

Village board approves salary increases, discusses ATV/UTV ordinance

Written by Wauneta Breeze
Wednesday, 20 November 2013 18:32 -

By Sheri Hink-Wagner

The Wauneta Breeze

The Wauneta village board met for their regular meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 12. Discussion items included village employee annual salary review, a possible ATV/UTV village ordinance, the Cheyenne Street water project and owner occupied housing grant administration.

Employee wage increases

Board members had a long discussion regarding the village employees' annual wage increases. Village superintendent Bill Bischoff told board members he had done extensive research into the starting wages of municipal employees with similar requirements as the two employed by the water and sewer department in Wauneta.

He reported to board members that his research showed that Wauneta's employees were paid considerably less than other area municipalities started their employees.

After discussion, board members voted to increase employee wages to make them more in line with what other municipalities are paying, though keeping them on the low end of the scale.

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Board members stated they felt increases to keep up with area municipalities was important to help retain village employees.

Salaries and wages for all village employees for the coming year include:

Village Superintendent Bill Bischoff, \$51,072 (\$1,001 increase).

Village Clerk Evelyn Skelton, \$17.45/hour (50 cent/hour increase).

Utilities Department worker Ryan McCrumb, \$13/hour (\$1/hour increase).

Utilities Department worker Shane Lawless, \$13/hour (\$2.15/hour increase).

Librarian Ruth Hohl, \$10.25/hour (25 cent increase).

Billing Clerk Sara Bardsley, \$10.35/hour (50 cents/hour increase).

Wage increases for the village employees will be effective retroactively to the beginning of the village's year on October 1, 2013.

ATV/UTV ordinance

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Two Wauneta residents, Kenny Smith and Troy Skelton, attended the November meeting to offer comments on the proposed ATV/UTV ordinance the village has been considering.

The ordinance was thoroughly discussed, but not finalized at the November meeting.

Village Clerk Evelyn Skelton distributed a draft copy of an ATV/UTV ordinance to all in attendance at the meeting.

Some of the changes made to the draft ordinance included removal of the requirement to wear helmets on UTVs within the ordinance. Also, the age required to operate ATV/UTVs within the city limits was discussed. Village board members felt the age of 18 for operators was a better fit than the age of 19 previously indicated on the draft ordinance.

Smith and Skelton also asked board members to reconsider the hours of operation listed in the draft ordinance. The current draft indicated ATVs and UTVs would only be able to operate in Wauneta between sunrise and sunset.

Smith and Skelton asked board members to reconsider this restriction if the vehicle in question had adequate headlights and tail lights allowing for safe operation after dark.

Village board members did not take any action on the potential ordinance, which will be discussed further at future village board meetings.

Cheyenne Street water main project

David Blau with Miller and Associates was in attendance at the meeting to assist board

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members with review of contractor bids for the work needed on the water main project on Cheyenne Street.

Blau dispersed a summary of all bids received. After discussion of the bids, Blau recommended Interstate Irrigation for the project, if any bids were to be accepted. The bid of \$56,130 from Interstate Irrigation was the lowest of all the bids, but came in higher than Miller and Associates had expected. The company's estimate for the project was \$46,480.

Board members discussed the project and decided to move forward.

Chairman Lloyd Sinner commented that this project will complete the other water structure projects which have been ongoing. Village Superintendent Bill Bischoff said, "Our structure in town is sound. Our emphasis now is the arsenic in the water."

Board members accepted the bid from Interstate Irrigation and authorized Sinner to execute the agreement.

Owner occupied housing grant

Amy Thelander with Southwest Nebraska Community Betterment Corporation (SWNCBC) attended the November meeting to guide village board members through requirements for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for the Owner Occupied Rehabilitation Program.

Tasks included choosing a lead based paint assessor from the bids received. The board rated the three bids received for lead based paint assessor and chose CDS.

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The CDBG grant allows for \$9,000, \$1,500 for each of the six houses planned to be served with the grant funds, for lead based paint assessment.

Other action items included documentation required for the grant.

Thelander also explained to the board the grant is intended to serve a total of six houses in Wauneta. She also explained if any of the grantees receiving funding fail to meet the requirements of the grant the money will be put back into the village's account to be used to help another household according to the guidelines of the grant.

Comprehensive plan

Board members discussed the upcoming update to the village's comprehensive plan at the November meeting. They decided to focus on getting a good idea of what exactly is wanted from the update, and not moving forward with a grant application for help funding the update until the needs can be determined.

Board members instructed village clerk Evelyn Skelton to look into the costs of hiring a contractor to facilitate a special meeting between the village board and zoning commission to begin the process of determining what is needed from the comprehensive plan update.

Nursing home report

Board members reviewed financials from Sunrise Heights of Wauneta for the month of

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September 2013.

Nursing home committee member Page Johnston reported that the nursing home is “up \$7,000 for the first three months” of the year. He indicated the financials show a loss from the book depreciation, but that in operations the facility is in the black.

Discussion included a report of a new bookkeeper hired at Sunrise Heights. Julie Hoskovec was one of three applicants and was hired for the position.

Board members also provided an update regarding the health insurance issue that was previously discussed at the Oct. 25 special meeting of the village board.

The special meeting was convened to discuss renewal of the nursing home’s health insurance package offered to employees. Village board members were not able to vote on the acceptance of a renewal of the nursing home’s existing policy at the special meeting because they did not have three board members to vote after Rick Einspahr abstained due to the fact that he is the nursing home’s insurance agent.

After the special meeting, board members determined that another special meeting to vote on the renewal was not necessary, stating that Lisa Kisinger, nursing home administrator, had the authority to make that decision.

Sheriff’s report

Deputy Mike Dukes attended the November village board meeting. As part of his report he indicated the Sheriff’s office is in the process of distributing emergency contact sheets to all Wauneta businesses.

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The contact sheets ask for the business name, owner and contact information for key holders.

He told the board the information will be used by the Sheriff's office if ever a business' door is found unlocked as part of their regular service to Wauneta businesses.

Dukes also told the board of two pursuits that took place over the past month. One was a foot chase where a deputy saw a person who had a warrant out for his arrest on main street. The officer chased the man down and arrested him.

The other was a vehicle pursuit that started in Wauneta and went onto county roads. The sheriff's office officials discontinued the chase when it became too dangerous.

Community needs survey

Board members were provided a summary of findings from the Community needs survey that was conducted earlier this fall.

The findings included a list of comments provided on the survey, which board members read and discussed.

Chairman Sinner commented, "I'm glad we got that sheet, that was very interesting." Board member Tony Cribelli added that the findings were, "Very positive overall."

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Superintendent's report

Bischoff told board members he had fielded a "pretty aggressive" complaint regarding a pickup and trailer parked on a street in Wauneta.

The resident had told Bischoff she had almost hit the trailer and she wanted to know what the village could do about it, she had already called the Sheriff's department over the issue.

Bischoff explained to the board that he didn't believe the village's ordinances restricted parking a pickup and trailer on a street, unless it was a snow route.

He stated that he would work with officials with the Sheriff's department to see if the issue is a traffic issue.

Bischoff also reported to the board that he will soon begin pricing new tires for the village's loader before the snow.

Other business

Village board members approved a request from the Wauneta Chamber to split the cost of candy for Santa Saturday on Dec. 14.

In her report, Skelton informed board members the village's auditors would be at the village office on Friday, Nov. 22.

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