

OPENING OF COUNCIL MEETING

Mayor Yaeger opened the remote and in person council meeting at 7:00pm. The council members present were Eric Ottmar, Dennis Chamberlain, Jen Verhey, Jessica Quinn, Brooke Scheel, Ky Beck-Gmeiner, and Mike Schrag. Staff members in attendance were Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt, Public Works Director Dave Breazeale, City Attorney John Kragt, Chief of Police Mike Suniga, and Community Development Director Tom Reese. City Fire Chief Joel Bell and Deputy Clerk Treasurer II Michelle Asmussen were excused. Also present were Linda Schrag, Brian Bothun, Rick from the Cheney Free Press, and Rod Larse.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Yaeger asked if there were any corrections or additions to the consent agenda. Council Member Mike Schrag made a motion to accept the consent agenda as presented for January 6, 2026, with payables in the amount of \$363,629.34 and Payroll in the amount of \$88,103.53. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

OATH OF OFFICE

- A. Council Ward 3-Ky Beck-Gmeiner-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt swore Beck-Gmeiner in on January 5th.

PUBLIC REQUESTS AND COMMENTS-Mayor Yaeger asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to comment. With no comments, he moved on.

ACTION AGENDA

- A. Establishing Fund 104 Transportation Benefit District-Council Member Jessica Quinn motioned to approve Ordinance No. 2206 establishing fund no. 104 Transportation Benefit District. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

DISCUSSION AGENDA

- A. **Tree Board Report**-Council Member and Tree Board Chair Mike Schrag presented the Tree Board's activities and achievements, highlighting their dedication and impact on the community. The city has had the Tree City USA classification for 16 years. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain and Tree Board member Dennis Chamberlain reported in 2025 there were 717.75 hours of volunteer time, which equates to \$24,970 in-kind volunteer contributions. In 2025, the board and volunteers planted 20 trees along 1st Avenue and established a tree nursery with 25 tree starts from DNR that will go along the walking path behind the fairgrounds. DNR representative Mike Sandborn and retired professional gardener and board member Jim Thomas showed 13 youth from the High School horticultural class proper pruning. The Tree Board is also coordinating the DNR urban and community forestry projects grant, worth \$348,000. Council Member and Tree Board member Brooke Scheel is working with Community Development Director Tom Reese to finish edits on the scope of work and budget, which will be sent back to DNR. Lastly, the Tree Board presented a draft donation and memorial policy for the City Council to review. The policy provides guidance on the types of donations such as monetary gifts, physical items/in-kind gifts, memorial donations, and

beautification/park amenities. It also provides process for donating, recognition maintenance, and record keeping. They will also put together an aesthetic book for the city to show the type of downtown and park benches and other items that memorial plaques can be placed on them. This will be done in coordination with the Park Plan that is being developed. In 2026, they will plant the trees and shrubs from the nursery, Arbor Day activities, relocate plants in front of the Plowboy statue, and finish the 1st Avenue Tree project.

CORRESPONDENCE-There was no correspondence.

MAYOR UPDATES-Mayor Scott Yaeger presented updated committee assignments for the new year, and the council discussed holding quarterly workshops on Fridays at 1pm on February 20th, May 29th, and August 14th. The October 23rd meeting will be the budget workshop set from 9am-3pm. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain motioned to appoint Council Member Jen Verhey Mayor Pro Tem. Council Member Mike Schrag seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES:

- **Licenses, Rules and Permits**-No report but planning a meeting soon.
- **Finance and Employee Benefits**-No report.
- **Health and Wellness**-Setting up a meeting in January.
- **Public Safety**-No report and meeting in February.
- **Public Works**-No report.
- **Parks and Recreation**-No report but they are working on reviewing the clubhouse restaurant lease. Mayor Yaeger will send the edited lease to the committee and then set up a meeting.
- **Personnel Committee**-Mayor Yaeger stated the committee needs to meet and review the draft Police Sargent job description. The mayor will send out a meeting invite.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES

- A. **City Attorney**-Attorney John Kragt excused.
- B. **Public Works**-Director Dave Breazeale reported getting ready to pour concrete for the kiosk near Circle K, Christmas decorations have come down, and he is researching equipment that is in the budget to purchase.
- C. **Police Department**-Chief of Police Mike Suniga reported the new officer Chris Wardlaw started on the 2nd and is going through officer training. They received the new patrol car and working on purchasing the upgraded equipment are per the budget.
- D. **Fire**-Chief Joel Bell was excused.
- E. **Clerk/Treasurer**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt reported the Visitor Impact Grant Award notification and agreements were sent to awardees. The Chamber of Commerce award was modified with the requirement to provide quarterly reports to council and Ritzville United is required to submit a detailed 4th of July event plan before that award is approved. The 2023 audit exit interview is scheduled for Friday, January 9th at 1pm. The 2024 audit is underway and Flyckt is working on responding to auditor requests for the single federal, financial and accountability audits. Mayor Yaeger is reviewing the procurement policy update after Flyckt made the suggested auditor changes.

THE CITY OF RITZVILLE REMOTE/IN PERSON COUNCIL MEETING JANUARY 6TH, 2026

F. **Community Development**-Community Development Director Tom Reese is working on the SS4A grant and will connect with Council Member Eric Ottmar to give him an update on the project. Reese is also working with SCJ Alliance on their periodic update agreement and updating maps. There will be one last mailing for the income survey for residents who have not responded to the first mailing or door to door effort. There will be a Heart and Soul memorandum of understanding for the council to review at a future meeting. Reese is researching and reviewing grant opportunities. He is also processing new annexation and development inquiries and working on the Grainery District Developer agreement. Council Member Brooke Scheel asked to recoup administrative costs on the grants or do a de minimis rate. Council Member Jessica Quinn asked for the status on the Traffic Impact Fee (TIF) and Reese stated it will be in front of council at their next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT-With no further comments or business to come before the council, Mayor Yaeger adjourned the remote and in person meeting at 7:43pm.



Julie Flyckt, Clerk-Treasurer