Mona City Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, January 23, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT: Randy Christensen- Mayor

Jay Christensen **–** Councilmember

TJ Pace – Councilmember

Amy Stanley – Councilmember

Kevin Squire – Councilmember

Kris Kay - Councilmember

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Alicia Hills – Recorder

Michelle Dalton – Mona City Secretary

Sara Samuelson – Finance Director

Brent Arns – Sewer Director

Jeff Elbert – Sewer Operator

Chad Phillips – Gas and Water Operator

Lori Henrie – Planning and Zoning Chair

OTHERS PRESENT: Jay Mecham, Bill Mills, Tony Openshaw, Kristine Phillips, Myrna Trauntvein – Times News Reporter, Sam Morrison, Travis Pay, Steve Ewing, Richard Robertson, Frank Riding, Mike Davis, Steve Parke, Louis & Janae Hopoate, Kyle Stanley, Janae Kay, Greg Dalton, Blair Kay, Scott Sorenson, Tricia Ridgeway, Richard Fuller, Russell Forsyth, Lois Pay, Melanie Dent, Jaylee Carter, Derek Moore, Cody Royce, Tina Royce, Mike Taylor, Tarah Taylor, Maughn Wright, Tiffinie McCafee, David Clark

Mayor Randy Christensen called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

**Opening prayer/Pledge of Allegiance:**

Councilmember Pace led the pledge of allegiance.

Councilmember Squire led the prayer.

**Public Hearing concerning an amendment to Mona City Fee Schedule to increase sewer rate:**

Councilmember Pace made a motion to open the public hearing. Councilmember Squire seconded the motion to open the public hearing. The vote of the Council to open the public hearing was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen Aye

Councilmember Kay Aye

Councilmember Pace Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley Aye

Regional Planner Shay Morrison explained the justification of a rate increase and that the proposed rate increase will be a $20 monthly increase. He also suggested implementing small increases to avoid future instances of large rate increases.

**Public Comment:**

The public was notified that they would be allowed 3 minutes for their comments:

Scott Sorensen commented that he has been a Mona resident for over 20 years and what he understood is that due to poor planning the sewer system price will increase. He stated that he was told that as Mona grew the sewer bill would decrease. However, because it was not planned in the sewer bill for parts replacement, the bill will increase. He felt that when the sewer system was put in, the citizens were misled because they were told that their bill would not increase.

Mike Davis commented that he was on a septic tank for a while, but $20 is a 40% increase. He said that he can afford the increase, but when things go up, they never go down. He asked where it all ends?

Richard “Boo” Robertson stated that a construction implementation plan should have been part of the bid and implemented from day one. Everyone here already paid to hook up to the sewer, and he hand-dug his connection to the sewer. He said that everyone who already lived here before the sewer plant was installed is paying for the new developments and the new buildings, and that isn’t fair. He said “we already had our infrastructure and our sewer but we were forced to connect.”

Bill Mills stated that before the sewer plant was put in the state came down and tested the water. He said that when you dug up a shovel full of water you smelled sewage because the septic tanks were overtaking the water system. So the State told us that it had to be put in and we didn’t have a choice. Mills stated that nowhere in the contract did it say that the prices would go down unless they refinanced. The cost of the sewer was 21 million and 7 million is what Mona was contracted to pay because of a grant. He said that originally the State suggested $96 to start, but they negotiated and it went down to $35.

He stated that what is being said here tonight needs to be discussed before making a decision.

Tiffinie McCafee asked whether the original loan was still being paid on. Mayor Christensen stated that it would be paid on for 20 more years. She suggested increasing the City’s sewer impact fee. She also suggested increasing the sales tax at the gas station. She also requested that something be in writing stating what the increases will be and when they will occur before they happen.

Jay Mecham commented that we have held this off as a city as long as possible because none of us wants a price increase. He stated that yes we should have been planning ahead and put forth a fee schedule, but we have kind of put our head in the sand. But the guys at the sewer plant have told us that things are wearing out. No, we don’t use it at full capacity, but the parts are still constantly moving and wear out. If we had 1,000 more people living in town, we probably wouldn’t have this problem, but do we want 1,000 more people living in town? So now we have to live with this and now we have to decide what to do with it. If we don’t do something, we have to take money out of other funds from our town, and we can’t keep doing that. The auditor keeps telling us that we can’t keep doing that. And if we don’t raise rates, we will be a bankrupt town. I don’t want my rates to go up either, but we have to keep the plant going. If not, our next option is that the state will come in and take it over, and they will immediately raise the rate to over $100 per month. It is a 12-year-old plant that has membranes and pumps going out, and the workers are doing their best to piece it together. The membranes are $350,000 for two of them, which have been replaced this year, and two more need to be replaced next year. So we are way over budget. So this isn’t pleasant for anyone, but to keep our town flowing we have to do something to make up for those costs.

Tricia Ridgeway asked how long we have been in this deficit, to which Mayor Christensen stated “From the beginning”. She asked if there was any assurance that our rates would go up in another area. She stated that the average city goes up from 2 to 2.5% per year so this was a large jump and she didn’t want to find ourselves in this situation again in the future. She thanked the Council for all they do for the citizens.

Brent Arns stated that Nephi has lagoons and the State no longer allows them to be built. Several surrounding cities are also updating their plants and if you drive by Payson, you can smell their plant because it is old and antiquated. Newer plants are now like ours. Arns stated that the life of the plant is about 20 years (ish) and things need to be updated along the way. He said that for the first 7 or 8 years they did not spend a dime on the plant. The most expensive part of the plant is the membranes, which have a 10 to 15-year lifespan, and ours are 12 years old and never shut off. We have ordered new ones which are coming from Canada and are a year out. He said that it just has to run and we can’t shut it off.

Maughn Wright stated that he was under the impression that Mona had to switch from sewer tanks and go to the plant. He also said that it sounds like we have a system that has a capacity for way more residents than is being used. He stated that he didn’t understand why it doesn’t last longer if it isn’t running to capacity. Mayor Christensen stated that it is like a car and if you leave it idling in the driveway, it still runs at the same capacity. To which Wright asked, “Then why did we buy a train if we only needed a Suburban?”

Councilmember Stanley stated that we don’t know what their motives were, but we are now just trying to go forward doing what is best. She stated that we are a small town with a small tax revenue and have to make decisions based on that fact.

Richard Fuller requested that we don’t get back into this situation again and have this problem again in 10 years. He would like a maintenance plan and financial schedule that is in place to prevent problems like this in the future. He stated that he appreciated the Council and all they do for the City.

Louis Hopoate commented that he has a very small family budget and is on a fixed income and has to watch his budget carefully. He said that he is concerned about the depreciation of the plant. He asked if we could allocate funding from one utility to the other to make up for the sewer. He asked if we could decrease one utility to make up the increase for the other. Maybe decrease the water to make up for the sewer? He then again asked, “have you already looked at all the functions of the city, and if there is one that is making money for the city, that fees be decreased to make up for the increase in the sewer?” He stated that his point is that if there is a function in the City that is doing well, that the Council consider lowering its rates to make up for the increases in the other rates.

Councilmember Stanley thanked the town members for coming and being willing to speak.

Councilmember Christensen made a motion to close the public hearing. Councilmember Stanley seconded the motion to close the public hearing. The vote of the council to close the public hearing was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire: Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

**Approval of Minutes:**

Councilmember Stanley motioned to accept the work session minutes of January 9, 2024, as written. Councilmember Pace seconded the motion to approve the work session minutes of January 9, 2024, as written. The Mona City Council roll call vote to approve the work session minutes of January 9, 2024, was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire: Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

Councilmember Squire motioned to accept the City Council meeting minutes of January 9, 2024, as written. Councilmember Pace seconded the motion to approve the City Council meeting minutes of January 9, 2024, as written. The Mona City Council roll call vote to approve the City Council meeting minutes of January 9, 2024, was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire: Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

**Miscellaneous Items:**

* Richard “Boo” Robertson – water issues

Mr. Robertson stated that he has had water issues for several years and has not received help with his concerns. He would like the problem to be fixed. A jar of water from his house was produced as proof of the condition of his water.

**Action Items:**

* Resolution 2024-1: Update to Mona City Fee Schedule: Sewer Rate Increase:

Tabled for further discussion

* Mona City Ordinance 2024-1: updates to Mona City Code 8-5-1(c) Services:

Councilmember Christensen made the motion to approve Ordinance 2024-1: updates to Mona City Code8-5-1(c) Services with the addition of “disconnections”. Councilmember Squire seconded the motion to approve Ordinance 2024-1: updates to Mona City Code8-5-1(c) Services with the addition of “disconnections”. The rollcall vote of the Council was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

* Mona City Ordinance 2024-3: updates to Mona City Code 7-3-2(J): Disinterments or Exhumations:

Councilmember Stanley made the motion to approve Mona City Ordinance 2024-3: updates to Mona City Code 7-3-2(J): Disinterments or Exhumations. Councilmember Christensen seconded the motion to approve Mona City Ordinance 2024-3: updates to Mona City Code 7-3-2(J): Disinterments or Exhumations. The rollcall vote of the Council was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

* Mona City Ordinance 2024-4: addition to Mona City Code 3-6 – Mobile Food Businesses:

Councilmember Squire made the motion to approve Mona City Ordinance 2024-4: addition to Mona City Code 3-6 – Mobile Food Businesses. Councilmember Kay seconded the motion for the approval of Mona City Ordinance 2024-4: addition to Mona City Code 3-6 – Mobile Food Businesses. The rollcall vote of the Council was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

**Community Advisor Shay Morrison:**

* Regional Growth Summit

Morrison stated that the Regional Growth Summit will be held on Tuesday, May 21st from 4:45 pm to 9 pm. He stated that there will be a dinner and Governor Cox will be speaking at the event as well as break-out sessions. He recommended that the Council and staff attend the meeting. He also stated that other municipalities will be canceling their usual meetings for that night so that they may attend.

* Available Trainings

Morrison stated that he is doing an extensive training for OPMA this year if anyone is interested. He also stated that there will be a training put on by the Ombudsman’s office.

* CIB List:

Morrison said that applications will be available for CIB in March 2024. Mona City will be eligible to apply for June of 2024 and February of 2025. He stated that the available grant funding is still low and they are doing slightly higher interest rates on the loans. He also said that up to 3 projects can be put on the list in March.

* Hazard Mitigation Plan

Morrison stated that this is done every 5 years. Six County applies for the grant through FEMA and receives the money. They then contract it out to have a hazard mitigation plan completed, then each region can adopt it by resolution. If you adopt the plan by resolution, it makes the City eligible to receive disaster relief or other funding through FEMA. It is in the process of being updated and should be complete in the fall of this year.

* Utah Outdoor Recreation Grant

Morrison said that this grant is open from January 16th through March 16th and is available for application right now. It is the biggest recreation grant in Utah and most of the programs open right now are between a 20 and 50 percent match. Morrison told the Council to reach out to him if interested in projects, as you should get moving on it immediately. Councilmember Stanley stated that in the past the city applied and was denied, but Morrison stated there is a lot of funding available and it is worth trying again.

**Secretary Report:**

* Business License
  + Derek Moore – D&D Equipment – 45 South Main

Mr. Moore reported that D&D would be a home-based rental business to rent out trailers, small skid steers, dump trailers, etc. Councilmember Squire stated that he would need to make sure not to park equipment on the easement or the street.

Councilmember Pace made the motion to approve the business license for D&D Equipment at 45 South Main. Councilmember Squire seconded the motion to approve the business license for D&D Equipment at 45 South Main. The roll call vote of the Council was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

* 2024 Public Awareness Program Proposal

Secretary Dalton reported that it is time again to approve the 2024 public awareness proposal, which is the blue and white cards that are sent in the mail in the spring and fall concerning gas. They are required for pipeline safety. Dalton stated that she negotiated the price down to $1850 for the mailings.

Councilmember Christensen made the motion to approve $1850 for the 2024 Public Awareness Program Proposal. Councilmember Pace seconded the motion for the approval of $1850 for the 2024 Public Awareness Program Proposal. The roll call vote of the Council was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

**Planning and Zoning:**

Nothing Reported

**Finance Report:**

Finance Director Samuelson presented the Mona City and Recreation Disbursement Listings for 1/10/2024 to 1/23/2024.

Councilmember Pace made a motion to approve the finances as presented. Councilmember Christensen seconded the motion to approve the finances as presented. The roll call vote of the Council to approve the finances as presented was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

**Gas and Roads and Water Report:**

Gas & Water & Streets Operator Chad Phillips addressed the concerns by Mr. Robertson. He stated that his concerns have been addressed several times and he provided a sample taken from the hydrant on the line of his house. Phillips stated that Mr. Robertson also has a leak on his side of the meter. He also stated that Mr. Robertson has been disconnecting his meter to hide his high rate of water usage. He stated that it is on his side of the meter and he doesn’t know what further they can do for him.

Phillips also stated that the new employees are working out well and are currently working on getting their gas certifications. They will be going to the rural water training in St. George in February and will take their state water qualification test there. He also said that they have been replacing water meters and also filled the sewer trench on 700 South.

**Sewer:**

Brent Arns stated that there is a lot of infiltration with 4 manholes that are submerged and he has contacted the state concerning it. He said that on Sunday the power bumped in town and messed up some of the laptop computers, but those are back up and running. He said that the computers are old and he is checking into upgrading the software. He also said that he appreciated the snow removal at the sewer plant.

Arns stated that the auger project will start on February 2.

**Recorder:**

Recorder Hills presented the Certification of Annexation Petition for Rick Kay.

**Council Business:**

Councilmember Stanley stated that it is 8 weeks until Easter.

Councilmember Pace had nothing to report.

Councilmember Christensen had nothing to report.

Councilmember Squire had nothing to report.

Councilmember Kay had nothing to report.

**Public Comment:**

Janae Kay stated that she would like to see the building impact fee for the sewer raised to compensate for the sewer deficit.

Scott Sorensen stated that he thought that the former mayors did what he thought was right at the time. There might have been some things that were overlooked, but we are a small community and that is one of the prices that you have to pay when you live here. He stated that he appreciated that the Council does its best to minimize the costs.

**Adjournment**

Councilmember Pace made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 pm. Councilmember Christensen seconded the motion. The council vote to adjourn the meeting at 8:49 pm was as follows:

Councilmember Christensen: Aye

Councilmember Kay: Aye

Councilmember Pace: Aye

Councilmember Squire: Aye

Councilmember Stanley: Aye

\_\_

Randy Christensen, Mayor Alicia Hills, Mona City Recorder