

**NOTICE OF MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
THATCHER TOWN COUNCIL
February 22, 2021**

Councilmembers present: Mayor Randy Bryce, Councilman Rapier, Councilman Welker, Councilwoman Smith, Councilwoman Howard, Councilman Vining

Councilmembers absent: Councilman Carlton

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, McKay Ferrin

Visitors: Vance Bryce, John Howard, Brittney Hernandez, Jeff Henley

AGENDA

Welcome and Call Meeting to Order at 6:30. Mayor Bryce stated this is a public hearing and council meeting for the Town of Thatcher and I would like to welcome you.

Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Bryce.

PUBLIC HEARING

- A. To consider the matter of Ordinance 188-2020, replacing the existing “Medical Marijuana Uses” section of the Zoning Ordinance with the proposed “Marijuana Regulations” text.

Jeff Henley stood and stated that I live in Quail Ridge and it is the only subdivision that does not have a playground. I would like to throw that idea out there so that our kids can have a place to play. It would also be nice to have some direct access to the walking path that is along Golf Course Road.

OPEN CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

John Howard stood and stated that I had a conversation today about the dyke that goes over to the walking path. It would be a great Eagle scout project for someone to build some stairs over the dyke. Just wanted to let you know that it is being addressed.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES:

None

CONSENT AGENDA:

- A. Approve Minutes of the January 25, 2021 Regular Council Meeting.
- B. Planning and Zoning Monthly Report.
- C. Police Monthly Report.
- D. Approval of Invoices.
- E. Financial Reports.

Motion was made by Councilwoman Howard and was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith to approve the consent agenda. Motion carries unanimously.

OLD BUSINESS:

- A. **ORDINANCE 188-2020:** AN ORDINANCE OF THE COMMON COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF THATCHER, ARIZONA, AMENDING THE TOWN OF THATCHER ZONING ORDINANCE BY REPLACING SECTION 13.15 OF ARTICLE 13, "MEDICAL MARIJUANA USES" WITH THIS ORDINANCE, "MARIJUANA REGULATIONS"; ESTABLISHING A PURPOSE; SETTING FORTH DEFINITIONS; PROHIBITING MARIJUANA ON PUBLIC PROPERTY; REGULATING MARIJUANA ESTABLISHMENTS AND MARIJUANA TESTING FACILITIES; ESTABLISHING REGULATIONS FOR PERSONAL USE AT AN INDIVIDUAL'S PRIMARY RESIDENCE; AUTHORIZING RETAIL SALES FROM MARIJUANA AND MARIJUANA PRODUCTS; IMPOSING FEES; SETTING FORTH VIOLATIONS; AND PROVIDING FOR ENFORCEMENT AND PENALTIES; ALSO, MODIFYING SECTION 7.2 AND 8.1 ESTABLISHING ALLOWABLE ZONES FOR MARIJUANA ESTABLISHMENTS.

Mr. Brown mentioned that this item was on our agenda at the last council meeting to consider the portions of this ordinance. I have written it on the direction that I received at the last meeting. I wrote it using the setbacks that we used for the medical marijuana ordinance and with it requires any new facilities to be a dual-purpose facility. The zoning changes allow the distribution in the C-2 zone with those requirements and, cultivation and testing in the industrial zone if it meets the setbacks. Mayor Bryce stated that this was a change that went to planning and zoning. Mr. Brown answered yes that they asked Council to approve it like it was written. Councilwoman Howard asked if still we can only have two facilities in our county. Mr. Brown answered yes, and the state will not issue any non-profit medical

licenses. Mayor Bryce stated that I am good with this. They have opportunities to change how regulations were, but we wanted the standard of having someone that can do both and the accountability that comes with that. Motion was made by Councilman Rapier and was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith to approve Ordinance 188-2020. Motion carries unanimously.

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Chamber of Commerce Presentation – Vance Bryce

Mr. Bryce stood with Brittney Hernandez and provided the Council with the Chamber's annual report. The Chamber is approaching its centennial in 2026. We need to build our institutions to get us through the next 100 years. Normally the Chamber is creating festivals, but this last year we have learned new skills and started new programs. We created a Gila Valley Stimulus Plan Facebook group which showed which restaurants were open and what their specials were. The Chamber highlighted the Gila Valley gift certificate program which provided deep discounts so that businesses could sell lots of gift certificates. We also created a website to help show where they could get the gift certificates.

One of our top priorities in the next fiscal year is to be a major leader in gathering organizations together. As we continue to work with the Town of Thatcher the Chamber is proposing full press support of our economic community. The Chamber's current funding plan is unsustainable. We rely on the City of Safford's bed tax to fund our operations. Bed tax is used to fund tourism and marketing. I would like to propose a more equitable funding plan where we receive 38% from City of Safford, 27% from our annual memberships, 20% from the Town of Thatcher, 5% from Graham County, and 10% from The Town of Pima based of the population. This would move the Town of Thatcher from from 5% to 20%. We need to market the Gila Valley to our own people and tourism will follow. Our ask today is for you to direct Heath Brown to work with us. Councilman Rapier asked what is the 20%. Mr. Bryce answered it would be \$52,000. Councilman Vining asked what our current contribution is. Mr. Bryce answered it is \$7,000. Councilman Rapier asked if you have looked at using percentages instead of population. I am curious how those numbers would line up with using percentages. Mr. Bryce stated that I will get those numbers from Mr. Brown and Pima.

B. Deputy Magistrate Appointment – Ned Rhodes

Mr. Brown explained that Merri Aden is our new magistrate and was the deputy before so she could fill in if Mr. Rhodes was not available. If we have Mr. Rhodes as a deputy magistrate then we have someone who can

fill in if needed. We will pay him only if he works. Motion was made by Councilman Rapier to appoint Ned Rhodes as deputy magistrate and was seconded by Vice Mayor Smith. Motion carries unanimously.

C. Allred Lane Right-of Way

Mr. Brown mentioned that we are doing a lot right now to improve drainage. It has us in that mode of thinking what other streets we need to acquire right-of-way. I have this on the agenda to start negotiations with the property owners. We would not make any decisions until we brought it back to council. We do have some right of way down on the east end of Allred Lane.

D. Pickleball Courts at Thatcher High School

Mr. Brown stated that we continue to get lots of interest and requests in pickleball. Chris Cook has been the go between, between the Town and the school and they are willing to develop the basketball courts into pickleball courts. Most of the cost is on the Town as the school does not have a lot of extra funds. According to the outline of the lights, nets, and courts it is about \$37,000. Councilwoman Howard asked if the public would be allowed to use them. Mr. Brown answered that is the only way that we would participate is if they were open to the public. Mayor Bryce mentioned that I love the collaboration and think the expense is minimal. The only thing I would like to see addressed is a better access to the courts.

E. Budget Workshop Date

Mayor Bryce stated that I think we could have our workshop on the 8th and move council meeting until the 22nd.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS:

A. Town Manager's Report

- Public Works Projects – Recreation Complex (restrooms), Pedestrian Crossing at 1st Street, Welcome to Thatcher Signs, We are nearly done with the parking lot and concrete work. The paths on the west side are done. We will be running the path down to the cemetery entrance. From there we will go install the Welcome to Thatcher signs. They will also do the lighting and landscaping around them. We missed a driveway when we were doing Church Street, so we will add that and then get back to the recreation complex. The plan right now is stopping concrete work and working on the mechanical room and which would include underground lighting and the security system. That would complete all the underground except for the drip and then we could complete the path to get the whole loop in. If we want to get things done more visible, then we could work on the playground area and the pickle ball courts. The soccer goals and backstops will be in by

baseball season. We are going to move the t-ball games up to those fields. We are working on plans to bid out the bathrooms.

- Cemetery Trees and Cemetery Committee
We have about 40 trees in. We have a drip system for about 40-60 more. We are waiting on trees right now. I talked to Councilman Vining about the cemetery committee. I think it would be appropriate to advertise for it and approach those that are interested.
- Census – Report Expected May 27, 2021
The census will be out May 27 for city and town numbers.
- Recreation Center – Meetings, Steering Committee
We have a meeting set up inviting City of Safford on March 3. We will start with a blank slate and see what the interest is. City of Safford is interested and wants to be in the discussion. Councilwoman Howard stated that I do not want to duplicate what we already have. I want to look at what we need to serve our community. We do not want to take away from small businesses.
- Thatcher Middle School Gym Aid
We use the gym for a lot of our programs. One of the motors went out on the basket raisers, so I agreed to replace that.
- Natural Gas Prices \$4 to \$400
With the natural gas hikes that went on with the Texas freeze natural gas went from \$4 a unit to \$400 a unit. We get some of our electric from gas powered so we are going to be on the hook for that very expensive electricity. It was for a short period of time, but we will have to pay 3-4 times what we normally do for February. It does not get reflected to our customers, but it does us. The flip side is that we are about \$400,000 in the black and our electric is doing well long term.
- Graham County Coop/South West Gas Franchise Tax
There is not a lot to add. Mr. Clifford and I discussed it again today and Southwest Gas is not willing to work with us and honor the agreement that we could put into place before the takeover.
- Financial Summary
We were in the black for all the funds. All the funds year to date look good. Revenues still look great.
- Capital Purchases Report
I took everything that I felt was a one-time unique purchase I put what we budgeted and what we spent. Lots of things are done and some we are in the middle of. Dan Martin is working on bids for the security cameras for Town Hall. The HVAC unit is being replaced tomorrow. We spent more on our paving project than what we budgeted. Another thing that shot the cost up was we were going to mill Railroad Street and when we tried to do that it unraveled so we had to rebuild the pavement section. We still have a chip seal to go. We have spent about half of the money on the rec complex and we will be starting the sewer cameras soon. Councilwoman Howard asked if we are paying the extra money from contingency.

Mr. Brown stated that it came out of the HURF fund.

- Platt Property – Appraisal Pending
We have someone scheduled to do the appraisal; it was about four weeks out.

B. Fire Department Report

- Calendar / Events
- Calls / Activity

Chief Payne mentioned that we have had a couple of structure fires. One of the problems we had was the amount of debris around the houses. Both houses were in the fire district. Training wise, we will be doing our regular training.

C. Police Department Report

- Department Updates

Chief Woods stated that we did our annual firearms training. On the 5th is the Gordon Graham conference over at the College. We are just about ready to hire our new guy. Nick Orr should be hired before the next meeting.

D. Council Reports

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS & POTENTIAL QUORUM'S

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made to adjourn council meeting at 8:21 by Vice Mayor Smith and was seconded by Councilwoman Howard.

APPROVED:

Michelle Mortensen, Deputy Clerk

Randy Bryce, 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 22nd day of February. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Michelle Mortensen, Deputy Clerk