Amending Water & Sewer Billing Policies

Mayor Gibson: introduced new business item c.

Councilmember Michalson: I move to approve resolution 457b.

Councilmember Barker: 2nd

Mayor Gibson: motion and a 2nd. Any public comment? Seeing none. Any discussion from the council? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: no

Councilmember Michalson: aye

Councilmember Wolff: aye

Mayor Gibson: 3 to 1

d. Discussion/Decision: Approval of Airport Hanger for Mr. Hall, Lot 1 Block 3, Stevensville Airport

Mayor Gibson: introduced new business item d.

Councilmember Wolff: make a motion.

Councilmember Barker: 2nd

Mayor Gibson: motion and a 2nd. Public comment? Seeing none. Any discussion from the council?

Councilmember Brown: I would assume that Mr. Hall's lease is recorded with the clerk and recorder's office.

Councilmember Wolff: I would assume so.

Mayor Gibson: I would assume so.

Councilmember Brown: not always.

Mayor Gibson: we will make sure that it happens.

Councilmember Brown: thank you.

Councilmember Wolff: I am the representative for the airport board. After attending a really long meeting. This is a fairly routine matter, and this all has to meet FAA requirements. This is a board that is very serious and meticulous in what they do. Plans were included in the packet, and I think that we can depend on them to make sure that this is done correctly. There were some questions about septic and water. Mr. Hall is trying to deal with this, and they are discussing this with the county health department. They are not connecting to city water, but they are planning on a holding tank.

Mayor Gibson: any further discussion? Seeing none, Jenelle would you call for the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Michalson: aye.

Councilmember Wolff: aye.

Mayor Gibson: thank you.

12. Executive Report

Mayor Gibson: gave his executive report. I was out of town and was unable to attend the chili field I want to thank Mac and Kristin I want to thank all of the people of Stevensville it was pretty successful. And the amount that some people donated I want to thank them. We the staff will be hosting an open house, we will be providing refreshments, it will not come out of the town budget. Our plan is to do that on April 8th from 4-5. I have asked as many employees as possible to attend, I think that it gives the citizens opportunity to ask questions, but I think that it is a good opportunity also for our staff. I have been so amazed at the staff, especially the ones that have been short term. You don't see it every day like I do, if it is the water billing or the budget, whether it is the town clerk, whether it is the chief of police, whether it is Steve Kruse, these people work constantly more than I do. And I am just so appreciative. We talked about the meters, and I assume you that drive around, Steve Kruse has also been busy fixing potholes, it was a bad year for potholes and the leaks, a big shout out to them.

13. Town Council Comments

Councilmember Michalson: did the red fire truck come back that was loaned out? The ambulance I mean.

Vicky Motley responded from the audience, "Yes it did".

Councilmember Brown: where are you at with the laptops for the council?

Jenelle Berthoud: as you guys can see I did not have minutes for this meeting, last week was an extremely busy week unfortunately minutes and those two laptops got put on the back burner. I will hope for IT to tackle them next week.

Mayor Gibson: next meeting there will be an agenda item to purchase 2 more laptops.

Councilmember Barker: I had a citizen of Stevensville reach out to me about Father Ravalli Park, some of the concerns for over there. We still have not had a Park Board Meeting; we are lacking some members for the Park Board. I did get with Mr. Kruse to see where we were sitting with some of the stuff, there was an email sent out to us councilmembers, I know that we are again shorthanded in some departments, however everything else is coming together well. Why can't we do a community workday like you do with Bear Mountain?

Mayor Gibson: I would agree.

Councilmember Barker: I think that we need to set a workday and get it done.

Mayor Gibson: Jenelle can we put that on the next agenda, we have also advertised for the park's person.

Councilmember Barker: I did attend the chili feed, very well attended. The responses that we got back from the community, everybody thought it was as great thing. And what can we do next to not always use the towns funds.

Councilmember Brown: two picnic tables showed up at the park yesterday, thank you very much.

14. Board Reports

Councilmember Michalson: The Planning and Zoning Board met. representative, Jim Sayer is the chair, Trenis Hindle vice chair and Angela Lyons secretary. Going to go over Subdivision regulations, started to discuss, have assignments to work on and will meet again on April 11th.

Mayor Gibson: tomorrow or Monday, Jenelle is busy. I went through all of the codes for MT codes for subdivision regulations and growth policy. We will make copies for everyone on the Planning and Zoning Board. There were questions so this will be a good start. As you all know we have been bombarded with zoning requests, etc. this is fair to us and also fair to the developers. The Community Development job has been open for years; we will draw up a part time job description that will focus on zoning. We also have another board report.

Councilmember Wolff: it was a long meeting, going over the potential for grants there is a lot of money, potential, for the airport. The report is in the prior, that Tim did, and that gives you the idea of the potential for contracts. Forest Service sees Stevensville as a central area. The airport is extremely busy and during fire season they really need the potential to have the space. Tim did a beautiful report on the potential at the airport.

\Mayor Gibson: ARPA, we are supposed to hear around April 11th. Water storage and leaks are very important. We will be back in the library next meeting.

15. Adjournment

APPROVE:



Steve Gibson, Mayor

ATTEST:



Jenelle S. Berthoud, Town Clerk

Jenelle Berthoud

From: Steve Gibson
Sent: Tuesday, March 22, 2022 10:35 AM
To: Mark Harris; Jenelle Berthoud
Subject: RE: [EXTERNAL] replacement of water meters

Dear Mr. Harris,

Read your email today, received your email at 7:40 March 21st.

In regards to replacing meters, the normal practice for changing meters at residences has been to knock on doors, identify ourselves and what we are doing, ask if it is a convenient time. The only exception was during the COVID emergency when we needed approval from homeowners to come into their house, which we did by scheduling appointments, we have since returned to the normal process.

In relationship to your statement about bogus water bills and random water bills, we are continuing to address these issues. The system calculated the billing amount from the meter reading and not the actual usage. For the meters that were not reading in the month of January, the system calculated the customer's bill based on the reader number and not the actual usage number.

We are continuing to address these problems and I am not blaming the previous administration. We are no longer short staffed and moving forward.

Your correspondence will be read into public comment at the March 24, 2022, council meeting as you requested. If you have any other questions, please contact me at 406-439-2203

Thank you,

Steve Gibson
Mayor of Stevensville

From: Mark Harris <mharris487@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, March 21, 2022 7:40 PM
To: Steve Gibson <steve.gibson@townofstevensville.com>; Jenelle Berthoud <jenelle@townofstevensville.com>
Subject: [EXTERNAL] replacement of water meters

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Hello Mayor Gibson -

On Monday afternoon a young man in a yellow t-shirt with a "Town of Stevensville" logo on it rang my doorbell and said he was here to change my water meter.

I had shown Jenelle a couple months ago that my water consumption was no longer showing on my bills. She made a copy of the bill and said she'd notify the proper folks. She also said they'd contact me to make an appointment to check batteries or replace the meter if necessary.

Anyway, fast forward to today when the young man didn't show any identification and no prior arrangements had been made. I tend to be suspicious of things like that and turned him away pending verification with the Town of Stevi. I also had to move some items to give him access to the meter and enough room to work. I made an appointment with him to return Tuesday AM at 0730 to change the meter.

I tried to call the town clerk and the billing clerk, but neither seemed to be answering their phones. I left messages. I then spoke with the police clerk by phone who put me on hold and said she'd try to get me in contact with the billing clerk. After waiting on hold for about a minute, the phone hung up.

I called back to the billing clerk and she answered this time. I explained that notifications should have been made prior to sending someone to my home and why. She went so far as to blame this on the previous administration.

I received a bogus \$1800 water/ sewer bill on the day I paid my 80-something dollar (correct amount) this month. Let's get this fixed. I know others who've gotten odd, random water bills this month as well. It has to be costing the taxpayers a lot of money to send out all that nonsense in the mail.

You have a problem, sir, with unprofessional workers who blame everything on the last mayor's administration. I am tired of it and would like to see them get their stuff together and start getting stuff done. No more blame on other administrations. No more blame on short staffing. Stop this and give them some leadership. You said you'd make mistakes as mayor, you'd own them, and you'd correct them. Correct them and lead this in the right direction. Stop blaming the previous mayor yourself and be a leader.

I am requesting that this be read into the record as a public comment at the next council meeting.

Sincerely,

Mark Harris
403 College Street, Stevensville, MT 59870-2525
(406) 777-4870