

TOWN OF MEEKER MEETING MINUTES, OCTOBER 15, 2024

Members Present	Mayor	Day
	Trustees	Browning
		Day
		Jehorek
		Lockwood
		Nielsen
		Sizemore
Town Staff Present	Administrator	Etheridge
	Town Clerk	Cook
	Attorney	Massih
	Police Chief	Thompson
	Comm. Dev./Planner	Thomson
	Public Works Supt.	Willey

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Day called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

All Board members were present.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Day asked for changes to the agenda, Administrator Etheridge stated two new items a. and b. had been added under New Business after the agenda was published. Trustee Sizemore made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Second by Trustee Jehorek. All ayes. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES

A motion was made by Trustee Day to approve the minutes of October 1, 2024, as submitted. Second by Trustee Nielsen. All ayes. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MONTHLY DISBURSEMENTS

A motion was made by Trustee Browning to approve the disbursements dated October 15, 2024. Second by Trustee Jehorek. All ayes. Motion carried.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

STAFF UPDATES

Public Works Supt. Willey reported during the month of September 24,903,936 gallons of water were pumped, asphalt had been hauled for patching the streets and building a curb on Garfield Street, staff will begin trimming trees next week, and getting ready for winter.

Police Chief Thompson reported his department received 260 calls for service during the month of September resulting in three arrests, twelve citations and one written warning. Trustee Lockwood asked about Community Service Officer Fellows and Chief Thompson responded that she is working out well.

Community Development/Planner Thomson said her update was included in the Board packets and there was nothing out of the ordinary to report.

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Town Clerk Cook reported liquor license renewals for Caroline’s Louisiana Kitchen, Ol’ Crows Beer & Beverage, and White River Liquor had been processed. Cook gave the third quarter financial report stating the budget worksheet reflects revenues vs. expenses without grant revenue, Mineral Lease and Severance receipts or Systems Development (capital expenses) to give an idea of where the Town is operationally for each fund. Operation and maintenance for this quarter shows a positive balance of \$315,745.66 in the general fund and \$108,955.77 in the water fund.

Each department’s expenses should be 75% or lower for this time period. All departments are under that amount, the largest revenue account in the general fund is sales and use tax, which is 74.77% with the largest income producing months generally occurring within the last quarter. Water service is at 81.12% for the end of the third quarter.

At this time, based on year-end estimates the Town will not need to use budgeted reserves in the general fund, the water fund will require \$44,521 of the \$560,438 reserves that were budgeted for this year. Town Attorney Massih reported there would be court the following week and she will have more to discuss during the executive session later in the meeting.

PUBLIC HEARING

Consideration of Conditional Use Permit to operate a Short-Term Rental at 1130 Market Street. Mayor Day opened the public hearing at 7:07 p.m. Planner Thomson thanked Chase Rule for being present and presented the staff report. The applicant is requesting a Conditional Use Permit to operate a Short-Term Rental at his property located at 1130 Market Street. The applicant intends to operate using online platforms such as AirBnB.com and VRBO.com. The property is located in the Highway Corridor (HC) zone. Short-Term Rental is listed as a Conditional Review Use under the HC zoning code. The applicant has submitted the required application and fee within the required time frame. The request has been advertised as mandated by the Meeker Land Use Development Code including notification of the Public Hearing to property owners within three hundred feet of the subject property, and in the Herald Times. During the referral review period the application received no comments from referral agencies. Additionally, the Town of Meeker has received zero public comment in favor of and against the application.

As presented in the staff report, the property and application comply with the types of permitted Short-Term Rentals, as single-family residence and not a dwelling located in a lodging business.

Additionally, the application is in compliance with the Performance Standards for Short-Term Rentals.

- The proposed unit is less than five bedrooms and accommodates groups of less than 10 people.
- The proposed unit has at least one off-street parking space
- The applicant will be on call when the unit is rented.
- The proposed unit has adequate trash service.
- The information provided to guests is updated with information regarding public nuisances.
- The applicant will pay taxes through the online hosting platforms.

The Town of Meeker has not yet met the maximum number of Short-Term Rental Licenses, as eight permits have been issued to date. The proposed unit is not subject to the 300-foot buffer as it is located in the Highway Corridor Zone as outlined in the Short-Term Rental Cap and Buffer section. The application meets the criteria of Building Requirements, as demonstrated on the application’s Fire and Safety Evaluation. As well the applicant provided a copy of the guest information which meets the standards of the License Posting Requirements, and the applicant has noted that this information will be posted in the kitchen.

The application has been found to be in compliance with the Conditional Uses requirements outlined in section 18.1.18, including various goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. Both requirements have been described in the staff report. At their meeting on October 6, 2024, the Planning Commission unanimously voted to recommend approval to the Board of Trustees of the Conditional Use Permit for the operation of a Short-Term Rental at 1130 Market Street.

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Hearing no further comments Mayor Day closed the public hearing at 7:10 p.m. and called for a motion. Trustee Jehorek moved to approve the Conditional Use Permit by Chase Rule to operate a Short-Term Rental at 1130 Market Street. Second by Trustee Nielsen. All ayes via a roll call vote.

NEW BUSINESS

Consideration of donation request from Meeker International Ecology Program. Ann Franklin addressed the Board introducing student members of the Ecology Program that were in attendance. Franklin said the students all went on the last trip and want to go again, this time to Costa Rica, which is a testament to the program if students want to return. Each student in attendance spoke positively about their experiences and the opportunities they encountered on the trips they had attended. Franklin said this trip will be working with sea turtles at night protecting their eggs, it will also include learning about invasive species control and include a rafting trip through the jungle depending on the level of the rivers. Franklin said twenty-two students are registered at a cost of \$4,000 each, and if awarded the donation would be equally split amongst everyone, some students have already raised enough money and the amounts for those students would be given to those who still need it, adding that these kids are all workers. Trustee Sizemore made a motion to donate \$3,000 to the Meeker International Ecology Program. Second by Trustee Jehorek. All ayes. Motion carried.

Consideration of request for support from YouthZone. Administrator Etheridge said she had received an email to the Board from YouthZone, which talks about what their relationship is to Rio Blanco County, and they are requesting a \$1,000 donation to support their non-profit services in the Ninth judicial district, which Meeker is a part of. Etheridge went on to say that YouthZone has not been very present in Municipal Court because of the lack of need but they are a resource should a case come up and asked the Board if they wanted to consider a one-time donation, adding that the town is not the only organization they are seeking funding from. Mayor Day suggested a representative of YouthZone come to a future Board meeting to talk with the Board and make a request. The Board concurred.

Presentation of proposed draft Town of Meeker 2025 Budget and scheduling a public hearing. Town Clerk Cook stated the proposed budget for 2025 has been prepared based on the discussion from the previous workshop. Sales tax continues to do well although, along with all revenue, has been budgeted conservatively, noting that a significant reduction in interest income is anticipated for next year.

Salaries were calculated with an increase of four percent totaling \$59,641, averaged over all employees resulted in a \$2,710 annual increase for each employee. Most departments are slightly higher than the 2024 budget due to an increase in salaries, health and liability insurance, most other expenses have been budgeted flat. Some line items, for instance in the Public Works and Water departments, have been consolidated into other line items. Training, safety equipment and misc. supplies have slightly increased in the Public Works Dept. as well as water testing/line locates and chemicals in the Water Dept. The General Fund includes a \$1,000,000 transfer to the Water Fund to help fund the Garfield Water Street waterline project.

As presented, the General Fund will require \$2,915,202 of reserves to balance. A DOLA grant request in the amount of \$1,000,000 has been submitted for the Garfield Street waterline project, this grant revenue is not included in the proposed budget. If the Town is not awarded the grant, \$1,231,821 would be required from the Water Fund reserve, which has a balance of balance of \$1,332,013 as of Sept. 30th to balance that fund, which would leave no operating capital. Cook said the Board should consider options if the DOLA grant is not awarded, such as applying for other grant opportunities, transferring additional money from the General Fund, or possibly not moving forward with the project if no outside funding is obtained, a motion will be needed to accept the proposed budget and schedule the public hearing for November 19th.

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There was some discussion regarding funding and grant opportunities for the water line project, Administrator Etheridge stated we should have a good feel for whether the Town is awarded the grant by the second meeting in November. Clerk Cook said if awarded the grant we could do a supplemental budget in 2025 to accept and spend the revenue. Hearing no further discussion, Mayor Day called for a motion to accept the proposed budget and schedule the public hearing for November 19th. Moved by Trustee Nielsen. Second by Trustee Sizemore. All ayes. Motion carried.

MANAGER’S REPORT

Administrator Etheridge reported that the grant presentation for DOLA’s Energy Impact Assistance Fund for \$1M to help pay for the Garfield Waterline has been scheduled for Wednesday October 30th at 9:45 a.m. in Wray, she and Mayor Day plan on attending in person. There will be a heavy focus on the fact that our water utility rates have remained stagnant for over ten years and are fifty percent below the state average. The committee will require reassurance that we are looking at a rate study and subsequent rate increase in the near future to stay self-sufficient as a water system.

Our CDPHE Lead & Copper Service Line Inventory self-reporting has had a turnout of around twenty percent based only on physical copies turned in. The Board asked if there had been many questions or negative feedback, which there had not been.

Atmos Energy is under similar regulations as the Town and has filed an excavation permit with the Town to pothole over twenty locations throughout town for materials testing. Supt. Willey said most of those locations are in alleys and that the Town could request a copy of the report from Atmos once it is completed.

Administrator Etheridge addressed the Board concerning the Riverfront Project, requesting a sub-committee meeting this Thursday and discussed finding a time that worked for all members adding she was unsure of the interest from ERBM members and suggested in lieu of the sub-committee meeting the Board as a whole could review the plans for discussion at the meeting on Oct. 22nd. Trustee Jehorek was not in favor of circumventing the sub-committee. There was discussion regarding a deadline of 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday for receipt of all materials from both the contractor and consultants in order to move forward with the subcommittee meeting which was determined to be on Friday at 7:30 a.m., there was a Board directive to comply with the deadline and meeting dates. Mayor Day requested all Board members receive the same information from both Administrator Etheridge and the sub-committee.

Administrator Etheridge reported on several upcoming events including: the Howl-O-Ween donation drive for the Animal Shelter on October 30th organized by Community Service Officer Fellows, the second work session on the Northwest Colorado Energy Initiative with Matt Solomon scheduled jointly with the RBC Board of Commissioners on November 12th at 1:00 p.m.; the joint meeting with the Rangely Town Board and BoCC will be 7:00 p.m. November 14th in Rangely; the only Board meeting to be held in December, in order to meet deadlines for certifying the mill levy to the County has been scheduled for December 12th, and a joint Christmas party with the Sanitation District has been scheduled for December 13th at the Brewery.

MAYOR’S REMARKS

None.

OTHER BOARD BUSINESS

Trustee Day encouraged staff to look further into the water rate study. Trustee Jehorek asked about the survey that was completed for Second Street. Administrator Etheridge replied the Town’s Engineer, Chris Hale, is preparing a report that will include a recommendation on improvements that could be made regarding drainage, etc. to be available by the end of the year.

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EXECUTIVE SESSION

Pursuant to C.R.S. 24-6-402(4)(b) conference with attorney for the purpose of receiving legal advice on a specific legal issue. At 8:05 p.m. Mayor Day called for a motion to move into an executive session. Trustee Lockwood made a motion to move into executive session pursuant to the Colorado Revised Statute cited above. Second by Trustee Day. All ayes. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Day reconvened to the regular session and stated, the time is now 8:16 p.m., and the executive session has been concluded. There was no other business discussed other than stated above, no decisions were made, and the regular meeting is adjourned.

Travis Day, Mayor

Attest:

Lisa Cook, Town Clerk