

### **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, Deputy Clerk Treasurer II Michelle Asmussen (remote), Public Works Director Dave Breazeale, Chief of Police Mike Suniga, and Community Development Director Tom Reese. City Fire Chief Joel Bell and City Attorney John Kragt were excused. Also present were Linda Schrag, Brian Bothun, Derek Schafer, 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 20, 2026, with payables in the amount of \$298,390.87. Council Member Jen Verhey seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

### **POLICE OFFICER OATH**

A. Christopher Wardlaw- Chief Suniga read the oath and swore in Christopher Wardlaw.

**PUBLIC REQUESTS AND COMMENTS**-Mayor Yaeger asked if there was anyone from the public who would like to comment. Rod Larse at 209 E. Olive asked if the city has ever had an information technology audit and if so, how did that go? Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt stated the city has not had a specific technology audit. The city does contract with a technology company, but they have not come in and done that type of audit. Chief Suniga stated as far as the police department is concerned, every two years they are required to do an audit by the state.

### **ACTION AGENDA**

A. **Public Works Purchase-CAT 303.5 MHEX Mini Excavator**-Public Works Director Dave Breazeale stated the equipment was discussed during budgeting last year. It is a smaller version of the backhoe for the crew to access the alleyways that are much smaller than the streets. Public Works rented one last year and it worked out very well for the repairs they had to do. It is budgeted for \$75,000 this year and half will be coming out of water and half out of sewer. If council approves, it should be here by Friday. Council Member Jen Verhey made a motion to approve the purchase of the CAT Mini Excavator in the amount of \$74,649.60. Council Member Jessica Quinn seconded the motion. Motion passed 7-0.

### **DISCUSSION AGENDA**

**Chapter 11.86 Traffic Impact Fees**-Community Development Director Tom Reese stated the traffic impact fees is a revised draft of chapter 11.86. The license & rules committee has been working on creating the transportation impact fee development code update for how new development contributes to or pays for new infrastructure. When new development comes online, the TIF will be applied at the permit application stage for road improvements. The monies are used for capacity projects and new infrastructure only. It is designated to be in certain service areas by ordinance and has a 10-year expenditure window. It is a one-time fee paid by new development. These are used statewide and by local jurisdictions. Things the TIF can be used are roadway capacity projects, intersection improvements, turn lanes and signals, and freight route upgrades. It cannot be used for maintenance, repairs, or operations. Reese said next steps is to finalize 11.86 chapter, update the city fee schedule and maps to

show the dedicated sub areas, and develop the funding ordinance. There will need to be a legal review, prepare a SEPA non-project checklist, and issue a DNS. There will also need to be two public hearings held and then presented to council for adoption. This is not a tax as it is a regulatory fee that is tied directly to the impacts created by new developments. Reese also highlighted the necessity of a nexus requirement between new development and the facilities funded by the fee, and the role of professional engineers in conducting traffic impact analysis. The policy direction he is looking for is to create the three ordinances to move forward, including the SEPA checklist and bring it back to council. The council discussed the implementation of the TIF for two specific projects: the westbound off-ramp division and Weber roundabout, as well as a shared path on 261. They agreed on a 50-50 cost-sharing model to reduce the fee to \$1,900 per trip. Concerns were raised about the six-year time limit for spending TIF funds, which could be extended to ten years under extraordinary circumstances. The council also discussed the process of collecting fees at permit time and the importance of having match funds for grants, particularly for congressional discretionary funds. The discussion focused on fee structures and engineering requirements for development projects. The city would be responsible for 80% of fees while developers cover 20%, and the need was emphasized to balance protecting the city with avoiding excessive regulations that could deter development. There were also highlighted concerns about the "Existing Authority Unimpaired" section, which could require developers to pay fees but still be responsible for mitigation costs like roundabouts if funds are unavailable. The conversation concluded with a recommendation to review specific code sections (1186090A and B) regarding professional engineering requirements and comparing Ritzville's approach to Airway Heights' different fee structure. There was also discussion on the city's authority and projections for potential developers, emphasizing the need for clear information to facilitate due diligence. There was also some discussion about the six-year and ten-year planning periods, with a suggestion to use the maximum allowed time for planning. The council addressed the use of local improvement districts and the need for new maps to reference the TIF in the comprehensive plan. Concerns were raised about the inclusion of all projects in the funding plan and the potential financial implications for the city. The conversation ended with a mention of a new traffic study that could impact future planning decisions.

**2023 Audit Exit Report-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt** stated on January 9<sup>th</sup> the finance committee members, Mayor Yeager and herself met with the auditors and went over the exit report. The meeting covered several key topics, including the 2023 Audit Exit Report, which noted an immaterial lease liability and the need to update the procurement policy. The city is currently in the 2024 audit, with the 2025 audit scheduled to begin in the fall of 2026.

## **CORRESPONDENCE**

### **A. Ritzville Museums 2025 Visitor Stats Report**

**MAYOR UPDATES-**Mayor Scott Yeager stated he has been working with Chief Suniga on reviewing the new Sergeant's description which I need to get to the personnel committee.

## **COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES:**

- **Licenses, Rules, and Permits-**We will be meeting on 1/22 at 3:30pm.
- **Finance and Employee Benefits:** Mike Schrag stated there was a 2023-2025 payroll correction discussion and there will be an update at the next meeting. The committee also reviewed the 2025 golf financial report and manager bonus. The golf manager bonus is 25% of the gross greens fees which were \$85,855. This year the manager bonus was \$6,713.84. Even with the

good numbers the golf course is still in the red at \$74,510 plus the capital outlay. The golf course roof is slated for a re-roof this year for \$45,000.

- **Health and Wellness**- No report
- **Public Safety**-No report
- **Public Works**-No report.
- **Parks and Recreation**-Brooke Scheel reported their regular meetings will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursday of every month at 3:45pm at city hall. At the last meeting they worked on the lease agreement with Porky's. We want to maintain the same lease revenue as last year until the committee can gather further information. The committee put together a SharePoint site to share and gather information. They have reached out to Michelle Plumb and got some maps from Dave Breazeale so they can start putting together some projects for the cemetery this year.
- **Personnel Committee**-Mayor Yaeger stated he would like the committee to look at the police sergeant's job description. He has looked at it and provided his comments and requested to set up a meeting with the committee for January 29<sup>th</sup> after 3:30pm.

#### DEPARTMENT UPDATES

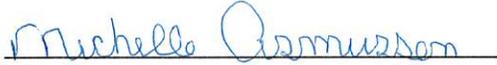
- A. **City Attorney**-Attorney John Kragt excused.
- B. **Public Works**-Director Dave Breazeale thanked the council for approving the mini-excavator as it will help in completing some city projects that have been lacking. Public Works has completed a street sign inventory and submitted it to Newman signs for a quote, and he should have the quote back by next council meeting for a replacement price.
- C. **Police Department**-Police Chief Mike Suniga reported they have been focused on training their new officer Chris. The officers have an in-service training course in Ephrata with the Ephrata Police Department next week. They will be doing some core stuff, simulations, like paint marker for shoot out simulations. Chief Suniga will be attending on January 27<sup>th</sup> while most of the department will go on February 3<sup>rd</sup>.
- D. **Fire**-Chief Joel Bell reported there were forty-five calls for service last year. The fire department has completed the insurance rating. Every five years they go through the insurance bureau, and it takes about a month to get ready. The bureau goes through the last five years of calls and all the information on the trucks. The last year it was completed was Covid year, so everything was done over the phone. This time they came back three times and wanted to see if we could get hooked onto a city truck and a county truck in under three minutes, as it would help the rating. The fire department was able to make the connection within 46 seconds. They have now lumped the city/county into one so anything within five miles of the city is now rated a six, which is good. Lind is ten and Odessa is also ten. They checked the number of gallons that can flow, the tools, and the training provided. Chief Bell stated they are working on a formal agreement with the school district for ongoing maintenance that is provided by the bus garage for oil changes, and any type of service work. Normally it was just a phone call, but they needed to get something in place in writing like an interlocal agreement to protect both sides of the parties. Mayor Yaeger stated he would like to get the document and work with City Attorney John Kragt to put something together and get it in place.
- E. **Clerk/Treasurer**-Clerk-Treasurer Julie Flyckt reported the auditors' will be on-site this Thursday to look through the Rural Development grant book. They will also spot check payroll. Michelle Asmussen is working to get all the tax stuff done for the city and getting the 1099's and W2's out. Asmussen and Flyckt will be working with Springbrook to get the 2026 payroll set up and

THE CITY OF RITZVILLE REMOTE/IN PERSON COUNCIL MEETING JANUARY 20<sup>TH</sup>, 2026

input any changes that have incurred. Dog tags have started to come in, and the advertisement will be in the journal, Facebook and website as the dog tags are due by February 28<sup>th</sup>, which is at the same time every year.

- F. **Community Development**-Community Development Director Tom Reese is working on the TIF and the Development Agreement for the Grainery District. He is also working on a couple more grant applications and getting ready to pull the trigger on the DNR grant.

**ADJOURNMENT**-With no further comments or business to come before the council, Mayor Yaeger adjourned the remote and in person meeting at 8:30pm.



Michelle Asmussen, Deputy Clerk-Treasurer II