

## **OPENING OF COUNCIL MEETING**

Mayor Yaeger opened the remote and in person council meeting at 7:00pm. The council members present were Michelle Plumb, Dennis Chamberlain, Jen Verhey, Jessica Quinn, Brooke Scheel, and Mike Schrag. Staff members in attendance were Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt, Deputy Clerk Treasurer II Michelle Asmussen (remote), City Attorney John Kragt, Chief of Police Mike Suniga, and Community Development Director Tom Reese. City Fire Chief Joel Bell, Public Works Director Dave Breazeale, and Ky Beck-Gmeiner and were excused. Also present were Linda Schrag, Brian Bothun, Rick from the Cheney Free Press, Eric Ottmar 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 December 16, 2025, with payables in the amount of \$105,074.06. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

## **RECOGNITION**

- A. Council Member Michelle Plumb-** Mayor Yaeger presented Council Member Michelle Plumb with a certificate of appreciation on behalf of the city and himself. Mayor Yaeger stated he would like to thank her for 9 years of great service to the council and the city. She has been very instrumental on projects and such as bringing technology to the city.

## **OATH OF OFFICE SHORT TERM POSITIONS**

Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt administered the oath of office for the two newly elected council ward members:

- A. Council at Large (2-year term)-Jen Verhey- Read and signed their Oath of Office
- B. Council at Large (4-year term)-Eric Ottmar-Read and signed their Oath of Office
- C. Council Ward 2-Brooke Scheel-Read and signed their Oath of Office
- D. Council Ward 5-Mike Schrag-Read and signed their Oath of Office

**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. Assumption of the Rights, Powers, Functions, and Obligations of a Transportation Benefit District Public Hearing, Ordinance No. 2203-** Mayor Yaeger opened the public hearing on the assuming the rights, powers, functions and obligations of the Ritzville Transportation Benefit District at 7:08pm. This hearing was to allow the public the opportunity to comment on the assumption. There were no written comments received by 5:00pm. There were no comments or questions from the public or the council. With no further testimony the public hearing was closed at 7:11pm. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2203, as ordinance of the City of Ritzville assuming the rights, powers, functions and obligations of the Ritzville

Transportation Benefit District pursuant to RCW 36.74. Council Member Brooke Scheel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

- B. **Street Fund Interfund Loan, Resolution No. 2025-16**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt reported on the cash and investment activity and went over the proposed amendment to the budget. Anything that exceeds the expenditure budget amount, we have to amend. The current remaining balance for the city street 103 fund was \$4,506, and that's not a lot of money for an ending balance. We want to make sure there is enough balance in the fund to cover wages or possibly a retainage coming up that might need to get paid out for 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. Mayor Scott Yaeger and Flyckt requested an interfund transfer of \$75,000 from current expense to the street fund as a short-term loan. Council Member Brooke Scheel made a motion to adopt Resolution No 2025-16 a resolution of the City Council of the City of Ritzville authorizing an interfund loan from the current expense fund to the street fund and providing for repayment. Council Member Jen Verhey seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- C. **2025 Budget Amendment Public Hearing, Ordinance No. 2204**-Mayor Yaeger opened the public hearing for the 2025 budget amendment at 7:17 pm. The purpose of this hearing was for the City Council to hear and consider the pertinent facts relating to the budget amendment. There were unanticipated expenses, which require the budget to be amended. At the time of the budget being approved, the council was not anticipating the expenses, therefore the need for an amendment. The 001 Current Expense fund: \$20,000 amendment for the interfund loan transfer to the street fund, potential DRS underpayment, and any unanticipated expenditures; 004 Cemetery fund: \$15,000 amendment for wages and utilities that will be expended by the end of the month and the \$5,125.75 variance; 006 City Memorial & Enhancement fund: \$2,000 amendment for the \$1,062.82 variance due to increased donations and expenditures; 103 Street fund: \$400,000 amendment due to non-budgeted street projects; 121 Public Safety Tax fund: \$20,000 amendment due to higher than estimated police officer pay; 304 Law & Justice Contributions fund: \$20,000 amendment for non-budgeted grant that was received and expended; 401 Water fund: \$150,000 amendment for increased expenses and to cover wages and unanticipated expenditures through the end of the year and the \$73,035.15 variance; 403 Sanitation fund: \$35,000 amendment to cover end of year expenditures for wages and utilities; 408 Sewer fund: \$40,000 amendment to cover wages and utilities for the end of the year; 425 DOE Debt Service fund: \$3,000 amendment for the \$2,602.56 variance due to loan payment amounts. There were no questions from the public. Council Member Brooke Scheel asked why the amendment on current expense is only \$20,000 and not more. Julie Flyckt stated right now the variance we have is not a negative. We have \$274,317 remaining before we hit the budget amount. With no further discussion, the public hearing was closed at 7:26pm. Council Member Mike Schrag made a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2204 an ordinance amending the 2025 budget of the City of Ritzville as adopted in ordinance 2177 and amended in 2178 and 2183. The amendment is to appropriate funds for unanticipated revenues and allocations in city current expense, cemetery, city memorial & enhancement, street, public safety tax, law & justice contributions, water, sanitation, sewer, and DOE Debt Funds. Council Member Jessica Quinn seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- **2026 Final Budget Public Hearing, Ordinance No. 2205**-Mayor Yaeger opened the public hearing for the 2026 final budget at 7:28pm. The purpose of the hearing was for the City Council to hear and consider the pertinent facts relating to the city budget and fees. Overall, the 2026 budget impacts and projects include: liability insurance increase by 6%, reformatted wage scale to allow placement of new employees or the ability to reclassify existing employees to different ranges, reduced the steps to 6 by deleting the 2025 wage scale steps 1 and 2 and then renumbering the

new steps 1-6, and decreased the Longevity time frame from 9 years of employment to 7 years; and numerous planning and improvement projects:

- Updating street name plates and centennial path signs.
- Repair and replace cemetery map kiosk.
- Completed safe streets for all plans.
- Replacing the police station HVAC system.
- Golf Course roof and Library entrance repair,
- Gazebo and fence repair and install softball at the city park.
- Water system plan update.
- Install plaza tree lights and bench,
- Develop and install Main Street education tree plaques.
- Implement Community Heart & Soul Program's initiatives.
- Dump vouchers for city clean up days.
- Water conservation plan.
- Install 1<sup>st</sup> Ave trees in front of old fire station and the Herd buildings.
- Grant to develop forestry policies, landscape and tree planting plans and manuals.
- Grant funded community outreach.
- Implement police technology updates; and
- Install fiber and VOIP to City Buildings.

Brian Bothun at 309 W. 5<sup>th</sup> Ave asked about fund 104 and if the \$120,000 was from the new Transportation Benefit District? Mayor Yaeger stated yes that it is from the Transportation Benefit District. Council Member Brooke Scheel stated she feels step increases need to be spelled out and should be based on their anniversary date. With no further discussion, the public hearing was closed at 7:39pm. Council Member Jen Verhey made a motion to approve Ordinance No 2205 an ordinance adopting the budget for the City of Ritzville for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2026 in the amount of \$7,884,480 and adoption of the city fees and wage scale, with the addition of the annual step increase notes on the wage scale. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain seconded the motion. Council Member Michelle Plumb opposed. Motion passed 5-1.

- D. Ritzville Visitor Impact Grant Awards (110 Fund)**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt asked if the council was ready to move forward with the awards as they stand. Council Member Brooke Scheel made a motion to approve the 110 requested funds as outlined in the 2026 spreadsheet, with the exception of Ritzville United's Hometown 4<sup>th</sup> of July request, which will be earmarked as pending until they can provide a council approved plan, at which time those funds can be released for reimbursement, for a total of \$203,488.27. The council also requests quarterly reports from the Chamber of Commerce. Council Member Jessica Quinn seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- E. Official Newspaper Bids, Resolution No. 2025-17**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt stated bid notification was put in the city's current official newspaper, Adams County Journal. Flyckt also emailed the bid notification directly to Free Press Publishing and Columbia Basin Herald. They both said they appreciated the notification and that they would respond. The City only received a response back from the Free Press Publishing's Ritzville Adams County Journal which is attached to the resolution. Council Member Michelle Plumb made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-17 a resolution of the City of Ritzville selecting an official newspaper. Council Member Brooke Scheel seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- F. Fiber Services Award**-Mayor Yaeger stated the committee was made up of Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt, Police Chief Mike Suniga and himself to review the RFPs. The recommendation is to award Eltopia/Pacific Northwest Networks the fiber services agreement. Chief Suniga stated essentially what they are going to do is activate a fiber node just for the police department so

we can make an in-house network that reduces virtual firewalls or actual hardware firewalls for one system because it has to be on a separate network. We are going much higher than what some of our infrastructure can handle right now but it is building that base. To simplify it, instead of from city hall going to the internet and then over to the fiber node, we are going to get a straight shot to the fiber node that is totally ours. Council Member Brooke Scheel made a motion to approve the Fiber Service Award to Eltopia/Pacifica Northwest Networks for the City of Ritzville. Council Member Jen Verhey seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.

- G. TIB Updated Cost Estimate-1<sup>st</sup> Avenue Improvements**-Mayor Yaeger requested approval to receive the remaining \$18,000 for reimbursement. Council Member Michelle Plumb made a motion to approve the mayor to sign the TIB updated cost estimate for 1<sup>st</sup> Ave Improvements- Division St. to Palouse St. Council Member Jessica Quinn seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- H. Ritzville Food Pantry Street Closure Request-W. Broadway Avenue**-An email from Robert Shockley requested to block the street in front of the American Legion Hall on West Broadway between Adams St and Division St on Dec. 18<sup>th</sup> between 8am and 3pm to hand out Christmas boxes. Council Member Jessica Quinn made a motion to approve the closure. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- I. Criminal Attorney Agreement-McGuire, DeWulf, Kragt & Johnson, P.S**-Mayor Yaeger stated the agreement was the same as the one with the prior criminal attorney, including the fee. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain made a motion to approve the mayor to sign the Criminal Attorney Fee Agreement for prosecution and legal assistance, between McGuire, DeWulf, Kragt & Johnson, P.S and the City of Ritzville. Council Member Mike Schrag seconded the motion. Motion passed 6-0.
- J. Financial Services Agreement-Tara Dunford, CPA**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt stated this is the same agreement the City has had with Tara Dunford for finance consultant services. She helps to review the city's annual financial reports before the auditors do their review. She also provides support for any financial questions that might come up throughout the year. Council Member Brooke Scheel stated she felt her hourly rate and her travel rate was rather high. Council Member Dennis Chamberlain made a motion to approve the Financial Services Agreement between Tara Dunford, CPA, not to exceed 25 hours or \$5,125, with the City of Ritzville. Council Member Mike Schrag seconded the motion. Council Member Michelle Plumb opposed. Motion passed 5-1.

#### **CORRESPONDENCE**

- A. Public Development Authority Minutes for October 29, 2025 were provided in the packet.

**MAYOR UPDATES**-Mayor Yaeger stated he appreciates all the work the council has done on working on the budget and wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays!

#### **COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

- **Licenses, Rules and Permits**- Meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> and reviewed the traffic impact fees.
- **Finance and Employee Benefits**-No Report.
- **Health and Wellness**- No Report.
- **Public Safety**- They met on December 4<sup>th</sup> and reviewed the police department requests, like the garage door opener.
- **Public Works**-No report.
- **Parks and Recreation**-No report.

- **Personnel Committee**-No report.

**DEPARTMENT UPDATES**

- A. City Attorney**-Attorney John Kragt stated his office meet with the outgoing prosecutor, and he has things set up efficiently, so he does not anticipate having to use much staff time at the city.
- B. Public Works**-Public Works Director Dave Breazeale was excused.
- C. Police Department**-Chief of Police Mike Suniga stated on Saturday they had the shop with a First Responder event. There were a lot of volunteers and a great time for all. He is moving forward with the lateral applicant as he did his psych evaluation today. The City does not have the results yet but if that's all good, the final step would be the physical and then get him started. Chief Suniga stated now the budget was passed he can actively start looking and getting a Sergeant on board.
- D. Fire**-Chief Joel Bell was excused.
- E. Clerk/Treasurer**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt stated much of the work completed was on the agenda tonight. She thanked everyone for getting through this year's budget process and expressed a lot of good improvements to the process. The 2023 exit audit interview with the finance committee and the mayor is scheduled for January 9<sup>th</sup>.
- F. Community Development**-Community Development Director Tom Reese stated Evergreen Rural did an in-person door knocking for the income study and had fairly good results. There are still not enough surveys so there will be another online survey. Flyckt stated there needs to be another 82 responses for the surveys to be valid, so we are looking at doing another targeted mailing. Rees thanked the council for approving the budget as it was a great first years' experience for him to go through it with them. Reese is continuing to work on development projects and boundary line adjustments. He is also processing some new development inquiries which are exciting.

**ADJOURNMENT**-With no further comments or business to come before the council, Mayor Yaeger adjourned the remote and in person meeting at 8:25pm.

  
Michelle Asmussen, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer