

## **Town of Meeker Meeting Minutes – April 1, 2025**

Members Present	Mayor Pro Tem	Lockwood
	Mayor	Day (via phone)
	Trustee	Browning
		Day
		Jehorek
		Nielsen
		Sizemore
Town Staff Present	Administrator	Etheridge
	Town Clerk	Cook
	Admin Asst.	Pakuer

### **CALL TO ORDER**

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

### **ROLL CALL**

All Board members were personally present except for Mayor Day who attended via phone.

### **APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Mayor Pro Tem Lockwood asked for changes to the agenda. A motion was made by Trustee Sizemore to accept the agenda as submitted. Second by Trustee Day. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

A motion was made by Trustee Nielsen to approve the minutes of March 18, 2025, as submitted. Second by Trustee Day. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **APPROVAL OF MONTHLY DISBURSEMENTS**

A motion was made by Trustee Jehorek to approve the disbursements dated March 31, 2025. Second by Trustee Sizemore. All ayes. Motion carried.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None.

### **PUBLIC HEARING**

None.

### **NEW BUSINESS**

*Consideration of Donation request from MHS Post-Prom Party Committee.* April Allen was present representing the Post-Prom Party Committee (PPPC). She stated this is the second annual event and the PPPC is a self-funded group that receives no money from the school district; the group's goal is keeping the kids safe, reporting there were one hundred twenty kids that participated last year. The event will be held at the HS auxiliary gym and commons area, it will run from 11:00 pm – 2:00 am after Prom, the Town of Meeker has the police officer on duty come into the event on occasion and do a walk about making sure everything is running smoothly. Allen stated once a kid leaves the building they are not permitted to re-enter. The committee would like

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to ask for a five-hundred-dollar donation but would appreciate any amount the Town could afford to donate. Trustee Jehorek moved to donate one-thousand dollars to the MHS Post-Prom Party Committee. Second by Trustee Sizemore. All ayes. Motion carried.

***Consideration of Donation Request from Range Call.*** Travis Goodwin was present representing the Range Call Committee and requested a donation based on what the Town donated last year, which was five-thousand dollars, however Range Call would appreciate any amount. Trustee Sizemore moved to donate five-thousand dollars matching the same as 2024. Second by Trustee Browning. All ayes. Motion carried.

***Discussion regarding water rate increase.*** Administrator Etheridge shared the following:  
History/Background The Town of Meeker has historically charged a base rate with increasing tiers for both residential water use as well as bulk water use. This structure encourages water conservation by making it more expensive to use more water. Additionally, the Town recoups some cost of additional maintenance and support for services outside of town boundary by charging double for out-of-town water.

While our current revenues for water services do cover our operational costs, there is a very slim margin for reserves – 9% or \$64,265 in 2024. At this rate, and with ever-increasing costs in construction and maintenance of infrastructure, the current reserves will not be able to support the regular replacement of aging water lines and equipment.

In a rate comparison from 2013 to 2025, the base rate for residential water has remained flat at \$24 for 8K gallons, with an increasing tiered structure introduced in 2015. Bulk water rates have not changed at all in over 12 years.

As for plant investment fees (or tap fees) these are scheduled to offset any capital project expenses, but only average about thirteen-thousand dollars per year depending on the development of that year. To create a more sustainable system, the rate increase must be enough to:

1. Replenish spent reserves in the water fund after the Garfield Street Water Line replacement.
2. Build reserves for future infrastructure maintenance and replacement

Data The previous data shared about affordability, the state and regional averages for water rates, and the costs for infrastructure replacement over the last five years, the real analysis should come in the form of some estimates and case studies that justify a specific recommendation. These calculations have been started in house but will be confirmed through a free technical assistance session with Colorado Rural Water Association (CRWA) sometime in the next few weeks. There is an option to use a consultant for a full-rate study however that would cost upwards of ten-thousand dollars to produce a fifty-page report which seems excessive.

Process The idea is to ease our customers into the increase and not hit them with a jump before the summer when water usage is up due to landscaping upkeep. If we can provide good public relations throughout the next few months a rate increase on September 1<sup>st</sup> should be more palatable.

Recommendation Administrator Ethridge asked the Board for thoughts, questions or concerns to address between now and May 6<sup>th</sup> in regards to any of the information or documentation shared so far; the numbers from that technical assistance analysis should be able to show exactly where we

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need to be (whether that is a 25% increase to \$30 base rate, or a 66% increase to \$40) and justify the recommendation for a resolution at that meeting.

Trustee Jehorek suggested that after the rate increase amount is determined, perhaps slowly apply the increase in some form of increments with a three-year maximum. Trustee Browning entertained the thought of doing it in a three-to-five-year phase to reach the final increase amount. Trustee Nielsen suggested a thirty percent increase in 2025 and then again in 2026. Trustee Day stated the Sanitation District applied their increase up front without phasing it in.

Trustee Jehorek questioned if the amount being charged for bulk water needs to be increased to the amount of an out-of-town rate. Discussion followed regarding bulk water operational costs and revenues with general thoughts that bulk water service is losing money. Etheridge asked how the Board felt about the process of notification and effective date of September 1<sup>st</sup> with discussion regarding best way to introduce an increase to the community. Trustee Sizemore thanked Administrator Etheridge for the well-informed information presented.

***Discussion regarding Meeker Housing Partnership draft bylaws.*** Administrator Etheridge stated that as a reminder, the Housing Partnership is being established through the Action Plan of our Housing Assessment from last year with funding from Department of Housing Local Capacity Planning Grant (\$32K with \$8K match = \$40K). The first step is to create the foundation for a non-profit community organization that can help develop and manage housing inventory within current climate. These bylaws have been put together by the towns Comm. Dev./Planner Thomson and reviewed by Town Attorney Massih. Etheridge asked for any Board feedback.

Questions regarding the Housing Partnership included how the organization would be funded, what funding the Town would be required to contribute, how the initial Board of Directors would be seated, and what oversight was in place for the Board of Directors. After some discussion the Board requested to table further consideration until the next meeting when Comm. Dev./Planner Thomson could be present. Etheridge asked the Trustees to submit any questions they would like to ask Thomson prior to the next meeting so she will have time to research and answer accurately.

### **MANAGERS REPORT**

- Public Works is preparing for the GWUDI (Ground Water Under Direct Influence) process which will start next week. Kyra Gregory, a training specialist and local advisor for Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) spent time with the department last Thursday afternoon on the process, they will run ground water for 24 hours on wells 7 & 8 with Micro-Particles Analysis (MPAs) and then send for testing. This testing will happen three times: April, June, August. As soon as the first round of sampling is done, wells four, five and six are scheduled to be scrubbed the next week.

Trustee Lockwood expressed concern about the sawmill going up on County Rd 4. The sawmill is being put in the Town's Source Water Protection District; Lockwood is concerned about possible tannins leaching into the wells. Etheridge stated she would look into whether that would require permitting and confirmed that Rio Blanco County is working in close proximity with the Town in regard to any activity in the Source Water Protection District.

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- Comm.Dev./Planner Thomson came away from last week's Uplift Meeker workshop feeling the need for a revitalization of the Living in Rio Blanco County Magazine to an updated, Meeker-only version to be used as an economic development guide. Her intention is to use Chamber funds and Town Economic Development funds as match for the AGNC technical assistance grant which is a maximum of \$5,000 with a 1:1 match.
- There is Planning Commission meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup>, there will be three seats on the Commission coming up for renewal, these vacancies will be advertised in the upcoming weeks with appointments to be made in May. Town is also advertising for full time Utility person, part time Animal Shelter person and seasonal full time Public Works person.

**MAYORS REMARKS**

None.

**OTHER BOARD BUSINESS**

- Trustee Day asked about updates on Circle Park. There is nothing to report as of the meeting.
- Trustee Nielsen stated the state of Utah has eliminated fluoride in their drinking water.
- Mayor Pro Tem Lockwood asked if the Meeker Skijor donation was refunded due to its cancellation.
- Mayor Pro Tem Lockwood asked for clarification about the memo regarding Robert Street development; after much discussion the Board requested a workshop. Trustee Nielsen requested that the length of the street be known for the workshop.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Lockwood adjourned the meeting at 8:17 pm.

/s/Chris Lockwood, Mayor Pro Tem

Attest:

/s/Lisa Pakuer, Admin Asst.