

TOWN OF WHITEHALL
P. O. BOX 529
WHITEHALL, MT 59759
October 12th, 2021

The Whitehall Town Council held their regular meeting in the Council Chambers at 207 East Legion Ave, Tuesday October 12th, 2021.

PRESENT: Council Members: Bill Lanes, Pat Peterson, Linda Jung, Roy McBride, Treasurer Allissa Christensen, and Mayor Mary Janacaro-Hensleigh.

VISITORS: Leonard Wortman, Kory Klapan, Lori Young, Liz Pullman, Heidi Austin, Lionel Austin, Will Austin, and Maxine Samuelson.

Mayor Mary Hensleigh called the Council Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

Roll Call was taken. All council members were present except Shawn Hoagland and Katy James.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

IV. AGENDA APPROVAL:

Roy made a motion to approve the Agenda with Linda seconding.

Pat: Umm.

Mayor Mary: Pat do you have something.

Pat: No.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Pat motioned to approve the Sept 2021 minutes with Roy seconding.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

VI. REPORTS:

Mayor's Report:

Mayor Mary: I would like to thank Pastor Darryl of the Expedition Church from Livingston. Him and his wonderful crew from Alabama came back, and they painted the two locker rooms at the pool. Not only do they provide all of this, they bought all the paint which was around \$500. They did a wonderful job. Derek painted the outside trim and shutters and that. The pool is looking really good. It is a very nice thing that they do coming all the way from Alabama to paint the Whitehall Pool. They have done so much more, and they just really like us. So, it is very, very nice. We really appreciate it. This is the last meeting before the election. It is an important election so that we can find out which direction we are headed. The ambulance district is on the ballot, and it's important that we find out how the people in Whitehall feel whether they want to join or not. I just encourage everyone to vote so we know which direction we are headed there. It has been kind of nice around here. Yesterday was a holiday. The garbage people told me that they worked on holidays. So, everybody that called and said should we put our garbage out? I said yes; and then, they didn't pick up yesterday. Hopefully everybody left their garbage out because they did pick up today. Tomorrow they will pick up over at the south side. If that is the least of our problems, we are in pretty good shape.

Officer's Reports:

Attorney Report:

No report.

Clerk / Treasurer's Report:

Allissa: The planning board has been very busy the last few weeks so I have been assisting wherever I can with that. I've been getting a lot of phone calls regarding zoning and building. The budget is complete and submitted, on time I might add. The budget is quite a process especially someone like me being new to this. Todd gave me a lot of direction, but it's all done and submitted to the state. It's available on the state's site if anybody wants to look at that. Court has picked up some so there have been several days where I have dedicated time to time pays, bookkeeping, scheduling, phone calls, and entering in new citations into full court enterprise. Todd has been helping me with bank recs. There is an issue in our UB system reporting to our accounting system so the girls have been helping me go through past deposits. Everything is looking good on our end so we just need to figure out what is going on with UB. We have been working on that, just a matter of coordinating with Black Mountain. Everything looks good with our accounting; we've had some clean bookkeeping the last several months. We had a phone conference on the 15th with all those involved with the water treatment plant and have another one coming up on the 20th. Our Engineer seems hopeful that all the nitty gritty details should be worked out, and we should be able to get started next summer hopefully. If anyone is interested in that process or have questions pertaining to the water treatment plant, you are more than welcome to come sit in on those monthly phone meetings. Quarterlies have been submitted and 941s, and Ed and I have been working on the Personnel Manual. Lastly, the town is now participating in the low-income water assistance program through the state. The link for more information is on the front page of our website, and we have information here as well. From what I understand it's like most welfare programs. It's not a permanent fix, but it's meant to help people during hard times. That's my report.

Mayor Mary: Okay. Thanks, Allissa. For those who don't know what does UB stand for?

Allissa: Utility billing. Sorry.

Mayor Mary: There you go. People talk in acronyms, and a lot of people are like, "what in the world are you talking about", but yeah, UB utility billing.

Linda: Allissa, this low water income. What is the name of that?

Allissa: Low-income water assistance program through the state.

Linda: Is that what you have posted out here? Income water assistance. Okay.

Allissa: Yes. LIHWAP is the acronym.

Linda: LIWHAP that's what it is not like LIEAP with Northwestern. I know they have a program.

Allissa: You have to apply to the state. We don't do it here. If somebody is approved then they I guess in a sense the State reimburses us, but it is just to help people in hard times.

Linda: Is this the first year that we have had something like that?

Allissa: Um-hum. From what I understand yes.

Linda: Good information to have if you find somebody who needs help.

Public Work's Report:

Kory: Alright I will start off on water. We took water bacteria samples September 7th; they were good. We did have three water breaks. We did have two new water hookups. We do have some problems with a few water meters not reading. We are going to address this next month. I don't know what is going on with them. Sewer. Samples the same September 7th. Two new sewer taps. We did start jetting sewers on the south side but they had some equipment problems so we didn't get totally finished. I haven't heard when they are coming back. So then onto streets. We filled potholes. The county came in and helped us with the potholes on the north side of town. We got quite a few done. We didn't get the ones on the south side done so we did fill them with millings. They seem to be holding pretty good so far. I hope they can make it through the winter to when we can fix them correctly. There is some big holes we have gravel in on First Street and Viella mostly where we had water repairs. It's going to probably be like that until spring. It's kind of still settling and I don't really want to pave them over until they are totally settled. So, we are going to have to deal with that. We did clean quite a few alleys and Lucille Street. If you get a chance go drive down Lucille Street, it looks awesome. We cut a ton of stuff out of there. Cemetery. We did two graves. Three headstones got set. We did blow everything out which took about three weeks. But everything is winterized as of now. The water is still on at the pool. We have a heater there because we will fill the pool back up here in a couple of weeks for the winter. So, it's still not totally done but everything else is done. Hydrants on the south side are flushed. We will finish the north side of town this week by Friday. We will be totally done flushing hydrants. We had 17 locate tickets and 7 water rereads.

Allissa: How many locates?

Kory: What's that?

Allissa: How many locates?

Kory: Seventeen I think I counted. Seventeen locates.

Roy: Kory can you give us an update on the new equipment.

Kory: So, on the loader to replace the skid steer. We did order the loader and the two attachments. One is a snow block blade and the other one is a pickup broom. Our attachments should be in any time. He will deliver them as soon as he gets them. The loader itself will probably be December/January depending on how good it comes. So yeah.

Roy: Thank you.

Kory: We did trade the skid steer in on that. You guys all know that but for whoever is wondering.

Fire Chief's Report:

No report.

Sherriff's Report:

No report.

Commissioner Report:

Leonard: I apologize that I haven't been here for a while. I've been having conflicts with the meeting, and it just hasn't been working out very good. But hopefully we get some of that stuff resolved. So, kind of the report our budget has been approved. We were thinking that this budget year was going to be a very tough one because we would have the full impact of the loss of Golden Sunlight gross proceeds. The taxable value in the county went up. I'm sure that people saw their appraisal. I was told by one of the state's appraisers this ain't nothing compared to what the next one is going to be. Because most of the values they got was just when the boom was starting. So, he said probably in the next budget cycle in two years is going to be a bigger impact than this one a nice thing to look forward to. In our budget to offset some of that we were able on the county wide mills we do start levies by almost 10 mills. So hopefully that helps some. It sure isn't going to help everything. The haystack fire is under control. It burned over 27,000 acres up by Boulder. The county has gone out of stage one restrictions. I believe next week we're probably going to reinstate the burning that has been closed all summer. The JLDC is looking at building a new warehouse building down on the business park down by Sunlight. They have had a lot of requests and stuff for folks that want to get in out there. The State of Montana is going to do a millings project on the highway from here down to Cardwell. I believe next spring. We are planning on updating Daly Road out here south of town. It is one of them that has been pretty bad for a while. The meat processing facility. We did a feasibility study on that, and it looked very, very promising. We've been going back and forth trying to find some land for it to be on. We were in talks with one landowner, and they didn't want to just sell a piece of their land for that. They wanted to sell the whole place. That just didn't fit with what it would cost. We are continuing to look at that. Last week we had a discussion with a large landowner between here and Boulder that has a real strong interest in seeing this moving forward, and is interested in possibly investing in it. If we can't find something in this area, they may offer some land for it on their property. One of the big things that should have a huge impact on the community would be the Wester Legacy Center. That is moving forward. This Thursday we plan to have

a press conference and a ground breaking ceremony that Mayor Mary is going to speak at. We have hired a national company to do fundraising for us. They are gung-ho to get started; and so, this will be the kickoff for that. The Legacy Center is going to consist of a museum type facility, a retail store, outlet store, and is going to have an e-commerce thing so vendors can sell stuff online. There will be a visitor center, and it will feature the Montana Pro Rodeo Hall and Wall of Fame. They are very exciting about coming on board. We have hired an executive director named Jay Linderman. He is really gung-ho on this thing. He has actually purchased a chuck wagon that is going to be delivered tomorrow. We are going to set up in front of the building out there where the Legacy Center is going to be.

Mayor Mary: That would be great.

Leonard: That should be really nice. That is really nice. The COVID stuff. This COVID strain that we are seeing right now seems to be far worse than what the other one was. It is affecting a lot of people that don't have any underlying issues. I have talked to several people who have had it. A couple have almost died from it that were younger and in good health. I think it's something that we really need to pay attention to. Apparently if you get the vaccine, it's not as serious. It's what we are told. The vaccine is free. The health department will go anywhere and do the vaccine. They will even come to someone's house if they requested it. People really should sit down with their doctors or medical providers and have a really good discussion and talk about whether it's a good thing for them. I have had the vaccine. My wife hasn't she has MS, and her doctor had some concerns about her having the vaccine. She has also had covid, and I have too. I think it's important to have a good discussion with medical providers and make that decision based on facts. Its sure available if you want it. Another thing I have is my current term ends the end of next year and I am not going to run again. It's going to be an important election that people have. I just want to address some comments that I read in the paper a couple of months ago that Jefferson County never does anything for this end of the county. That rather concerns me. I would like to if I can just take a couple minutes and go through a few things that I have got accomplished. I can't speak to what happened before I was a commissioner. I don't know that. I was a commissioner in the mid-1990s also. Back in 1993 the first year I was here in the spring I went out on one of the roads. I can't remember which one it was for sure because they were all pretty much the same. But there were two four-wheel drive pickups, a school bus, and a four-wheel drive tractor all buried plum to their axles in the middle of the county road. That was really common on certain year. It didn't happen every year; but some years it was very, very common that most of the roads out in this area were impassable. We started digging them out, hauling in rock, doing filter cloth and whatnot. We got a lot of the roads in this area fixed and passable. There are still some issues there. The Whitetail Road was by far the worst road in the county. When I came into office, one of the first things I did was got that road put on the Montana State Secondary Highway System. That allowed us to access federal and state money and got the first ten miles of that road paved. That was a process because it was two years after I left office before the work actually got done. It was quite a deal. The Department of Transportation used to have something called a CDBG grants that were for small little transportation type things. In the 1990s we utilized those monies to do at least two sidewalk projects in Whitehall. The Clerk & Recorder said that she thought that there were three but I could only remember that there were two for sure, and they were both in Whitehall.

Mayor Mary: The third one was when I was Mayor the first time.

Leonard: Okay. That's when it was.

Mayor Mary: We used grants. We did Yellowstone and Division.

Leonard: So that would have been on my second.

Mayor Mary: Yes. Right.

Leonard: That is why I couldn't remember. Well, anyways, that is three things down here. After I left office in 1998 some of that money was utilized to do a trail system in the north end of the county. Then, the Department of Transportation ended the program; and we utilized the last of the money to do a trail from Boulder out to the fairgrounds. That is kind of the way the money got divvied up. Whitehall certainly got their fair share. One of the first things I worked on that many of you would remember was MSTI when I came in this time. If you are not familiar with MSTI, it was a 500KV power line that Northwest Energy was planning on putting right above town here. There was a huge outcry from the citizens down in this end of the county about not wanting that huge power line. It was almost a done deal. The previous commission to me had gone to a meeting and said the county didn't really care where it went. We ended up having a lawsuit and some other stuff, but we got the MSTI project stopped. We delayed it. They didn't get done what they wanted to get done, and they finally dropped it totally. That was one of the good benefits for here. Flooding issues in Whitehall. In 2011 we had a bunch of flooding in town. So, we had a big public meeting and somebody suggested we do a big study and find out what was causing all this stuff. Come to find out there had been three studies already done. All three of the studies said the same thing that the flooding in Whitehall was caused because the silt coming down Pipestone Creek from the Smith and the Calf Ranches. A bunch of it was dropping off as it went through Whitehall raising up the level of the thing which was causing the flooding in Whitehall. I went to the legislature with a couple of other folks, and about that time they found Eurasian watermilfoil in the Jefferson Slough. It was going to be real tough for us to find money for the flooding in Whitehall. I went to the legislature with Ted Dodge and Tom Harrington I believe and met with some of the leadership from the legislature, and we were able to convince the leadership that the milfoil down in the Jefferson Slough was a direct result of the wonderful nursery that was being built by the silt coming down Pipestone Creek. We were able to access somewhere in the neighborhood of \$4 million so far to do work on the Pipestone Creek and on the Jefferson Slough. We have eradicated the milfoil in some places there is still some below where we have done work. But where we have done work above there is no milfoil. So that has been successful. We have done a lot of chemical stuff. We have done a lot of work on the Smith Ranch. The Calf Ranch didn't want us doing anything on their property. We have done a lot of work there. We did replace the bridge on Kountz Road and put in a new headgate and did some other work out there. I believe it has helped. A few years ago, we had some flooding in Whitehall again caused by the ice buildup. There was a bunch of ice built up, and the mayor at that time who was not Mary wouldn't do anything even though it was flooding the people in town. I took it upon myself to hire a private contractor with an excavator. We went in, and we cleaned the ice out of Pipestone Creek because it went through Whitehall and basically took care of that issue. Sugar Beet Row. Mayor Mary had done a deal with Sugar Beet Row and had a bunch of grants and a bunch of loans a bunch of stuff set up to fix the sewer system on Sugar Beet Row. The sewer system had failed. The lots were too small to have individual septic. The people out there were left because if they couldn't tie into the city water system, their property was basically worthless because they had nothing. Mary had all this stuff set up; and when the new mayor came in, he caboshed everything. I was able to come in and work with the funders that Mary had already lined up and stuff. And got everything turned over to the county, and we got the folks at Sugar Beet Row tied in to the city water system which I certainly appreciate. That was an

ordeal. One of the big things we have done down here is Bruce Binkowski. I don't know if any of you know Bruce. Bruce is our event coordinator, and he has been extremely active in Whitehall. He has helped a lot of groups and organizations. He has a budget for advertising, and he has helped all kinds of stuff with that. That's just a few things that I wanted to bring up that we have done while I have been a county commissioner. We certainly have not spent a whole lot of time or effort in the north end on roads over the past several years. We did improve a bunch of roads in Boulder because we had the millings project going on I-15 so we utilized those millings and fixed a bunch of roads in Boulder. When they start the millings project in Whitehall on I-90, then all the roads down here should get fixed. That is kind of the way that stuff works.

Mayor Mary: Thank you Leonard. I think people need to be reminded of everything that does get done in town. It seems like people fixate on the negative and don't accentuate the positive. I think that was a very good thing for you to do.

Leonard: Yeah. All the commissioners are elected to represent the entire county. We each have to live in our own district. So, it's not like everything is going to happen here or everything is going to happen there. When you elect my replacement, make sure the person has a strong enough personality to be able to get things done that need to get done. Thank you.

Committee / Board Reports:

Planning Board:

See minutes.

Recreational Complex Board:

No meeting.

Pool Board:

No meeting.

Trees, Parks and Cemetery:

No meeting.

Water/Sewer/Garbage and Streets/Alley/Sidewalks:

See minutes.

T.I.F.F:

See minutes.

CTAC:

No meeting.

VII. Public Comment :

None.

VIII. Consent Agenda :

Planning Board:

Address zoning/development permit application revisions / Tabled

Industrial zoning dispute & 2 structures not approved / Brenda Sue Hartford / 8 East Viella / Tabled

Building Permit / Lionel Austin / 107 South Whitehall Street / New Structure / Approved

Building Permit / Chad Sacry Co. / Corner of A Street & 1st (Old Rice Motel) / Approved

Business License

Business License / Cole's Special Services / Construction & Remodeling / Approved

Road Closure

Hannah Forcella 5K on Thanksgiving Day 8:00am – 11:30am

Pat: I have some questions on that.

Mayor Mary: Okay. So, there aren't going to be any road closures.

Linda: Right.

Mayor Mary: There will just be people who are helping out with the 5K making people aware that this is going on, but we aren't closing any roads.

Pat: Oh okay.

Roy made a motion to approve the consent agenda with Linda seconding.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

IX. PRESENTATIONS

None.

X. Unfinished Business

A. Council discussion and determination on final draft of Employee Personnel Manual.

Linda motioned to discuss with Roy seconding.

Linda: I wasn't aware that we had this policy, and we haven't been using it. To me it is a pretty good policy, I think. I was interested in when we hire the way we do it. I noticed that this was done, and I think it was approved in 2015. I don't know when we used it. Were you around during this time or was that Dale?

Mayor Mary: Dale.

Linda: It shows that when we need somebody hired, the head of the clerks and the head of public works would actually come to the mayor and the council with the request. The mayor and the council then would look at the funding and make sure that everything is there and decide if we can move on at that point. Then, of course, they would start the process. Then there would be an interview with the department heads, at least one councilman, and the mayor to interview. We haven't done that. I'm not sure why we haven't done that. I'm new; but when I looked, I was like wow this is pretty cool. I would like to see us do it. I don't know how everybody feels about that. Instead of it all being done and then we vote on it. We really should be part of the process I feel. I don't know how you guys feel.

Roy: This is my thought on it. It could put us in a very precarious position whoever hires and the council disapproves of that hire. So, now you've got a legal issue that you're probably going to get taken to the laundromat on. So, I think that process should be followed to keep us out of jeopardy. We have to quit stepping on our toes. We just got to quit doing that. I think that we need to start looking at these policies a lot closer and follow them. That's part of our problem we didn't look at them and didn't know that they were there. I guess we should have been made aware that they were there. I'm not too sure anybody knew that they were there. I think it's a good policy the way that it stands. I think we just need to follow it. It's just a lot easier to have the discussion up front instead of after we've committed to somebody because then we can discuss the wage. We can discuss the hours, the benefits. I just think it's a much cleaner process that way, and it keeps everybody on their toes. It's just straightforward.

Mayor Mary: It's totally doable. I think it fell by the wayside with past councilmembers who we felt weren't that involved. We felt lucky that they just show up for council meetings and hardly anything else. I think it's just one of those things that just kind of fell by the wayside. I think it's real important and totally doable.

Allissa: I can have Ed take that exert and put it in this manual. Before you can approve on this Personnel Manual, I have to type up a resolution approving this. We can move forward with this tonight saying we want to add this or change that and get the definitions.

Linda: Wonderful. I think that's great.

Allissa: We can do that, but I will make a note here to let Ed know to add that from the old Procedures Manual and put that clearly in this Personnel Manual that we are working on.

Pat: Okay. Will we then have one manual because right now we have two?

Allissa: Yes.

Pat: We have employment policies which describes the hiring, and then we have the Personnel Manual which is different.

Mayor Mary: Yeah. Very confusing.

Pat: But there is a lot of overlapping between the two.

Allissa: That's why hence the resolution to say ending all previous manuals and going off this one.

Linda: Right. I agree.

Bill: I would agree. I think it is a good policy to follow. I'm glad that we are making these corrections to this. It's going to be healthy and good everybody involved.

Mayor Mary: Yes Maxine.

Maxine: Because pool staff are part of the employing group, we developed a separate application. Because if you look at the application that the town has previously used, it's primarily for public works people. Is the pool staff separately designated in the new manual?

Allissa: It doesn't refer specifically to a pool employee but seasonal part time. It makes lots of references to that. All in all, everyone needs to follow the same rules.

Maxine: Right. When I was on the pool commission, I always had well after the first year decided that we were going to have employee orientation using whatever the current manual was at the time. I went through that manual and made sure each staff member had a copy of the manual so that they were familiar with it. The pool staff often that's their very first real job. They haven't always been aware of certain policy situations that might occur in a town or in a real job even though its seasonal. We also developed separate questions to use during the employee employment interview and for the application process. So, will something like that be included in this?

Mayor Mary: We are still using that.

Roy: I think that needs to be. I think that application needs to be brought to here so that it is all under one roof. So Allissa can look at it because she is going to be I don't know how it's going to work in the future with the pool. But we can't have you doing one thing and public works doing one thing and Allissa doing another thing. I think we need to make sure that they are all contiguous and kind of line up with what we put into this new policy. I think it would be very nice if the pool board would give us copies of that application.

Maxine: I'm no longer on the pool board.

Mayor Mary: We have all that.

Roy: We have it, but I just think that it is very important that it is included into this process also.

Allissa: Just with my experience with the pool staff I always made sure that they got a copy of the Personnel Manual along with the W-4's and I-9's.

Maxine: When I resigned, I had a thumb drive with all that information on it in that plastic container. I mentioned that clearly the night I resigned to the pool commission.

Allissa: Okay. Thank you.

Mayor Mary: We should still have that. We will look for that.

Pat: There has to be some conformity, but not one size fits all.

Maxine: Right.

Pat: The same procedures need to be followed, but it will be slightly different for the seasonal workers at the pool.

Maxine: Because pool staff has to have different qualifications.

Pat: Right.

Bill: Other than public works, pool, is there any other, other than staff in here is there any other groups that would be involved hiring groups?

Allissa: If you read the Personnel Manual, it talks about remote employees like Todd. We contract with Todd. It addresses all of that.

Pat: But he is a contractor. He is not a town employee.

Mayor Mary: No.

Allissa: But it's in there though.

Pat: They mention the contractors, but they are not considered employees so they don't get vacation time. They don't get insurance or anything like that.

Allissa: Right. So, it is all in there.

Pat: It does talk about the seasonal workers. The temporary workers.

Linda: Short term workers.

Lori: That would be short term? I assume.

Allissa: Seasonal. Yeah.

Mayor Mary: Anything else that you want added in or brought to our attention?

Linda: On the Personnel Manual?

Mayor Mary: Umm.

Linda: Yes, there is one thing. When I was going through it, I spent several hours one day and then the next day because I just had to leave it. There is a lot there. I think in definitions. We talked about this.

Allissa: Define the Town.

Linda: We use the Town of Whitehall all the way through it, and it doesn't fit sometimes. Different examples in there Town of Whitehall what does that mean? Does that mean the Mayor and Council? Does that mean the staff? Allissa was going to have Ed work on that. To define what we mean in the definitions part. It's too general. It's not getting down into. It would be really questioned by anybody. What did you mean by that? So that was one thing, and that would solve a lot of the issues I was seeing in there. Other than that, I didn't come up with anything else. I thought everything looked pretty good. There is just a lot there. We are not approving it tonight anyways.

Mayor Mary: There won't be any motion tonight.

Linda: Right.

Mayor Mary: It will be on the agenda next month in Resolution form.

Allissa: So, what I can do is have Ed add these, email you all, make sure it's okay, and then next month we can approve it with the Resolution that still needs to be done up.

Linda: Right and that way if there are any questions, we can still have that time.

Allissa: Then we are going to burn all the old policies.

Linda: We want to get it right. We definitely want to get this right. So, we don't have to do this again because this is not fun. That's it for me. I'm good.

B. Council discussion and determination on the Town's hiring process and following and/or changing procedure.

Mayor: But is that just umm.

Bill: That's the same thing.

Pat: That's the same thing.

Mayor Mary: I think we have already covered that.

C. Council discussion and determination on employee pay scale.

Roy motioned to discuss with Linda seconding.

Allissa: In your packets I have attached several different things. I have made a note. One of them is the pay scale I have found on the computer. Then, I did one up including the step increase which is fifty cents which is guaranteed every year for full time employees. I also include the COLA (cost of living) so we have no way of knowing exactly what COLA will be every year. But Google search says on average its anywhere from 1.3% – 1.4%. That is what I added on the scale that you see. So, the first 5 years I did 1.3 and then year six through ten I did 1.4. I feel that is a better example of keeping up with inflation versus just the fifty-cent raise. Also, determining where to start on the pay scale.

Pat: Right.

Linda: So, looking at that.

Pat: The COLA is usually determined by the federal government.

Allissa: Correct.

Pat: They stipulate what the COLA is.

Allissa: Correct.

Pat: So, it might be 2.0.

Allissa: Right, you never know they said on average its 1.3 to 1.4.

Pat: Years ago, it use to be a bit higher. That might need to be specified. It's not just us picking out COLA. It's what the Feds say the COLA is.

Allissa: That is also something you as a council vote on if employees get it or not.

Pat: That is stuff that a bunch of union contracts factor in the COLA.

Roy: So, when you run this, I can't remember I didn't look at this very closely; and I apologize for that. When we start hiring, we don't have people in Kory's department people in your department with start dates that are one gets more because they are over there or over here or is that how we are going to do that? Is everybody equal; everybody's not equal?

Allissa: I personally would like to see it as everyone is equal when they are starting out.

Pat: I didn't see anything or read anything that said based on the experience they have coming in. If they have some pretty relative experience, could they start at a higher step.

Mayor Mary: That doesn't factor in.

Allissa: Kory, do you want to pipe in on that?

Kory: I haven't seen what you are looking at. I take it each position has a starting pay. You know your experience level if your public works director is going to leave, he is going to start at a higher level than your laborer.

Allissa: What I put together was us, not a generic. Right now, it has what you're making and what I'm making. Since we have three new employees, I started them all at \$16.21 being new. This isn't anything binding. I was just trying to get some ideas out there.

Kory: So, whatever you come up with you have to put the fifty-cent increase and the COLA. Whatever you give your employees now has to go on that start pay scale; that is where this always falls behind. You know if you give your employees now fifty cents with no COLA that's what you do on the pay scale chart.

Pat: But would you consider somebody more valuable and possibly worthy of a step or grade increase who has years of experience in public works and in accounting.

Kory: So, this step increase shouldn't go on every pay scale; COLA should. The step increase is where we are getting paid for longevity. I know what I'm doing you know what you're doing. That's the fifty-cent increase. Should a new guy come in and make exactly that off our pay scale? Probably not.

Pat: But, if someone comes in that has a degree in accounting, you leave and somebody comes in with a degree in accounting they shouldn't necessarily start at a grade one level.

Bill: For instance, public works the head of the public works which you are if you were to ever leave would the next one start at the lowest level based on some experience. Maybe the head of the department there has to be some kind of consideration. I don't know.

Allissa: Hence the one that I found on my computer. If you look at each of those numbers.

Pat: Yeah.

Linda: Yeah.

Kory: I think it would be tough if an employee left, you replaced him at the same pay scale that employee was making after ten years of being here. It shouldn't work that way.

Bill: No.

Pat: No. But I think hiring and tying the pay to some extent at least based on their experience. Like that somebody with an accounting degree coming in to be Clerk/Treasurer.

Allissa: Right now, with the guys they can choose to take their water or sewer test.

Linda: And raise their income. Right.

Allissa: And go up a dollar.

Linda: Yeah.

Pat: So as long as those things are taken into consideration. That it's not so rigid. It's like a peg in a hole, and that's where you go because you are new. I think that would be part of the hiring process.

Bill: Yeah. Most definitely.

Pat: In the discussion with the council on the new hire.

Linda: And by doing that as a group and deciding that would help too. But somehow, we have been talking about getting this uniform. So, one council group starts people out one thing and then the next council comes in and does something different. Then everything is jumbled because they are not taking into effect the COLA and not paying COLA one year. It's gotten to be a mess. We need some kind of uniform system here. I think that what's you're trying to get the point across.

Allissa: Yeah. Yep, that's what I'm trying to do.

Kory: So, we definitely have to bring our higher pay scale up, but I think it should be with COLA and not the step up now that I am sitting here thinking about it. It should be COLA as it goes up. Right? If not, you are going to sink the town.

Lori: Yep.

Kory: I mean seriously. Sorry.

Allissa: Shut up Lori. Laughter.

Kory: But we are. You got to be fair to the town too. You can't be replacing employees for the same price your employee with the best of interest has left.

Pat: Right.

Bill: Yeah.

Linda: No, you can't. We can't afford to.

Allissa: Oh yeah.

Kory: And by doing the step up and the COLA per position that's exactly what we are doing.

Allissa: From what I understood it was the fifty cent was guaranteed, but the COLA is what council voted on if their employees got or not.

Kory: True. But the fifty cent up step is what you want to reward your employees with for learning and progressing in their job. If we get COLA, then it should go on the pay scale increase. If not, it shouldn't go on the pay scale increase. Then, it should keep everybody equal except for the step up. Is the way I see it.

Allissa: Okay.

Mayor Mary: So, do we want to vote on this.

Allissa: So yeah. One more thing Kory. On the other sheet I attached what it would cost to bring up the laborer position up to matching office staff at \$16.21. It's an \$827 increase for this year's budget.

Linda: That brings him up to what the girls are making.

Kory: Yeah. I just think right now just leave it. He has options to increase his pay.

Allissa: Okay.

Kory: I think from here out we should equalize it, but I don't know if we have to retro pay him from the time he started back.

Allissa: Right. Okay.

Kory: That is up to you guys. I don't see a need. What's there is there. I would say moving forward let's get them equal. And he has options to move up. I don't see it being a necessity to do that myself.

Roy: I would like to see this tabled for another month. We got a lot of questions here that we need to get clarified.

Pat: Yeah, clarified that would help.

Roy motioned to table with Linda seconding.

MOTION TABLED.

XI. New Business:

A. Council discussion and determination on retro stipend pay for current employees that have met the 30 hour per week requirement.

Pat motioned to discuss with Bill seconding.

Allissa: So hence the reason why we are updating our Personnel Manual. There were a lot of contradicting things in the old one. It said that employees were on a six-month probationary period. Yes. But then in the health clause it says that employees that meet the 30 hour a week minimum are entitled to health benefits immediately. In the past there have been employees that had to wait that six-month period before they received the stipend. But in the health clause it says immediately. I have some employees here that would like to be compensated for having to wait that six-month period. I attached all those in there. I've attached the payroll register so you could see what they were paid and when.

Linda: By the insurance so the audience understands that is the stipend that we are paying to those employees every month. In other words that \$800 that they are getting.

Pat: \$400.

Allissa: The \$800.

Roy: The \$800 is for a full-time, right?

Linda: Right.

Allissa: At 30 hours or more a week, employees are eligible for a stipend which is \$800. Two \$400 out of their paychecks to go towards health insurance if they so choose, or they can participate in our health insurance plan which is done through MMIA.

Linda: That stipend is what that is. That insurance.

Allissa: Correct.

Linda: If they don't use for insurance, it doesn't matter.

Allissa: Correct.

Linda: When some of them were hired, we didn't do that right away.

Allissa: Correct because I was under the impression you had to wait the six months.

Pat: In the employment policy manual it says the Town pays \$400 a month not a pay. \$400 a month towards base insurance plan.

Allissa: It use to be \$200 a paycheck. Then the Resolution I put in your packet or the minutes they increased it from \$200 a paycheck to \$400 a paycheck.

Pat: That is a lot of money.

Allissa: In the insurance world, it is not.

Pat: I know but still that's a lot of money.

Allissa: Yeah. In the insurance world it's really not.

Pat: When did the Resolution go through?

Allissa: I attached the minutes in it. 2017 I believe.

Linda: Was that 2017 did you say?

Pat: That it went up to \$400 a pay.

Allissa: Two pay periods so \$800 a month.

Bill: So, \$800 a month. Yeah.

Mayor Mary: Most months there is only two pay periods. There are certain months where it falls that there is three pay periods. So, on the third they don't get anything.

Allissa: So, example if it's okay. Kory gets health insurance so he doesn't get that stipend. It comes out of his paycheck to have him covered for health insurance. Me, I use my husband's insurance, so I take the stipend. It just depends.

Bill: So, we have a mix on this.

Mayor Mary: Yes. It's a choice that each employee makes.

Allissa: It's also stated in the new manual that says that there is an open enrollment period. Example, the new employees they've opted just to get the stipend, but let's say they change their mind they can get health insurance May 15th through June 15th during that open enrollment.

Bill: At some other point.

Roy: What's the cost on this Allissa to fix it?

Allissa: Linda you did the math for me.

Linda: Yeah. It's a total of \$7,400 when I added all this up.

Allissa: So that \$7,400 back at budget time we set aside \$40,000 for sidewalks to match for the TA grant. We did not get that TA grant so we are proposing that we take that \$7,400 out of that \$40,000 that was set aside for sidewalks.

Roy: Do we have to amend our budget then?

Allissa: No because it's coming out of the general, and we have this council discussion to back that up.

Lori: When was the last time that you guys researched insurance companies so you get the best policies for the town employees? Do you do that annually or every couple years?

Allissa: So MMIA is who we insure everything with. They are the ones that do the dirty work for that. They find the best.

Lori: So, if they change?

Mayor Mary: Yes.

Lori: So, you get the best policy.

Allissa: Yeah. Insurance it's not fair what's good for you might not be good for me. So, it really just depends on the individual.

Lori: Right. That's what I'm asking. If you researched that.

Kory: So, they do offer several different, MMIA does. I will throw mine out there. It's just me not my family. I took their highest possible plan and its \$712 a month.

Linda: That's what I wanted to hear.

Kory: For one person for me.

Allissa: For one person.

Kory: If and I'm probably going to do it in May, I'll add my family. It will go up to \$1700 a month.

Linda: Then you got to foot the bill on the rest of it.

Kory: Yeah, on the rest of that.

Pat: So, if their highest plan for one person is seven hundred something but we are paying them eight hundred not to take the insurance.

Kory: So, I assure you I use the rest of mine on Aflac. I end up paying \$7 a month out of my check now for the insurance I get. The lowest plan they offer through MMIA I think was \$520 I want to say.

Allissa: Yeah. Something like that.

Lori: For a \$10,000 deductible.

Kory: A lot higher. So, the one I have is great. You're not going to find better insurance.

Lori: It's probably a \$2,500 deductible.

Kory: Yeah. So, they do give you options too.

Lori: To choose which plan A, B, C, or D.

Kory: Yep. I don't know if that helped.

Allissa: Yeah, thank you Kory.

Linda: That did help. Thank you.

Mayor Mary: Are there any more discussion or any more questions?

Pat: This \$800 just seems high.

Roy: It's not, trust me.

Mayor Mary: It's not.

Pat: No, I know how much insurance costs believe me. But if we are paying more for them not to take the insurance then it would cost us to put them in the highest-level insurance plan, that just doesn't seem to square with me.

Kory: Okay. Let me jump in on this again really quick.

Allissa: Thanks, Kory.

Kory: Before I took the town's insurance, my family was insured. We were able to buy private insurance for right around the \$800 mark for my whole family. You kind of get what you pay for. That is why we've switched things around, but that option of \$800 it's kind of how it was pushed last time when we went from \$400 to \$800 was because I was paying \$1200 a month for insurance for my family. And other people working here the same. We were paying a lot more than we were getting. That is where they settled on the \$800. It was kind of an average to help pay for the family's insurance.

Roy: I think if you are single that is where you probably get a little benefit out of the \$800. If you have a family, you don't.

Kory: With the \$800 I get from the town now I will be pulling \$900 out of my paycheck so I will be losing \$450 every two weeks.

Mayor Mary: That's a chunk.

Pat: That is a chunk.

Bill: You're sitting at seven something already.

Kory: \$712, I think.

Bill: So, it's really close to the \$800.

Kory: And like I said, I filled mine out with Aflac to finish it. I just wanted to throw that in there to. With a family by the time, you give me the \$800 plus the \$900 that I have to come up with. We are skimping pretty good.

Lori: That's 2021 rates. Who knows with this pandemic what is going to happen each year?

Kory: Yeah, and it may go up.

Mayor Mary: I can ensure you my employees are not getting rich off this stipend. The only one getting rich are the insurance companies.

Linda: Absolutely for sure.

Mayor Mary: You can take that to the bank.

Kory: So, Leonard what does the county pay for an employee's insurance?

Leonard: The minimal like \$1200 a month.

Allissa: We have talked to other towns and that's more of the going rate, about \$1,200. And just to give you an idea our family is insured under the same program that MMIA goes through Allegiance. For our family, I have three kids and my husband, and we are fairly healthy human beings and it's about \$3400 a month. I am one of those that we are not going to the doctor unless we absolutely have to. It's insane how much we pay for insurance.

Kory: So, Pat I always look at our benefits okay my employees. Either one of my employees can go to the state right now and get hired. We have to compete with the state and the county. I mean it's just it is what it is. I mean if not, who are we going to have working? He just said that the county gives \$1200, and I know the state is more than that. So, the state will pay half of your family policy just to give you a heads up on it.

Mayor Mary: Thanks Kory.

Lori: If you don't pay it in the wage or the benefits, they are not going to stay here.

Linda: If you take that \$800, that's \$5 an hour if you figure forty hours a week. They need insurance. I know I've been without insurance before when we were self-employed. It was really tough. We have to

give insurance to our employees a lot of them have families. I just feel we are actually getting off pretty good at \$800 a month.

Roy motioned to approve with Linda seconding.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

XII. BILL/ CLAIM APPROVAL LIST TO BE SIGNED BY ALL COUNCIL MEMBERS

Roy made a motion to approve the bill claim approval list with Bill seconding.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

XIII. Adjourn:

Roy made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:15 with Pat seconding.

THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Mayor Mary Hensleigh

Date

Town Clerk Treasurer

Date