

Stevensville Town Council Meeting Minutes for

THURSDAY, JULY 14, 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)

Vickie Motley, 318 9<sup>th</sup> Street, own property on College Street, there is yard debris on the street that has started to pile up and I would like that taken care of.

Jim Kalkofen: comments and questions about Burnt Fork Estates, the water booster station, my questions is it is upgraded. Architectural theme has this been updated. Single family homes could only be erected. One final comment as a taxpayer, when a new owner of a subdivision takes over and increases the size, it should be reviewed by the Planning & Zoning Board and the town council.

4. Approval of Minutes

NONE

5. Approval of Bi-Weekly Claims

a. Claims #17780-#17808

Mayor Gibson: introduced approval of Bi-Weekly Claims.

Councilmember Wolff: I would make a motion to approve the claims. #17780-#17808.

Councilmember Michalson: 2nd

Mayor Gibson: there is a motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Any discussion? Any public comment? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Michalson: aye.

Councilmember Wolff: aye.

Mayor Gibson: motion passes 4-0.

6. Administrative Reports

a. Airport

- b. Building Department
- c. Finance
- d. Fire Department
- e. Police Department
- f. Public Works

Mayor Gibson: introduced administrative reports.

7. Guests

NONE

8. Correspondence

NONE

9. Public Hearings

NONE

10. Unfinished Business

NONE

11. New Business

- a. Discussion/Decision: Special Event and Alcohol Use Permit for Stevensville Creamery Picnic

Mayor Gibson: introduced new business item a. it is all in your packet, any discussion?

Councilmember Michalson: I will make a motion to approve.

Councilmember Wolff: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Gibson: motion and a 2<sup>nd</sup>. Any public comment?

Liz Cook: I am with Civic Club, any questions or comments.

Councilmember Michalson : security that they are providing?

Mayor Gibson: I believe that it is four. Any further discussion? Seeing none, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: aye.

Councilmember Michalson: aye.

Councilmember Wolff: aye.

Mayor Gibson: motion passes 4-0.

b. Discussion/Decision: Rescind/Suspend Resolution No. 486 (Resolution for The Bill Assistance Program)

Mayor Gibson: introduced new business item b. in your packet, this is Mr. Michalson's.

Councilmember Michalson: I would like to amend mine a little bit. I want to a motion to suspend Resolution 486.

Councilmember Barker: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Gibson: we have a motion to suspend. Councilmember Michalson.

Councilmember Michalson: After a long thought, I can't kick these 8 people off of this. I went back to 2015. We have, I am looking at \$1100.00, we have enough money to keep these people on the program until the end of the year. We could suspend, stop taking the .41 cents out.

Mayor Gibson: so, basically what you are saying is leaving the program but not charging.

Councilmember Michalson: correct, leaving the program but not charging the .41 cents.

Councilmember Barker: we actually did it before, we just spent it down.

Mayor Gibson: we have an amendment to suspend.

Councilmember Michalson: to suspend the rate payers paying, but not the program.

Mayor Gibson: again, my question is who is going to pay it?

Councilmember Michalson: it will come out of \$1100.00 we have.

Councilmember Barker: 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion to suspend.

Mayor Gibson: is there any discussion?

Councilmember Wolff: I do have a prepared statement. (Councilmember Wolff's statement will be included in the minutes of this meeting)

Councilmember Brown: I disagree, we can't make them pay for something that they are not getting. If they are not using it, they should not pay. I feel that it is a lawsuit waiting to happen. Especially the letter going out to people saying that their water is going to be shut off and their water bill is paid current. Their usage has been paid, we can't make them pay for other people's usage so, with a voluntary program that is a different story. Mandatory, I can see is a lawsuit waiting to happen.

Councilmember Barker: was this brought to the public to even vote on at the time.

Mayor Gibson: I can respond to that; it was during the Burnt Fork Estates, and everyone had left, and I was the only one left. And my comment was not that the program was wrong, but how did the numbers get calculated. They said that it was a decrease, but it was actually an increase. So, to answer your question there was no body there to vote, I was there no one spoke in opposition.

Councilmember Michalson: I can go back to ~~2010~~<sup>2015</sup> when it was first created under former Mayor Minmack. It was a big thing then; they moved the meeting from in here to out to the fire hall. 6 people showed up and 4 of the 6 voted in opposition to it. Then it went to 2017 and it was a \$1.52 and the funds were so high in 2017. We suspended it because it was so high, and I have not seen more than a dozen people on the program. There is also a program passed by the council last fall that will end in 2023. You can't use them both and how many are on that?

Jenelle Berthoud, Town Clerk: it varies, because they can apply through out the year, but off the top of my head I would say about 8-10 have come through.

Councilmember Michalson: so, we have about 12 on DPPHS and 7 on Help for You.

Mayor Gibson: there are only about 3 people that are not paying, no one is having their water shut off. Any further discussion?

Councilmember Brown: I brought the letter. I know personally of two letters there were sent out for shut off. Mayor Gibson:

Jenelle Berthoud: I believe that took place because it is the automatic system that Black Mountain reads is when an account is not paid in full or there is a balance.

Mayor Gibson: but they did not receive a shut off.

Jenelle Berthoud: correct, no pink slip was hung on the door. That letter was made because of how the system generates notices.

Councilmember Michalson: between the office in there and the billing system in Idaho you guys don't know.

Jenelle Berthoud: Black Mountain is our billing system, and that program talks to BDS, and that company prints our bills.

Councilmember Michalson: what I am hearing Mr. Mayor these 2 or 3 people that are protesting will not have their water shut off.

Mayor Gibson: so far.

Councilmember Brown: what about the letter? A way to stop the letter going out, talk to them.

Jenelle Berthoud: I think that is something that has to be discussed, mayor.

Mayor Gibson: we will have to talk to Black Mountain.

Councilmember Brown: because the people that I know, it is a stress on them.

Mayor Gibson: I am going to make one more comment, I understand what you are saying Mr. Michalson. This is just my personal opinion, price of gas, price of groceries, the price of getting a person to the doctor. .41 cents people. My goodness, .41 cents. I just don't understand it. Councilmember Barker not one person got up during that meeting. Any public comment?

PUBLIC COMMENT

Vicki Motley: is there a way in the software that the portion of this can be taken off their bill. I agree it is only .41 cents. Maybe if that portion could be taken off of the bill. For those that don't want to do it, it could be just taken off of their bill.

Mayor Gibson: I have a comment to that, we let 2 then we let 10 then we let 20 my personal feeling on this is that it is not the time. I think that we had two elderly aged woman here last week that did not even know about this. Any further discussion?

Councilmember Wolff: for two of three people, I looked at my bill today, it is .40 cents. To me it is nothing, I have asked the question that Vicki brought up. There could be more in the future.

Councilmember Michalson: I am sorry that I brought this up now. I am having a really hard time kicking these 8 or 10 people to the curb. I came from a background of very poor people I am trying to see both sides. I cannot support this; I withdraw my motion.

Councilmember Wolff: 2<sup>nd</sup> the motion to withdraw.

Councilmember Michalson: I make a motion to table the motion.

Councilmember Barker: 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Mayor Gibson: any further discussion, Jenelle please take the vote.

Councilmember Barker: aye.

Councilmember Brown: no.

Councilmember Michalson: aye.

Councilmember Wolff: aye.

Mayor Gibson: this has been tabled, 3-1.

12. Town Council Comments

Councilmember Barker: will the Lewis & Clark Park sign go back up to identify the park?

Jenelle Berthoud: I can send an email to Public Works.

13. Board Reports

Councilmember Michalson: we were supposed to have a P&Z meeting but did not have enough members to hold the meeting.

Councilmember Wolff: there was an Airport Board Meeting, I was unable to attend.

14. Executive Report

Mayor Gibson: ARPA grant, we will have it in the budget, about 1.5 million that we will have to match. Focus on fixing the leaks and the water storage. Our plan is to start the next council meeting and I will talk to later and would like to start at 6:00 for that meeting.

15. Adjournment

**APPROVE:**

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**Steve Gibson, Mayor**

**ATTEST:**

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**Jenelle S. Berthoud, Town Clerk**

July 14, 2022 Town Council Meeting

New Business: Rescind/Suspend Resolution No 486 Help for You Water Assistance Program

The previous administration reinstated the water assistance program in September 2021 for those town residents who qualify by income requirements. Currently eight residents receive a reduction in their monthly water/sewer bill. With all the financial challenges we are experiencing through price hikes, helping those most affected is important. Montana DPHHS offers a similar but temporary program that requires completion of an 11 page application, a wait to see if accepted, and the program ends September 2023. If the Council rescinds the town's program, it seems to me as Council members we are not doing our jobs to help support vulnerable residents in our town. Suspending the program on the other hand only delays a final solution.

We have residents who refuse to pay the 40 cents on their monthly water/sewer bill to support the assistance program which equals 1.3 cents a day. I leave pennies at the check out counter all the time to help others pay for a shortage on a purchase. The Town's billing system identifies unpaid balances, and it prompts a shut off notice and those who oppose the assistance program don't appreciate getting the notice. 40 cents a month in a years time results in the price of a loaf of bread or a cup of coffee whereas the money could help those in need.

Right now there is an overage in the water assistance account that supports the program making this a self-supporting program. Those who pay the 40 cents are making a meaningful contribution to the elderly, disabled, and probably veterans who live here. I believe the overage should be kept in place and grow especially if more residents apply for the program because we live in uncertain financial times.

I feel the "Help For You" program should continue and I oppose to rescind or suspend it.

Marilyn Wolff  
Stevensville Town Council Member