

PUBLIC HEARING for ROCKY RIDGE TOWN:
Amendments to the 2023-2024 Budget & Approval for the
Preliminary Budget for 2024-2025 Fiscal Year

May 15, 2024
7:30 pm
TOWN HALL

APPROVED

Opening:

Presiding: Mayor Ronald Allred

Present from the Town Council: Ronald Allred, Joanna Covington Andrew Aagard, Lucy Gold, and Bethany Sturgeon.

Present from the Town Staff: Marilyn Bronson, and Rachel Bronson.

Visitors: UMCA Board: Pamela Spencer, Alicia Fairbourne, and Kim Crane.

Others Present: Michael Reynolds and LaRee Allred.

Invocation was given.

Meeting was called to order at 7:35 p.m.

Approval of Minutes:

March 20th, April 17th Minutes & May 2nd Work Session Minutes

March 20th: Minor amendments were made to March's Minutes regarding Council Member Bethany Sturgeon's conversation with Rural Water Association of Utah (RWAU) along with some discussion regarding the request that Park Superintendent Lane Allred made. The request was in regard to Budget adjustments or changes needing to go to all Department Heads. It was understood by Mayor Allred that this request was in regard to the Parks Budget specifically, however, Council Member Bethany Sturgeon felt that informing all Department Heads was a need.

Council Member Andrew Aagard motioned to approve March's minutes as amended and Council Member Joanna Covington seconded the motion; all others voted in favor with the exception of Council Member Lucy Gold, who abstained.

April 17th: Minor amendments were made to April's Minutes regarding correct punctuation and clarifying the Town Office Trailer when referring to the trailer.

Council Member Lucy Gold motioned to approve April's minutes as amended and Council Member Andrew Aagard seconded the motion; all others voted in favor with the exception of Council Member Bethany Sturgeon and Council Member Joanna Covington, who both abstained.

May 2nd (Work Session): Council Member Bethany Sturgeon addressed two key points during the meeting: first, the discussion regarding wage increases, and second, the Town Council's directive for Park Superintendent Lane Allred to reduce the Park Budget Request by \$50,000, emphasizing the importance of stating this in the minutes.

Discussion on wage increases: Council Member Bethany Sturgeon acknowledged the dedication of Treasurer, Rachel Bronson and Town Clerk/Recorder Marilyn Bronson while noting the historically low pay of their positions. She advocated for maintaining a focus on Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) to manage costs, expressing opposition to a merit-based wage increases due to their potential budgetary impact and perceived lack of necessity. Council Member Andrew Aagard queried who would determine merit-based increases, highlighting that such decisions fall within the Mayor's discretion.

Council Member Bethany Sturgeon reiterated the Town's need for fiscal responsibility and the challenges posed by its small size and constrained budgetary resources.

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During the discussion, Marilyn mentioned that the Mayor asked her to gather information on wage increases, in which she received an Excel spreadsheet detailing how Municipalities are implementing both a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) and a merit-based increase.

Mayor Allred expressed support for annual merit raises, suggesting potential increases beyond the COLA increase, if feasible. Council Member Andrew Aagard questioned whether a COLA would restrict the possibility of additional raises, prompting a discussion on flexibility in budget allocation.

Water/EMS Director Casey agreed with Bethany regarding the Town's small size and the financial implications of hiring more personnel. He cautioned against overspending, advocating for prudent financial management as the Town grows.

Council Member Joanna Covington motioned to approve May 2nd's minutes as amended and Council Member Bethany Sturgeon seconded the motion; all others voted in favor.

VISITORS: UMCA Board; CMC Designation:

Mayor Allred delegated the floor to the Utah Municipal Clerk's Association (UMCA) Board, who honored Town Clerk/Recorder Marilyn Bronson with achieving her Certified Municipal Clerk Certification (CMC Designation) from the International Institute of Municipal Clerks (IIMC). The UMCA is committed to furnishing its members with educational resources and networking opportunities, fostering positive professional relationships with elected officials and the public, and highlighting the importance of Municipal Clerk and Recorder roles. The organization offers two certification programs: Certified Municipal Clerk (CMC) and Master Municipal Clerk (MMC), in partnership with Southern Utah University (SUU).

Marilyn has completed the requirements for the Certified Municipal Clerk designation, which involves accumulating 50 points for education and 60 points for participation, totaling approximately 120 hours of coursework. Her dedication to professional development was commended, with gratitude extended for the Town's support of her training efforts. Marilyn was presented with a certificate and pin in recognition of her achievement.

The ceremony concluded with expressions of appreciation and well wishes for Marilyn's continued success in her role.

VISITOR: Shay Morrisson – R6 Regional Council Updates:

Newsletter Starts in June: Shay will be starting a newsletter that he will be sending to all of the communities which will cover critical updates.

Summer Schedule: Shay will not be attending as many meetings over the summer.

CIB Application: The mayor requested that Town Clerk/Recorder, Marilyn Bronson submit the railroad project and complete an application to CIB. It was confirmed that both Rocky Ridge Town and Commissioner Painter had added it to the CIB list, ensuring eligibility for funding. However, the crossing lies within the county, not Rocky Ridge Town, so the county must apply. There is a possibility of an arrangement where Rocky Ridge bears the financial burden while the county applies.

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Applications to CIB can be made in June and October this year, and February 2025. There were discussions about why the railroad is not responsible for the safe crossing. It was noted that federal funds are available for this purpose, and the process is ongoing with a good chance of success.

The Grant awarded to Rocky Ridge Town last year can be used as a match for federal funds. The timeline for federal funding is long, but the project ranks highly for approval. Rocky Ridge can retain the grant funds for now, and additional funds can be applied for from the same state pool in subsequent years if necessary. If federal funding is not secured, Rocky Ridge may need to apply for an extension in 2025 or seek further allocations from the state pool.

CDBG Survey: The CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) is a smaller federal funding source, comparable to CIB. It is suitable for projects like parks, small water projects, or road projects. Applications typically open around September, and Towns must be income-qualified by HUD or through an income survey to apply. It's recommended to start the qualification process early to avoid last-minute issues.

CDBG funds were used in previous years to install a sidewalk (2022). However, if funding was received in the past couple of years, the Town may be ineligible or receive fewer points on the application.

Water Department Head Casey Reynolds suggested applying for a new well house on well one (1), which would involve raising the structure above ground. Shay explained that while water projects are eligible, federal funding may impose strict requirements, such as adhering to the Davis-Bacon Act if the project has multiple phases. Additionally, projects that have already started may face issues unless the procurement process aligns with federal guidelines. If the engineering and drawings have already been completed without following the required procurement process, the Town may need to hire a new engineer to comply with federal regulations. This can complicate the project, but it remains possible to navigate these requirements.

Review of previously discussed items: Code Update, Policy Update, etc.

Shay met with staff to discuss code and policy updates. He sent a cash-depositing policy to Treasurer Rachel Bronson, who noted it needed further work and a smoother implementation process. Along the same lines, Shay explained that policy and code updates typically involve the Planning & Zoning Commission (P&Z), which advises the Town Council. Staff input is included along the way, with P&Z reviewing and recommending updates to the Council for approval. Shay suggested starting a process where he prepares updates for P&Z, which then reviews and provides feedback before recommending to the Council.

Council Member Andrew inquired about updated codes required by December for a new law. Shay clarified that Senate Bill 174 changes the subdivision process from legislative to administrative, removing the Council's involvement entirely. P&Z can handle preliminary reviews; however, final reviews must be conducted by Staff. There's some controversy over whether the P&Z Chair can act as the Administrative Land Use Authority, but it is clear that no Council Members can be involved in the review process. Shay recommended that P&Z conduct the preliminary reviews while Staff handles final reviews, aligning with state mandates to be implemented by December.

NEW BUSINESS: GENERAL SESSION

1. **Cemetery;** opening and closing fees, increase of plot fees:

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Town Council sought to revise cemetery fees to better reflect current operational costs and ensure sustainable management of the Town's burial services. Much discussion was had on said topic with the following proposal made: an increase in fees for burial rights, at \$400 for residents and \$600 for non-residents per burial right. Additionally, fees for open and closing services were to be charged \$300 for residents and \$600 for non-residents per burial. These adjustments were deemed necessary to maintain the quality and availability of cemetery services while addressing rising operational expenses.

The motion outlined that these fee changes would take effect at the beginning of the upcoming fiscal year, ensuring a clear timeline for implementation. It was emphasized that the Clerk/Recorder would be responsible for updating relevant documents and communicating these adjustments to the public.

NEW BUSINESS: PUBLIC HEARING

1. Amendments to Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget:

Mayor Allred opened the Public Hearing for Amendments to Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget

General Amendments across the Budget Year:

The Town Council received and reviewed amendments, utilizing both paper copies and screens in the Council Chambers for detailed information.

Town Hall expenses are now categorized under "Capital Outlay" based on recommendations from Pelorus, the Town's Accounting Software. There was an inquiry into whether specific improvements, such as signage and furnishings for the building, are covered by the CIB Grant. It was clarified that signage not attached to the building qualifies. However, reimbursements for Town Hall furnishings cannot be processed until the project is fully completed.

Allocation of Funds for Rocky Ridge Days:

Discussion revolved around budgeting for Rocky Ridge Days, particularly focusing on funding for fireworks and additional event expenses. There was debate over how much money should be allocated annually from the Town's budget for these purposes. Some participants suggested a specific amount for a specific purpose, while others proposed higher figures to cover various event costs. Concerns were expressed about accountability and ensuring that funds donated or allocated would be properly accounted for with receipts and transparent financial management. Ultimately, the decision-making process involved weighing community support against fiscal responsibility, with varying opinions on how much financial support the Town should provide annually for Rocky Ridge Days.

A motion was made to amend the budget to \$5,500 for the purchase of Fireworks for Rocky Ridge Days for the current fiscal year as well as next fiscal year. The motion was made by Council Member Lucy Gold and seconded by Council Member Bethany Sturgeon. Council Member Andrew Aagard abstained. All others voted in favor.

Allocation of funds for the position of Water/EMS Director:

The Water/EMS Director's start date has been moved up from July to May to coincide with ongoing work to maintain Water/EMS. The budget has been amended accordingly to accommodate this adjustment.

Paying Down Water Bonds – Issuing a Substantial Payment:

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Discussion on whether to delay paying down a water bond, as the Town continues to earn significant interest from the loan in the Public Treasurer's Investment Fund (PTIF). Currently, the Town has earned \$18,000 in interest from the PTIF, and this figure is expected to reach approximately \$23,000 by year-end. Conversely, the annual interest payment on the bond is \$13,000. Historically, the town has not consistently exceeded its interest earnings over interest payments. After consultation between Rachel, Casey and Mayor Allred, there was consideration of postponing the pay down until interest rates decrease. Additionally, there was mention of funding the construction of a new Well (#1 Well House) which has not been budgeted for. The proposal involved utilizing reserve water funds for this project, potentially impacting those reserves. Further discussion ensued about the financial implications and the necessity of allocating funds for a potential Well House Project, acknowledging the need to balance immediate operational needs with long-term financial strategies.

Mayor Allred asked for any other questions or comments. None were given. Mayor Allred then closed the Public Hearing for Amendments to Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget.

2. Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Mayor Allred opened the Public Hearing for the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

The Town Council received and reviewed amendments, utilizing both paper copies and screens in the Council Chambers for detailed information.

The budget line for Animal Control was removed, as it has not been active in the system for over 10 years.

An expense of \$765,000 is expected in donations to cover the expense of completing the Sports Courts in the next fiscal year.

Due to the Wage Increase being the only thing that wasn't thoroughly gone over in the Work Session the key topic of deliberation for the Preliminary Budget for Year 2024-2025 was the wage increases for employees. During the meeting, attention centered on determining whether to implement a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) alone or to consider additional increases. The current COLA rate was cited around six percent (6%), with the approved wage increases (COLA percentages) referenced the prior two years.

Various viewpoints were exchanged regarding past wage adjustments. There were also personal reflections on compensation relative to colleagues' roles and responsibilities. Concerns were expressed over equitable compensation practices, referencing both historical context and comparisons to volunteer and staff work with certifications noted.

Ultimately, a motion was made by Council Member Andrew Aagard for a 6% wage increase, seconded by Council Member Bethany Sturgeon; all others in favor.

Mayor Allred asked for any other questions or comments. None were given. Mayor Allred then closed the Public Hearing for the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

DEPARTMENTAL UPDATES:

1. **EMS/CERT:** None
2. **Water:** Road Department Head Terry Allred updated on the progress with Well Three (#3)

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where six new epoxy-coated pipes have been acquired and prepared for installation. Additional measures include cleaning oil drip tubes and discussing the epoxy coating of existing pipes underwater to extend their lifespan. There's also a plan to add an anode to mitigate corrosion. These efforts may delay reassembly by a week or two but are considered beneficial. Concerning water conservation, mandatory watering restrictions from May 1 to October 1 were reiterated due to repairs on the north water source. The schedule includes no watering between 10 a.m. and 6 p.m., specific watering days based on location, and encouragement for household water conservation. Plans to distribute this information door-to-door were also discussed and approved.

3. Road: None

4. P & Z: None

5. Admin: Marilyn provided updates on administrative matters focusing particularly on preparations for Rocky Ridge clean-up day. Discussions revolved around scheduling the event and coordinating dumpster drop-off. Rachel was given the responsibility of coordinating clean-up day with Country Garbage. Given the community's schedule, it was agreed to tentatively schedule the clean-up for either June 7th-8th or June 28th-29th, taking into account volunteer availability. Concerns were raised about effective dumpster management and enhancing recycling efforts to ensure the clean-up proceeds smoothly. It was noted that volunteers will oversee the clean-up activities. Additionally, it was mentioned that gift cards were distributed to volunteers last year as a token of appreciation and intend to continue this practice for the upcoming clean-up event.

Monthly Expenditures will be reviewed at a later time. Those with questions can reach out to the Clerk/Recorder if needed.

6. Park: None

7. Library: None

***OPEN FLOOR:**

1. Citizen Items: None

2. Town Council Items: None

Adjournment:

Council Member Lucy Gold moved to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Joanna Covington seconded the motion, all others voted in favor with the exception of Council Member Andrew Aagard who abstained.

The Public Hearing was adjourned at 10:13 pm.

/s/ Marilyn Bronson

Approved by Town Clerk/Recorder

Marilyn Bronson; UCC, CMC