

**MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE
THATCHER TOWN COUNCIL
November 18, 2019**

Councilmembers present: Vice Mayor Allen, Councilman Rapier, Councilman Bryce, Councilwoman Smith, Councilman Welker.

Councilmembers absent: Mayor Rivera, Councilwoman Howard.

Staff present: Town Manager Heath Brown, Town Attorney Matt Clifford, Town Engineer Tom Palmer, Police Chief Shaffen Woods, Fire Chief Mike Payne, Deputy Clerk Michelle Mortensen, Officer Ellsworth, Tommy Nicholas, Gary Allred

Visitors: Ward Weaver, Daneece Cluff, Phil Oliver, Lisa Oliver, Ashlynn Oliver, David Sowders, Jason Larson, Travis Larson, Anthon Ellsworth, Joseph Bull, Mila Millar, Clara Barron, Morgan Cluff, Topher Rublacaca, Milan Millar, Anna Mata, Grady Allen, Lance Henrie, Judge Rhodes, Merri Aden, Rylee Aden, Tyson Richins, Lila Millar, Mackenzie Millar, Anna Mata, Lydia Mata, Joe & Heather Bull, Carson Richins, Wendy Millar, Ty Allen, McKay Ellsworth, McKay Ferrin, Scott Adams, Melanie & Amelia Thuzek

AGENDA

Welcome and Call Meeting to Order by Vice Mayor Allen at 6:30. Vice Mayor Allen stated that we have a quorum. I would like to excuse Mayor Rivera and Councilwoman Howard.

Pledge of Allegiance led by McKay Ellsworth.

PUBLIC HEARING:

None

OPEN CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Representatives from the Lego Robotics Team from Thatcher Middle School stood and explained that they had come up with a problem they saw in the community and present solutions. Joseph Bull stated that they would like to get ADA's put in at the parks. He explained that last year there was a girl at track practice who's heart stopped. He would like to see them put at the parks in case it happened again. Another student stated and we know that it could be really useful in a life threatening situation but are not sure where they could be located.

Milo Millar stood and explained that his group represented the Gila Valley Micromanagers. We saw the plans for the new park, and have some ideas that we hope you will consider. Travis Larson stood and said that he likes to play football. We saw that there are going to be

soccer goals and I was thinking that we could add two poles to the top so that we could play football as well. Clara Barron stood and said that she thought it would be a good idea to have a contest every year to have people come up with drawings and then paint a mural somewhere at the park, and every year repaint it. Morgan Cluff said that she would like to see a Dignity landing slide added, so that someone with a disability can slide down and scoot over for someone to help them. Topher Rubalcava stated he would like to see a big Connect 4 put in so kids could have more fun.

The Thatcher Elementary 4th grade Robotics club was also represented. Anna Mata stated that she would like to see an allergy awareness sign put up at the park because 1 in 13 kids suffer from food allergies.

Chris Carrell stood and mentioned that he was the coach of the middle school robotics team. I took my students on a field trip and we noticed some things while we were out. One of the things was at the park on Reay Lane, we noticed that while the playground equipment is ADA compliant because of the transfer bar, it would be nearly impossible for someone in a wheelchair to be able to play. It would be nice if the equipment at the new park was more accessible to those with disabilities. Also at this park has a sidewalk which goes all the way around, but some of the slabs of the sidewalk are inaccessible by wheelchair because the trees are planted so close to the sidewalk.

Rachel Allen spoke wondering if you would consider lowering the speed limit on 1st Avenue between Church Street and 8th. Councilman Bryce asked how much. Rachel stated maybe to 25 mph. .

PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

A. Melanie Tluczek with Gila Watershed Partnership – Gila River Linear Park & Trail

Melanie stood and thanked the council for letting her speak. She presented the outline for the Gila River Linear Park. She explained that they were lucky enough to get some money to bring this idea to life. Freeport McMoran and William Flora Foundation put up about \$75,000 towards this process. The concept includes a three mile walking path from the 8th Avenue bridge to the Reay Lane bridge and encompasses the entire area. It would link up with a number of the trail systems in Safford and Thatcher and coordinate with the Safford sports complex that is in the planning phase. We are asking for support from the private land users and municipalities and would like them to give trail easements in the flood plain area adjacent to the river. We want to be a significant community amenity. We want to improve the environmental quality and clean up the flood plain. Some of the measurable benefits are property values increasing, can attract tourism, and an increase in physical activity. It can also aid in stormwater management.

City of Safford voted last week to approve the MOU. This MOU is a partnership showing support and we are in the process of getting the landowners to sign

these. Once this is in place a more conceptual design will be put in place. We are also collecting data and using the Trust for Public Land to help the homeowners. Once we have a final master plan then we will start looking for funding. We will have this done by June 2020.

1. CONSENT AGENDA:

- B. Approve minutes of the October 21, 2019 Regular Council Meeting.
- C. Planning and Zoning Monthly Report.
- D. Police Monthly Report.
- E. Approval of Invoices.
- E. Financial Reports.

Motion was made by Councilman Rapier and seconded by Councilwoman Smith. Motion carries unanimously.

2. OLD BUSINESS: Discussion, consideration and possible action

- A. Town of Thatcher Employee Handbook Update

Mr. Brown explained that we have been working with the Employer's Council on the employee handbook for some time. The main goal in revising the handbook was to make sure that we are in compliance with all the laws. There were significant changes made to the drug and alcohol policy. The discipline and appeal sections were reworded. One change that I do propose is the funeral leave policy to include three days of paid leave for immediate family. Several items in there have been removed to put in an employee personnel policy that isn't appropriate for the employee handbook such as recruitment, appointment, change of assignment.

One other change was the amount of leave time that an employee is allowed to rollover. We have had a limit on the amount of leave time you can accrue but the law states that you have to allow 40 hours of leave accrual per year, so we changed that to be compliant. Councilman Bryce stated that I am a little concerned about the maximum accrual of PTO that we let carryover. Isn't that a liability? Mr. Brown explained that if you have over 90% of the maximum allowed accrual rate, then you are allowed to sell back back up to 40 hours the first pay period in December. So now if you have 760 or more hours, then you have to sell enough hours to get to 760 hours. When you leave, depending on how long you have been with the Town you can get paid out for your time. Councilman Bryce stated that I'm less concerned as I initially was because there is no ability to become compensated during sick time then. I do not think the accrual amount is

too high. Mr. Brown stated that our accrual rate is very common. Councilman Rapier mentioned that he would like it to be communicated that if the employee chooses to take their pay in one lump sum that they will get hit with high taxes. Councilman Welker asked if we knew what the liability was as of the last financials. It is one of the biggest growing liabilities because it is something that eventually gets paid out. Mr. Brown stated that I don't know that off the top of my head.

Councilman Welker stated that I would like to look at that liability a little closer. It is definitely something that can come back and bite you if you don't understand the ramifications. Councilman Bryce stated that I think you have to budget for that and have that as a reserve to pay. What a lot of organizations will do is pay you out at 50% at separation to cut their liability in half. Mr. Brown explained that this isn't a change. Councilman Welker said it isn't a change, but it is also something in general that we should be looking at because of the monetary amount.

Motion: Action: Table, Moved by Councilman Welker, Seconded by Councilman Rapier. Motion carries unanimously.

9. **NEW BUSINESS:** Discussion, consideration and possible action

A. Gila River Linear Park & Trail - Memorandum of Understanding

Motion: Action: Approve, Moved by Councilman Rapier, Seconded by Councilwoman Smith. Motion carries unanimously.

B. Appointment of Merri Aden to Deputy Magistrate

Mr. Brown mentioned that we have had to have some substitute judges lately and it can get expensive. Many other courts have Deputy Magistrates and I think this is a great idea. Judge Rhodes stated that City of Safford did this before we merged the courts together.

Motion: Action: Approve, Moved by Councilman Rapier, Seconded by Councilwoman Smith. Motion carries unanimously.

10. **INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:**

A. Town Manager's Report

Mr. Brown mentioned that work is progressing at the recreation complex. The rough earth work is all done and all the sewer taps are in. Currently we are putting in the electric conduit and primary power out there. We will be starting

shortly on the water mains and the potable water. We continue to work with Rob Merrill on the construction. We are also looking at items to use in construction and CKC donated whatever we wanted out of their bone yard to repurpose. The next thing we will get done is the mechanical room. We are shooting to get the grass planted, that is our first major goal.

The contractors are doing well on Church Street. We have the first layer of asphalt from Highway to 70 to 1st Avenue done. They should be starting curbing tomorrow on the next section. Wes Miner has been putting a pipe in over on 1st Street where we had a ditch overflowing. We have hired a mechanic to replace Rusty, Todd Thatcher who is coming from ADOT. Arnold Lopez will be retiring. He will be coming two or three days a month and reading meters. The nice thing about his position is that his replacement will be someone to help us build and maintain the recreation complex. Brent Morris will also be retiring around the first of the year, but he will be staying long enough to let us hire someone for his position. It will have to be an electrician, so we will be advertising for that right away so they have some time to train with Brent. Vice Mayor Allen asked if we could have someone look at the sidewalk that Mr. Carrell addressed and Mr. Brown stated that we will look at that right away.

B. Fire Department Report

Chief Payne stated that we have a house that was donated to us which we are going to burn on December 7th. We have had a company come in and check the house for asbestos. Pima has been using the house for training as well, and we will be doing some joint training before the burn. We will also have an entry in the light parade that night. Vice Mayor Allen stated please thank our firemen.

C. Police Department Report

Chief Woods mentioned that we will have the police Humvee in the light parade and we are actually turning that into more of a community friendly vehicle for kids and things. We recently had that repainted and Jared is getting it ready for us. We have had some officers at the middle school talking to kids about internet crimes. Other than that it is business as usual.

D. Council Reports

None

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS& POTENTIAL QUORUM'S

None

12. ADJOURNMENT

Motion: Action: Adjourn, Moved by Councilman Rapier, Seconded by Councilwoman Smith at 7:43 p.m.

APPROVED:

Michelle Mortensen, Deputy Clerk

Bob Rivera, Mayor

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the regular meeting of the Town Council of the Town of Thatcher held on this 18th day of November 2019. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Michelle Mortensen, Deputy Clerk