

Regular City Commission Meeting

Mayor Stebbins presiding

CALL TO ORDER: 7:00 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL: City Commissioners present: Dona R. Stebbins, Bill Bronson, John Rosenbaum, Bill Beecher and Mary Jolley. Also present were the Assistant City Manager, City Attorney, Directors of Community Development, Fiscal Services, Library, Park and Recreation, Planning, Public Works, the Fire Chief, Police Chief, and the City Clerk.

NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCILS

- NC 7 – Greg Hall sworn in.**
1. Greg Hall was sworn in as a representative of Neighborhood Council District No. 7.
 2. There were no miscellaneous reports or announcements from neighborhood council representatives.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- Res. 9804. Adopted.**
3. **RESOLUTION 9804, ESTABLISHING WATER, SEWER AND STORM DRAIN UTILITY SERVICE RATES AND FEES.**

Public Works Director Jim Rearden reported that the proposed rates were presented at the January 20, 2009, City Commission Work Session. The public has been notified of the public hearing and the proposed rate changes through three legal ads in the *Great Falls Tribune*, and to all customers through inserts sent in the utility bills January 30 and February 5, and in a separate mailing on January 6. Staff is proposing the rates take effect March 1, 2009.

Mr. Rearden presented PowerPoint slides. He explained that staff reviews and analyzes the financial needs of the water, sewer, and storm drain funds to ensure the City has adequate funding necessary to finance the day to day operations, provide for any capital improvements, emergency main breaks, or replacements. These funds also provide the financing to run the Water and Wastewater Treatment Plants effectively. Adjustments in utility rates are also necessary to provide adequate revenue to finance the capital improvements program, and meet debt service coverage requirements and to maintain appropriate reserves. Staff is recommending 5% increases in each of the water (including fire hydrant) and sanitary sewer rates and fees, and no increase in storm drain rates.

If approved, the average residential utility bill will increase \$1.82 per month. Staff has determined moderate annual increases to service rates are

more effective to necessary revenue needs as opposed to sporadic large increases needed at the time of unforeseen emergencies. Even with the proposed increase, the City of Great Falls' rates are still the lowest in the state.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing open. Speaking in opposition to Resolution 9804 was **Art Vender**, 1606 8th Avenue South, council member of NC 9. Mr. Vender commented that the council is opposed to taxing the citizens for major improvements on the water mains. The council feels the City should use stimulus money for major improvements to the City's water and sewer mains, as well as fixing roads, the animal shelter and the police station. Mr. Vender suggested the Commission forget about the bridge.

Written letters of opposition were received from: **Melvin Zuern**, 3624 1st Avenue North, **Robert Johnson**, 2617 6th Avenue South, **Tim Ballou**, 223 River Drive South, and **Dan Moltzan**, 717 6th Avenue North.

No one spoke in favor of Resolution 9804.

Mayor Stebbins declared the public hearing closed and asked for the direction of the City Commission.

Commissioner Beecher moved, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum, that the City Commission adopt Resolution 9804, establishing water, sewer and storm drain utility service rates and fees effective March 1, 2009.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners.

Commissioner Jolley asked how much revenue the increase would create. Mr. Rearden answered an additional \$400,000 in the water fund and \$350,000 in the sewer fund annually.

In response to Mr. Vender, Commissioner Beecher commented that there is no way of knowing what type or how much stimulus payments the City of Great Falls might receive. Increases in water and sewer rates are necessary for capital improvements. One thing the City does not want to do is let the essential services of water and sewer fall behind. These increases still keep Great Falls' rates the lowest in the state.

Commissioner Rosenbaum added that there are strings attached to the stimulus package monies. More than likely some stimulus funds will be loans that have to be paid back.

Mayor Stebbins pointed out that the federal stimulus money is still not a sure thing. The City needs to make plans for now instead of what may happen.

Motion carried 5-0.

OLD BUSINESS

NEW BUSINESS

ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS

**Consent Agenda.
Approved.**

CONSENT AGENDA

4. Minutes, February 3, 2009, Commission meeting.
5. Total expenditures of \$1,024,921 for the period of January 30-February 11, 2009, to include claims over \$5,000, in the amount of \$958,451.
6. Contracts list.
7. Approve Electric Transmission Line Easement on City-owned property with NorthWestern Energy.
8. Award construction contract to Shumaker Trucking & Excavating Contractors, Inc. in the amount of \$194,883.50 for the Third Avenue Northwest Roadway Improvements, Phase 1-Easterly.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Bronson, with the exception of Item 5, that the City Commission approve the Consent Agenda as presented.

Mayor Stebbins asked if there were any inquiries from the public. No one responded.

Motion carried 5-0.

With regard to Item 5, Commissioner Jolley inquired about the new category on page 2 entitled "utility bills" instead of being split up among other categories. Operations Supervisor Martha Capps responded that she would look into it and provide her with that information.

Commissioner Jolley moved, seconded by Commissioner Bronson, that the City Commission approve Item 5 of the Consent Agenda.

Motion carried 5-0.

BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

**Appointments made to
the City EMS Advisory
Board.**

9. APPOINTMENTS, CITY EMS ADVISORY BOARD.

Commissioner Bronson moved, seconded by Commissioner Rosenbaum, that the City Commission appoint the following people to

the City EMS Advisory Board:

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| 1. Fire Chief Randall McCamley (chair) | City EMS Administrator |
| 2. Dr. Dave Simpson (vice chair) | EMS System Medical Director |
| 3. Justin Grohs | Great Falls Emergency Services Manager |
| 4. Dave Kuhn | Great Falls Emergency Services
Owner/President |
| 5. Dr. John Stowers | Great Falls Emergency Services
Medical Director |
| 6. Scott Schandelson | Benefis Emergency Department |
| 7. Laurie Jackson | Benefis Trauma Coordinator |
| 8. Pam Johnstone | Cascade County Dispatch Center |
| 9. Dirk Johnson | GFFR EMS Coordinator |
| 10. Ron Scott | GFFR Paramedic/EMT |
| 11. Will Fleming | GFEMS Paramedic/EMT |
| 12. Patty Cadwell | Neighborhood Councils |

Mayor Stebbins asked if there was any discussion amongst the Commissioners or inquiries from the public. No one responded.

Motion carried 5-0.

10. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**CITY MANAGER****11. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.****PETITIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS****12. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

Mayor Stebbins opened the meeting to Petitions and Communications.

Pot holes, newspaper article.

12A. Kathy Gessaman, 1006 36th Avenue NE, commented that she appreciates the pot holes being filled by the City. Ms. Gessaman provided an article from *USA Today* regarding a study linking children's lead levels to SAT scores.

Census.

12B. Mike Brown, 1908 15th Avenue South, announced that he is a partnership specialist with the U.S. Census Bureau. He will be working with state and local governments to prepare for the 2010 census. Mr. Brown reported that there are plans to have an office located in Great Falls. The Census Bureau will be hiring approximately 3,000 people in Montana. The job positions are posted at: www.census.gov.

Rates, taxes.

12C. John Hubbard, 615 7th Avenue South, stated his opposition to raising water and sewer rates, or any taxes.

CITY COMMISSION**13. MISCELLANEOUS REPORTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS.**

Mayor Stebbins invited the public to attend the CMR essay contest on Sunday, February 22, 2009, at the C.M. Russell Museum.

ADJOURNMENT**Adjourn.**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, **Commissioner Beecher moved, seconded by Commissioner Bronson, that the regular meeting of February 17, 2009, be adjourned at 7:26 p.m.**

Motion carried 5-0.

Mayor Stebbins

City Clerk

Minutes Approved: March 3, 2009