

## Meeting Minutes

**Attendees:** Mayor Brady Gragg, Ken Stringer, Grant Bowlin, Dan Ravenscraft, Kathryn Coleman & Trent Clark

Others In Attendance: Officer Tom Moore, Andrew Hanna, Terry Ullum, Anne Morrow, Andy Floyd, Gene Stanghor, Bob Bartlett and Jake Callstrom.

**7:00pm:** Mayor Brady Gragg calls the City Council Meeting to order.

Agenda Addition: Andy Floyd will be added to the Personnel Reports for a Parks & Rec Update.

**Bowlin motions to approve the agenda with the addition. Ayes Carried: 7:01pm**

**Bowlin motions to approve the December Meeting Minutes as written, Coleman seconds.**

**Ayes Carried: 7:03pm**

## Open to Public

- N/A

## ORDER OF BUSINESS

**Ordinance No. 638 to Vacate “alley” in front of 512 N. Main – (documents) 7:04pm:**

**Mayor Gragg** – The zoning committee met and made a recommendation? Can you (Morrow) speak to that?

**Morrow** – Um, sure. They wondered why it came to them after the City Council had already heard the request and could have decided to move forward then. However, they do recommend the city council to move forward if they so choose.

**Mayor Gragg** – Okay, so the zoning committee didn’t see any problem with vacating the alley. We have Ordinance 638 before us here. (reads the Ordinance aloud, describes the Exhibit A Map).

**Clark** – I thought this was already vacated back before the house was built.

**Mayor Gragg** – Not legally.

**Morrow** – The streets and a southern portion of this alley were vacated that surround this property at a different time. However, this portion was not.

**Clark** – Okay, because that was never considered, because they came to the city council one time before they built the house and wanted it vacated. I think we gave approval, but I guess the paperwork was never done.

**Mayor Gragg** – Yeah, we could never find the paperwork, so it must not have ever been sent in.

**Morrow** – I will say this, the new owners stopped in just this afternoon, and they could care less if it is vacated. So, whoever was pushing this and making it an issue is no longer involved. They said they will mow it and it's not a big deal. The new owners don’t have a problem with it as is.

**Mayor Gragg** – So probably the title company.

**Stringer** – I did investigate this. This ordinance says, “to vacate streets and alleyways whenever necessary or expedient,” I don’t see that this is necessary and I don’t see that it is expedient, so I went and asked the folks down at the county appraiser office about all of this, and I learned a lot. There was a lot of information that I did not know. She told me that you will be giving about \$2500 appraised property to them, taking property that belongs to the citizens of your city and giving it to just one citizen. She also stated that vacating this alley will really help them, because once you do away with that alley which is also acting as a divider between those property areas that belong to that house, creating a one block area, once it becomes a one block area, the assessed/appraised values go down. This will cost our town

revenue. I also talked to folks at KS Gas about the utility easement, the right to use that area. If the area is vacated, they can put a fence or sprinkler system in through that area and the city will have to work around those features or pay damages if something should happen while trying to work on the utilities if it is vacated. This ordinance just gives us the right to easement, they can't keep us out, any improvements they might put in because we've vacated would make it where Andrew would have to get it located and then hand dig around the improvements. That is what I found out because I wanted to know the full scope of how this would affect our city.

**Mayor Gragg** – So I have family that had to deal with the city of Andover, being an easement that went through their backyard. The city came in and cut their fence post off at the ground because it wasn't a removeable fence area, they had access to it and didn't even have to ask. With how we have this alley if something like that were to happen as is, we could do something like that but if we vacate it, you're saying we wouldn't have that right any longer, we will have to get things located and pay for any damages.

**Stringer** – With a vacate we would have the ability and right to get in that area anytime needed but if they did make improvements through that area but would be held liable for any damages that may happen if we needed to try to work in that area and damaged something.

**Ravenscraft** – If they wanted to put a fence in there, they must come to the city for approval on where it's going to be, couldn't the zoning and planning say something.

**Stringer** – But we are abandoning that.

**Morrow** – The Planning & Zoning doesn't give out the building permits, they don't see that, we don't have inspectors. None of this is set up correctly. To be honest, it comes to my desk, I look it over, I don't have anyone to go out and look over any of that because it's not set up correctly, that isn't what the zoning board does.

**Ravenscraft** – But don't we have the right to say you can't build through there.

**Stringer** – Not with this Ordinance. We are doing away with our right-of-way. We maintain the right to go in and dig, etc.

**Morrow** – With this vacate, they could build a fence around their property, they just can't put a fence post right on our sewer lines.

**Stringer** – and they could put a sprinkler system in, and we would have to pay for damages if any were incurred when we were trying to fix a sewer issue.

**Mayor Gragg** – Now, you've (Morrow) also said the new property owners don't care.

**Bowlin** – I thought it had to do with the Title company needing an appraisal or something like that?

**Morrow** – When I got back from vacation, I questioned the Bells on that, wondering why the survey couldn't be done anyway. And they told me he had already surveyed everything already. So, it's a moot point, now. I think they were being told by the Title company that they needed this done to sell the property, when that wasn't true.

**Mayor Gragg** – So, we can table this and do nothing about it.

**Coleman motions to table the Ordinance to vacate the 20-foot alley along the front of the property of 512 N. Main. Ravenscraft seconds, Ayes carried. 7:14 PM**

## **Financial Report (packet) – Terry Ullum, 7:15pm**

The only major expense we had in December was the new lawn mower. Everything else was pretty routine. (In Packet) The next couple of pages we have the Expenditures by Fund, then Transaction Details, followed by the Visa card that Andrew and crew use, then the Debit card used by the Office, if you need details on anything we do have the receipts to match, you are welcome to come to office anytime and we can pull those for you. Then I've included a comparison from Jan-Dec '23 to Jan-Dec '24, just to get a feel of the comparison for the 2 years. On page 2 of the Profit and Loss Comparison there is Total Income 2023 = \$820,000 a year ago, 2024 = \$865,000 this year. Our income came up a little bit, most of which was tax money. In the Expenses, they were almost identical in the last 2 years, \$909,000, bottom page 4. So, in 2024 our income was up and expenses the same overall. The biggest area of expenses was

our payroll, paying for 2 superintendents when they were overlapping, so that should come back down a bit. One of the things that Anne did this last year on postage was get a permit for utility bills to replace using stamps and that saved us about \$1000 in postage. Our professional fees went from \$50,000 to \$26,000, the Audit stuff helped that, our utility expenses went up about \$24,000. Our costs went up for all the things we pay for as a city. But overall, bottom line if you look at '23, we spent \$89,000 more than we took in, most of that was spending the ARPA funds that we had to spend. This year (2024) we spent \$43,000 more than we took in, and a lot of that was again the ARPA funds. This coming year, in looking at some of these things hopefully leveling out (payroll, keep an eye on spending), I'd like to see a surplus in place of those negative numbers. I think we can do it. I think we can aim for +\$10,000 which is a \$50,000 swing. I think that can be done and with how we are handling our maintenance issues by scheduling those quarterly, unless there is an emergency, I think we can cash flow it really well. Our Tax money this month, for the 1st Quarter of the year was \$174,000 from the County, bringing our cash flow back up. Overall, I think we are doing well and heading in the right direction.

**Stringer** – I'd like to not have to go up on the Mil Levy, we are being taxed enough as it is.

**Coleman motions to accept the January Financial Report, second by Bowlin. Ayes Carried: 7:18pm**

## **PERSONNEL REPORTS**

### **Parks & Rec Report – Andy Floyd, 7:19pm**

- Knee deep in Basketball, 4 weekends left, around 105 registrations this year. 2nd or 3rd top year for registrations. We have a healthy program, and it runs pretty smoothly.
- Least amount of spending on equipment by the Park Board, most of our previous purchases seem to be holding up and lasting longer.
- It's going really well being able to partner with the school district, especially with the snow removal, keeping everyone safe. We did have to cancel one weekend.
- Financials for basketball, we will be in the negative, with registrations coming to about \$5300 and we are spending about \$6250. Those costs come from the app we use to communicate with parents and the "contract labor", paying officials. We have about 10-14 high school and adults helping us, and we have increased the amount we are paying the officials (\$25 per game), its difficult to get folks to do it. So, we will have to look at increasing the registration fees to come back even. But overall, our financials are looking good.
- Baseball Registration will be out soon, practices will be starting in about 45 days. About the third week of March.
- With the snow and rainfall, I think the work that these guys (city maintenance) did on the outfields will look really good. We are excited about that, Thank you.
- We will have to get in there to do some work alongside the school to get ready for baseball, which is approaching quickly.
- Now we are shifting focus to up our social media game. Hoping for an App that will allow us to post across multiple social media apps at once. This could help in our recruitment campaign to help with our volunteers and get some new people on the Park Board.
- We are open to linking to the city website with our Rec stuff, we are looking at upgrading our TeamSnap app into a possible Whitewater Rec website.

### **Police Report – Tom Moore, 7:24pm**

- Four traffic stops and 1 warrant arrest.
- When baseball starts we will get the radar set up at times to get tickets to those kids speeding so they have to think twice when they are leaving their practices/games.
- With all the snow and ice, we didn't have a lot of people out and when they were they weren't going fast.

**Mayor Gragg** - did somebody knock the pole down?

**Hanna** – No that was the weather. Crushed the speed sign.

**Ravenscraft** – They got a new pole up now. There is probably several of those poles that need to be replaced.

## **Maintenance Report – Andrew Hanna, 7:26pm**

- No water leaks this month.
- Ice & Snowstorm, attempting to clear the roads and sidewalks to make it safer for travel for the residents. Ice is hard to remove. Next year we hope to have better equipment for this kind of winter weather. I would like to propose that we add a plow for the F-250 to be entered into the 2026 budget.
- We have been helping residents with cold weather needs and removing snow at driveway entrances to allow cars to get in and out. Thanks to Dan Ravenscraft in helping the maintenance team in snow removal around town.
- We have been performing maintenance on equipment during the cold mornings/days. Cleaning and organizing the shop space to further increase the space available to store equipment without damage. Allowing them to be stored and keep a safe working environment for employees.
- Daryn from KWRA was here helping with the annual water report for KDHE. Now turned in.
- Weather has damaged a pole on S. Elm. and crushed the speed trap sign. The solar panel might be fine, but the rest of it snapped in two, it isn't salvageable. We checked with the manufacturer and its not covered.

**Ravenscraft** – looked like you used the Kubota to clear off the streets. One thing that I noticed, the county usually grabs Main St and Central and I think we did a lot of work early on those streets. I think they would have eventually come and done a lot of that work.

**Hanna** – Yes, they came through about 12:30, 1:00 that afternoon.

**Bartlett** – don't they just do the center 24 of those roads?

**Hanna** – Yes, they just do the driving lanes.

**Ravenscraft** – right, I just didn't know how much of that we did with that little tractor. When we could have let the county done a little more and the city concentrated on other stuff.

**Mayor Gragg** – So they don't clear curb to curb.

**Hanna** – No they just do a strip. Drive down one way and then turn back and drive to the other side, and that is it. By the time they came through, if I had already cleared the edge, they would have just pushed all of that back over to the edge and I would have to do it again. I have to do everything twice with the blade we have for the Kubota. With a truck plow I can drive once down and back and get most of the streets mostly cleared before most traffic gets on them.

**Morrow** – One of the things we are developing is a plan of priority routes. What needs to be cleared 1st, 2nd, etc. I asked for that to be put together last year and was laughed at. This year, I showed it to Andrew and he is developing it and we are going to get that right. Then we have a game plan and everyone will know what it is, this is the order of events. Emergency routes cleaned first and so on as far as street maintenance and snow plow.

**Hanna** – Here is a list left for me. (small memo pad paper)

**Coleman** – Well we definitely look better than Potwin. They are still bad.

**Ravenscraft** – Have you priced the blade?

**Hanna** - \$7000 - \$14000, One that is local dealer is around \$7000 - \$8500. plow, hardware and controls. There are lot of used plows only for sale but not with the mounting hardware and controls.

-- discussion on the quote from the Park City dealer and snow and ice melting around town.

## **Clerk's Report – Anne Morrow, 7:38pm**

- The current maintenance laptop takes about 20min to fire up. In looking to get them a new laptop, through talking with Terry we decided it would be best to purchase a Desktop for the Treasurer desk and recycle the treasurer laptop to Maintenance. The new desktop (\$660) is up and running real good. Once I get the “new” laptop set up for maintenance, I can see what I can salvage from the old maintenance laptop and possibly use it for cameras, etc.
- All ordinances, resolutions and annexation ordinances have been scanned, organized and sent to Ranson City Code. They have also been organized on my computer as well as reorganized in the office in binders.
- Requests to change the closing time for the city office to 4:00pm. Now that we have the online billpay set up it cuts back on the need to stay open later. In the last week and half, I’ve had a handful of individuals come in; one complaining about snow and ice, another was a solicitor who came at 5pm, another was the Sexton coming in trying to get a jump on a burial before I had even been called about it. Most things that could have been dealt with at any time. I would still work my 8hr day, I’m just requesting to get off at 4pm instead of 5pm.

**Ravenscraft** – Have you been taking an hour lunch and closing the office?

**Morrow** – Correct, I have been taking an hour lunch and closing the office for that time.

**Bowlin** – We just went to 4:30 at the locker and I was worried we were going to miss somebody, and its turned out to be the best thing. I can make games, etc.

**Stringer** – Well it gives you a life.

**Mayor Gragg** – If somebody was to say, I can’t make it until 4:30...

**Morrow** – I could adjust if I needed at times but this way the set hours won't require as much shuffling.

**Mayor Gragg** – Anyone see any problems with that?

**Coleman** – What are your thoughts on 4:30 instead of 4:00?

**Morrow** – It cuts into some of the times for other things, I mean do you have a reason for 4:30?

**Coleman** – I get off at 4:00. I can’t pick up my packet if its then 😊

**Morrow** – We can add you to the packet deliveries route. 😊

**Mayor Gragg** – It doesn’t seem like it will be a problem.

-- discussion on making sure the new hours get posted

**Mayor Gragg** – Now that the ordinances and everything has been sent to Ranson Citycode, do they have any idea when we can see results?

**Morrow** – Like they told us a while back, it will more than likely be a few months into this year before we see something. So give it a couple of months.

## Mayor’s Report – Brady Gragg, 7:45pm

- Dan Ravenscraft set up a meeting between Dan, me and Dr. Pat Regier. We went out to Countryaid Vet on Saturday, (to Pat) Thank you for making time for us. It was informative.
- Andrew has sent me some estimates on various kennels or buildings. If we decide to put up some kind of shelter. They are pretty pricey.
  - **Bowlin** – Some of the ones I looked at would require extra reinforcements.
- Anne also did some research and gathered information from other cities of like size. They have some suggestions concerning procedure, codes, fees. And if they house animals. The kennel would have to meet State criteria and be inspected/approved/licensed by the Dept. of Agriculture. Dr. Regier informed me that he would be the one to inspect any facility we might have, the paperwork is available online through the States website. I did ask Dr. Regier to come and talk a little about what the city has done in the past as far as working with Dr. Regiers office and possibly a path forward. Creating a partnership back up again.
  - **Dr. Pat Regier** – In the past when you had a dog catcher, if they got a dog they would give us a call to see if we had room, bring it out, we would hold it for 3 business days. In that

time looking to find the owner, check for registration or if it is chipped, if we can't locate an owner in those 3 days, the animal is disposed of accordingly, sometimes we have been able to find homes for them, we are not really a clinic that is set up to find homes for wayward animals but sometimes we are able to rehome. Cats we can rehome; dogs are a little harder. This last one was able to get a new home and is doing good.

- **Mayor Gragg** - And that dog, the last one he is talking about is the one that was dumped near Bells Auto at the Highway. And you boarded that animal for 8 nights, vaccinated and spayed the animal. And that bill for the boarding was paid for by the city.
- **Ravenscraft** - Donations paid for the vaccination and spaying.
- **Bowlin** - In the case that if the owner was found, historically they are responsible for paying the boarding fees and any fines?
- **Dr. Regier** - Historically, we will not release an animal to their owner until all the bills are paid through the city office, etc. Correct.
- **Ravenscraft** - I will say that Jessica put a lot of effort and time into trying to rehome the dog, and to catch the dog. I really think she should be compensated by the city for that. Acting as a dog catcher really. In some form or fashion for her efforts, it takes a lot of time, and she was able to get a few other people involved, renting traps. It really is a good dog.
- **Dr. Regier** - We are willing to work with the city. If it's after hours call and leave a message.
- **Mayor Gragg** - Mrs. Regier mentioned that there were some guidelines published by the city at some point, but they were pulled down because they were so old and weren't really being followed anymore. Do you happen to have those?
- **Regier** - Yes, she found those from 2016. (Delivers the handout and copy of city codes.)
- **Morrow** - I've also been gathering codes and procedures from other cities to help us develop how we want to proceed or update.
- **Stringer** - It would be really good if Jessica would take the animal control position.
- **Ravenscraft** - No, she doesn't want to have anything to do with it.

--- Whatever is developed by the city will be sent to the Regiers. Dr. Regier just reminds the city to be careful how things are adopted from other places or make sure that the wording reflects grandfathering certain things in. Those animals don't live forever.

- Micro-chipping was part of our conversation on Saturday. The city has at least one microchip reader. One of the things I brought up was to possibly adopt as an ordinance (check legality with attorney) that when folks register their pets, it needs to be microchipped. So, in the future when we do have an animal control officer, we can figure out who that animal belongs to and return it quickly. It's \$45 to chip an animal, maybe if they are chipped, the registration fee can be less.
  - **Bowlin** - It's already cheaper if it spay/neutered. So, like that.
  - **Regier** - We run a vaccination day where we waive the office visit fees, we could maybe even do a microchip day, saves \$23 on that office call. We tell people to register it in their name, because that service is free.
- I didn't look into any training for animal control, we will have to table that for the Feb. meeting.
  - **Clark** - Circling back to the kennel or cage, is that something we need to look into somewhere down the road? For times the Vet is full, or we can't get it out to them right away.
  - **Regier** - If you go by Peabody and look south of their police station, you can see what they have set up. It's basically a couple of dog houses and a couple of fenced runs. Simple. It's concreted down so that folks can't just come and take their animals out without some work.
  - **Coleman** - What is the boarding costs? **Regier** - It's around \$20 a day.

--- discussion on requirements for kennels. Including if we were to house cats, it would have to be in a climate-controlled situation. Water source? Security/Cameras? The location could possibly be out at the old water plant, there are some buildings at one point, it might have a slab or two out there. The

Fence/Kennel we have now is out there, if we were to put a doghouse out there would that be acceptable?

**Answer:** Yes

**Ravenscraft** – I want to ask the council if they would consider some type of compensation to Jessica for her part in helping with the dog that was dumped? She has spent a lot of time with the dog, she has done wonders with the cats too. Shes been like an interim person there and I think she needs some sort of compensation for that.

**Bowlin** – She's volunteered, we have asked her to take the paid position. She didn't want the job.

**Ravenscraft** – I think a one time, like \$200 for helping with that dog.

**Morrow** – As a city should we make a donation to her foundation that she created to do all this stuff? Would that be a way to compensate?

**Ravenscraft** – I mean she gets calls from all over about lost dogs and cats, I mean she tried to handle all of that too.

**Morrow** – That's what I mean, she has created this space as that person to call, she takes donations from people to do these things, so as a city do we just donate to that?

**Coleman** – What if we put something in the newsletter thanking her for that service, and suggesting people donate.

**Ravenscraft** – The only thing is, if you draw too much attention to her, they will be dumping cats out there for her to deal with.

**Morrow** – And we have enough cats, we don't need any more. Most of them don't have owners. They may be here in Whitewater but they have no owners. They are not registered. I'm not trying to pick on it, I'm just saying how it is. We don't have community dogs. So my question is, do we just donate to this cause and hope for no more cats.

**Coleman** – I don't know that donating city money to her organization is a good idea.

**Stringer** – I don't either, I don't think that is wise.

**Coleman** – I'm also iffy on giving her a one time compensation. What happens if somebody else says they helped with an animal 3 years ago, held a dog for 3 weeks, nobody paid me for the help. Or if we get another stray dog, and saw we gave her money for it so they decide to try and help and expect to get paid. I mean if we are hiring somebody that is different.

**Ravenscraft** – She's not expecting anything, she doesn't expect anything from the council anyway, she doesn't feel supported anyway. This council doesn't care about that, is what she thinks.

## **New/Unfinished Business**

### **Hydrant Installation Bids, 7:50pm – Andrew Hanna**

I tried to reach out to a few places and have yet to hear back from anybody. I've requested from Graber and haven't heard back, which is unusual. I don't know if it's maybe through the holidays so I will follow back up with them.

**Ravenscraft** - I looked back to when we did it before and it looked like around \$1700. That was years ago.

**Mayor Gragg** – So maybe around \$2000 by this point per installation.

### **Website Bids, 7:53pm – Anne Morrow**

A heads-up on how things have not been progressing over the last few years concerning our website development. When I first came in, I redesigned the homepage with minimal functionality almost as a functioning placeholder. I do not have the time and training (self-taught) to build and develop the appropriate layers needed to function in a good way. I have reached out to the guy (Tommy) that originally was to help with everything multiple times over the years. Finally, I reached out to the company that sends us the bills for hosting our site. They informed me that he no longer works for their company and has just been trying to help a little bit with some of these sites. As a company they do not do website development or building. So, I have requested any recommendations they may have for us.

**Coleman** – What do we pay them?

**Morrow** – Around \$35 a month just to host. So, I have been researching on my own and reached out to a couple of companies that specialize in website development for municipalities. They do a lot, but they also do it well. I thought I would provide these two bids (handouts from Civic Plus & MunicipalOne) from these companies for you to look over and we can talk about it more next month. I can also keep looking around as well. Both of these companies are being used by other cities in our area. This is developing a full website that functions as well as communicates.

---- look over bids, discussion on possible locals who could help if they have the time. ----

**Mayor Gragg** – Forgot to mention another letter from Loyd Group, shares the letter with the council and signs the acknowledgement letter.

Glad to have you back with us this month, Mr. Clark.

### **Agenda Items for Feb. 24, 2025**

- Animal Control - Training
- Bids for Hydrant Install
- Website

***Clark motions to bring the January Council Meeting to an end, Second by Bowlin. Ayes carried:  
8:16pm***

Meeting Adjourned – 8:16pm