

**** Page 1** A SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY OF THREE FORKS, MONTANA, DECEMBER 9TH, 2025**

DECEMBER 9TH, 2025, The Three Forks City Council met at the Three Forks City Hall at 206 S. Main Street and via Zoom. (Zoom is a virtual meeting tool which the City began using due to COVID-19 and social distancing guidelines and continues to use to encourage participation from the safety of one's home.) The meeting was chaired by Mayor Randy Johnston, who called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

ROLL CALL: City Council members Ed Tharp, Gene Townsend, Roxi McDermott, Reagan Hooton, (Warren) Garret Buchanan, and Alex Blackburn were present. City Treasurer Kelly Smith, City Clerk Crystal Turner, Gallatin County Sheriff Sergeant Desmond Doonan, and Three Forks Rodeo Director Casey Elmore were present at City Hall. No staff attended via Zoom.

The record reflected a quorum with the attendance of six (6) Council members and the meeting was held.

The **Pledge of Allegiance** to the American Flag was led by Mayor Johnston. Mayor Johnston reminded the audience that this meeting was audio and video recorded and may be streamed via Zoom and on our Facebook page.

GUESTS: Robert Buchholz, Trevor and Kerry Walter, Whitney Taylor, Elizabeth (EB) Love, Lindsie Diebold were present at City Hall. Kelly Bugland and Mickie Imberi attended via Zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS (For items not on the agenda)

There were no public comments or concerns for items not on the agenda.

CONSENT AGENDA

- a) City Claims Paid on 11/26/2025 to Mail Utility Bills Totaling \$215.25
- b) Three Forks Rodeo Arena Board Claims to be Paid
- c) City Claims to be Paid
- d) Service Agreement with TnT Electrical to Perform Electrical Services for the Fire Hall Addition (not to exceed \$21,000)
- e) Draw Packet #37 for the Water Distribution Project in the Amount of \$124,498.76: ARPA Minimum Allocation Grant #21 for \$40,926.69, and MCEP #6 for \$83,572.07
- f) Draw #7 for the Jefferson River Flood Mitigation Project to Reimburse City Expenses \$17,021.45

Councilman Buchanan moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Councilman Tharp and Councilwoman Hooton seconded the motion in unison. There were no public questions or comments.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

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PUBLIC HEARINGS

**Public Hearing and Decision on a Resolution Deciding to Close City
Departments All Day on Friday, December 26, 2025 and January 2, 2026**

Mayor Johnston read what would be Resolution #464-2025 if approved, into the record in its entirety.

Public Comment: EB Love asked how to approve Friday after Christmas in perpetuity. Crystal Turner replied if Christmas fell on a Tuesday, staff may ask for Monday off instead.

Councilwoman Hooton moved to approve Resolution #464-2025, a resolution of the City of Three Forks deciding to close city departments all day on Friday, December 26, 2025 and January 2, 2026.

Councilman Tharp seconded the motion.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

**Public Hearing and Decision on the Zoning & Planning Board's
Recommendation on a Request for Conditional Use Permit by Whitney Taylor
to Operate a Dog Training Facility (Shadow Paws) within the Residential
Zoning District, Located at Lot 1, Block 10A of the Headwaters Addition,
Commonly Known as 115 S. Kansas Street**

Garret Buchanan recused himself, stating he has been friends with the applicant since kindergarten.

Zoning & Planning Board liaison Reagan Hooton recapped the staff report, noting the application is no longer for the front and side yards, just the interior of the garage. She edited her recap of the staff report to reflect the Zoning & Planning Board's changes and recommended conditions.

Applicant Presentation: Whitney Taylor introduced herself and said that she measured her neighbor's fence, which is a 6-foot tall fence so she requested condition #3 reflect a 6-foot tall fence to match her neighbor's. She also requested postponing the paving of the driveway condition (#2) until there are more favorable weather conditions.

The Council agreed to both requested changes. Alex Blackburn asked if it would be amenable to add an expiration date to the pavement condition. Staff agreed that it would be legal.

Public Comment: EB Love spoke that she is not in opposition of someone making income nor of Whitney's business, however she encouraged the Council to consider [in light of what she called a barking dog epidemic] to not set a precedent of bringing more dogs into town. Lindsie Diebold asked if the City already had an ordinance against boarding kennels. Staff answered yes. EB Love recanted her public comment. The Mayor

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asked if the dog owners would be on-site when she was offering classes. Whitney Taylor replied yes.

Councilman Townsend moved to accept the application with the 10 conditions stated in the staff report, changing condition #2 that parking upgrades be completed by 6/1/2026, and condition #3 that the fence listed at 8-foot be a 6-foot fence. Councilwoman McDermott seconded the motion.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

Garret Buchanan reentered the public meeting.

REPORT OF OFFICERS

Gallatin County Sheriff Office Sgt. Doonan reported the calls for service are at 52 so far for December. November had a total of 261 calls, October had 209 calls, and again these are in the city limits only. He said he is looking forward to Christmas Stroll; the Sheriff Office will be doing all road closures and patrols, and will have mounted patrol on site.

City Clerk Crystal Turner reported that Big Sky Passenger Rail Authority sent an invoice for \$400 for annual membership. Crystal explained the City has been inconsistent with this membership/support so was not sure if she should enter it as a claim. Gene Townsend said he believes it is a good thing to reintroduce the passenger rails and get more vehicles off the road. Reagan Hooton agreed and said she would support it. Gene added, "The train may not come through Three Forks but Bozeman isn't far away to get on the train. This is a way to utilize existing rail, provide transportation for those who do not like to fly but also do not want to drive, and reduce the number of vehicles on the road." Crystal will input the claim and if others wish to pull it when it is up for approval, they can.

Crystal also reported the Montana Municipal Interlocal Authority is seeking two Board members. Crystal explained what the MMIA is to Alex and incoming Councilman Robert Buchholz, as well as the meeting times, Board Director roles, as well as subcommittee options. She asked the Council to think about if they would like to serve in this capacity and get back to her soon.

City Treasurer Kelly Smith did not have anything to report.

Three Forks Rodeo Board Annual Report

Board Chairman Casey Elmore said the July 2025 Rodeo was pretty much the same as last year. He thanked the other board members, the Arena Manager (who he said does a fantastic job at keeping the arena in good shape), the Marketing Director and the Secretary because he could not do it without them. "Attendance at this year's rodeo was just about 2,700 on Friday and 3,000 on Saturday. We are working on bleacher bids, we would like to tear

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out the old wooden ones. Last year, we upgraded our sound system by adding a new PA system. We are going to add two speakers for the music side of it because we got feedback that the music part just wasn't loud enough, but the voice/announcer was good. We also got all new electrical on the west end for vendors and food trucks. This was the first time we didn't trip a breaker. That was a 2-year project. We were able to reduce the use of five generators with this upgrade, and still was able to run the big TV screens," Casey informed the Council. Casey also told the Council that the rodeo grounds were rented for other events or used by open riding/practice every single weekend all spring and summer.

Gene Townsend complimented Casey on his job performance. He said, "You guys, Casey runs a good rodeo, there are lots of volunteers and it's a lot of fun. I don't know if you know this, but it takes over 100 volunteers to put the rodeo on. Crystal has a lot to do with that part of recruiting volunteers, but Casey runs a great program. Thank you Casey for the job you do," Gene said.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES (if any)

Gene Townsend reported the Budget Committee met with landowners to begin negotiations on the assessments for the Jefferson River Floodplain Mitigation. "I'm not going to talk numbers yet because it doesn't seem fair during negotiations, but also will be public eventually. I thought the meetings went well," Gene said. Kelly Smith added one party asked for copies of some of the documents we brought to the meeting, so they could review it. Our engineer is working on the legal metes and bounds since one landowner is ready to sign papers. "We are looking at paying half this year and half next year to help with tax implications," Kelly said.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Jefferson River Floodplain Project

Kelly Smith reported the floodplain permit has been submitted to the County; they have to authorize our permit, since we are working in their jurisdiction. Sean O'Callaghan had a couple questions and wanted to question/discuss with DNRC first. "It seems like the same report every month: we're getting closer, but I really do think we are nearly there now," she added.

Water Project

Mayor Johnston reported that Steve Johnston and Bill Wilson are slowly getting the pipe laid for the Wells #12 and #13. He said everyone thought there would be less groundwater in the fall and winter, but it has not reduced yet, so it has been slow work.

NEW BUSINESS

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There was no new business.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS (For items not on the agenda)

Lindsie Diebold, of the Three Forks Community Library Board just wanted to let everyone know they changed their meeting dates so they were not held just half-hour before the Council. "That way if you wanted to attend, or some of us wanted to attend your meeting, we could," she explained.

Kelly Bugland and Mickie Imberi both commented that they think the new form for the "Owner/Designee Agreement" of the water/sewer landowner/tenant issues discussed over the past couple of months is lacking and still unclear. They both asked for the wording to be modified. Crystal Turner asked what any suggestions for clarification were. Kelly Bugland said she did not have any yet. Crystal offered that as long as the form still meets the Council's intent/direction from Resolution #463-2025, we could modify it. Garret Buchanan asked for a copy of the form. Crystal said she would email it to all the council members so they could review it, as well as the City Attorney, and see if there could be clearer language.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Johnston recognized Roxi McDermott, as this would be her last meeting as a Councilmember. "We have had many meetings about different ordinances or her concerns while she was Council, she has learned a lot since she began," he said. He referenced an old friend he worked with for years, who has since passed. He was quite the guy and I spoke at his funeral but it reminded me to say the same to Roxi, "The Apostle Paul said, 'I fought a good fight, I ran the race, and most of all I kept the faith'."

Roxi McDermott thanked all for everything on her journey. "In this journey, which hasn't been very long but long enough to know I have way too many feelings to be on this board. I have learned a lot about the City, the community, thinking about things and dealing with things." Thanked all for helping her learn.

Gene Townsend reported that most of the Council and City staff have received an invitation to a Christmas party at the Townsend house. "The City crew got on me about restarting the Christmas party. So it will be Saturday the 20th of December at the Townsend house at 323 5th Ave. E. It's a way for Pat and I repay all those we ask to do stuff or help us throughout the year, like the Trails, the Rodeo, the Museum. And the City staff help us a lot, this is one way for us saying thank you." Gene added this it is also a way to say thank you to the Council, "You guys do a great job. Do we always agree? No, but it's fun and this is a way, at Christmas, we can get together and have a good time." Mayor Johnston

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thanked Gene for holding the meeting on the 20th, because it is his 52nd wedding anniversary and joked, "Now I don't have to take Vicky out."

Crystal Turner then administered the all the newly elected/appointed by acclimation Council members and Mayor their Oaths of Office and distributed their election certificates.

The next meeting will be on December 9, 2025, and will have the following items:

- 5:15PM will be the annual Joint Three Forks Council and Rural Fire District meeting
- 6PM will be the Council meeting so far with:
 - a. Election of Council Chairman for 2-year Term
 - b. Council Committee Assignments
 - c. City Clerk Annual Business License Report
 - d. Possibly other items

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Councilwoman Hooton. Councilman Townsend seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned without a vote taken by the Mayor's gavel at 6:55P.M.

Randy Johnston, Mayor

Crystal Turner, City Clerk