A SUMMARY OF PROCEEDINGS OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING CITY OF THREE FORKS, MONTANA, MAY 12TH, 2026

MAY 12TH, 2026, 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 Gene Townsend, Ed Tharp, Robert Buchholz (Warren) Garret Buchanan and Reagan Hooton were present. Alex Blackburn was excused. City Attorney Susan Swimley, City Clerk Crystal Turner and City Treasurer Kelly Smith were present at City Hall.

The record reflected a quorum with the attendance of five (5) 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 recorded.

GUESTS: George Chancellor, Gloria Howland, and Colter Metcalf attended in person at City Hall; no one attended via Zoom.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS (For items not on the agenda)
Colter Metcalf introduced himself saying he will be running for District 3 County Commissioner. He said that he just retired from the Gallatin County Sheriff Office and served as a Three Forks Police Officer prior to that. "I just love this community and am looking for a new way to serve our community. I would appreciate your vote, and I look forward to having an answer or work with you on any questions or issues you may have," he said.

CONSENT AGENDA

a. City Claims Paid due to Timeliness on 4/30/2026 in the Amount of $211.43
b. City Claims to be Paid
c. Three Forks Rodeo Arena Checks Cut at High School Rodeo 4/26/2026 Totaling $19,437.50 (Stock Contractor and three Judges)
d. Three Forks Rodeo Arena Claims to be Paid
e. Council Minutes of 4/14/2026 & 4/28/2026
f. Zoning & Planning Board Minutes of 3/12/2026
g. Manhattan Bank Pledged Securities through 3/31/2026
h. Draw Packet #24 for the Water Project Totaling $117,029.97 (26 for ARPA Minimum Allocation Grant for $95,972.24, #11 for MCEP for $21,057.73)
i. Draw Packet #12 for the Jefferson River Flood Mitigation Project Totaling $5,626.15

Councilman Buchholz moved to approve the Consent Agenda, as amended. Councilman Tharp seconded the motion. There was no public.

Motion Passed Unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARINGS
There were no public hearings.

OFFICER REPORTS
City Clerk Crystal Turner reported she attended the Montana Municipal Institute last week, for just two of the four days. She provided a training called "Council Meetings 101", which derailed from her PowerPoint presentation but there was great discussion. "There are several new clerks throughout the State, so it was good for them to hear those discussions and questions. I also learned about AI and how to verify it, as well as using it for any drafts, because we need to make sure we source every "fact" AI may provide," she reported.

City Treasurer Kelly Smith did not provide a report.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL COMMITTEES (if any)
Gene Townsend reported that the **Budget Committee** met on Friday, May 1st at 2:30PM. "First, we reviewed the proposals for the Workers' Compensation and Robert was not able to attend so we wanted to hear his opinion first," Gene said. Robert said he reviewed what Crystal had emailed and the committee's draft minutes and was supportive of their conclusions. Gene continued, "We would like to recommend First West Insurance out of Bozeman and have that on the next agenda." Crystal to create a notice to get to the newspapers and draft a resolution for 6/9 agenda.

Gene said, "We also went through the budget process, asked Kelly about revenues coming in. We talked a little about the cost of living for our employees and noted that second-half taxes would not be received until after May 30th." The committee discussed a fire department request to purchase a highway vehicle stabilization kit for $23,087.85, which would be split with the Rural Fire District. Gene expressed strong opposition to the purchase, arguing the cost was excessive and the equipment would primarily be useful to the City for earthquake response, which he considered an unlikely scenario. The discussion revealed that while the equipment could have multiple uses including lifting vehicles on the interstate for the Rural, the City's share would primarily fund earthquake preparedness, without other identified city uses. The group concluded they should consider having Keith come to explain the proposal in more detail. Garret said that he and his wife's household rule is "if it is a single use tool, it probably doesn't belong in the kitchen," so this sounds like that, and money could be spent better on turnouts or radios. Robert added SCBAs were mentioned last time as needing to be replaced soon. Susan Swimley asked if it could be used for uses other than earthquakes, for the city to support its share in the cost? Robert said he looked online and there are a lot of hydraulics and hydraulic hoses, and an expensive piece of equipment (including training for it) to even use this type of equipment. Garret said he looked closely at the generator outside the fire

hall, and he would be surprised if it worked. He thinks the funds could be better spent on a new generator.

Gene continued that the committee discussed whether Public Works had any planned big purchase? Not yet. They talked about a new truck but think all their equipment is running well right now.

Garret Buchanan reported the **Water/Sewer Committee** meeting was held on Wednesday, May 6th at 6PM to discuss the projects listed in Great West Engineering's draft wastewater PER. Steve Johnston attended and had printed out data of the BODs over previous years: 2021, 2022, 2025 (because GWE had provided 2023 and 2024). There was an increase in all those years which was an average of 1.5. "We start running into trouble when the town hits 20, so we have flexibility still. They talked about camera-ing the line, and I&I [inflow and infiltration] from water coming into our sewer mains household services, which gets treated and that could be due to broken sewers, sump pumps that are illegally connected to the sewer. Repairing and maintenance in broken lines, and this has not been high priority because the city has been working on more pressing projects like the water supply project (new wells), and once these projects are wrapped up he can put more resources on those repairs and decreasing I&I. Steve plans to use the city's own camera, and possibly borrow Manhattan's camera, to monitor flow data and identify sump pumps or other inflow sources.

Garret posed to the Council, "What action should we take, and how should we start addressing the sump pumps connected to the sewer? We need to review the ordinance and get some actionable items the Council can take on for those who are connected. One small sump pump could add 20,000 gallons of water to be treated."

Gene said the other issue is taking a real hard look at installing solar panels at the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to reduce our consumption. "We spent about $70,000 annually on gas/electric for the sewer systems. We do have a perfect spot out there at the WWTP, we should take a look at seeing what could be done to offset those costs, and it was one of the projects that was not brought up in the PER but is something we've been talking about for years. We will pursue it pretty hard this summer."

Garret reported they also discussed renewal for our wastewater discharge permit.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Jefferson River Flood Mitigation Project Update

Kelly Smith said there is not much to update. FEMA's response is in process. "We have a good FEMA contact now, who is attending our monthly meetings, and has a lot of input since they've returned to work. The reason there were so many conditions on the letter of map amendment permit, is because they were looking at our current map not the proposed map. Everyone is still saying [project completion] by the end of 2026, but

I said the other day in a meeting, *if it's still going on in 2027, I'll go dig it myself.*"

Water Project Update
Mayor Johnston reported he spoke with Susan Hayes today, "Wells 12 and 13 are scheduled to go online in early June. Components all arrived last week and the electricians installed everything. Well 11 will probably be closer to being online mid-June."

NEW BUSINESS
Discussion of Out-of-City Limits Customer, Fairview Cemetery District, Utilizing City Water
The Mayor explained the Cemetery has requested the city to provide it with water for irrigation, which is out of city limits but has existing water infrastructure. They ceased using City water in 2016. Gene Townsend explained it used to be owned by the Catholic Church, and it was in disrepair so was given to the City, but the City could not support it financially, so a district was created. Susan Swimley said she has checked with the City's water rights attorney, who is OK with the City selling bulk water, but we need to have a contract in place with the Cemetery since they are out of district, and they will pay our bulk water rate for that. "Their usage cannot deplete our reserves, in favor of keeping the cemetery watered," she said. Garret Buchanan asked if it is standard potable water piped to the cemetery? The Mayor answered yes.
Gene asked what our current bulk water rates are now. Crystal Turner answered they are $30 for the first 100 cubic feet and $15 for each additional 100 cubic feet. Garret asked if this was only to offset when their well gets drier, or pumps less when the summer heat kicks in, or at the beginning of irrigation season? The Mayor said it would be to offset their supply, probably in July or August. Gene asked if there is backflow protection for our city water? The Mayor replied yes. Susan asked if the Council would like to proceed in this direction, she requested they make a motion and have discussion on how they want her to proceed.

Councilman Townsend moved to have the City Attorney devise a contract with Fairview Cemetery District to sell and serve bulk water. Councilman Buchanan seconded the motion. There was no public comment.
Motion Passed Unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS/CONCERNS (For items not on the agenda)
There were no public comments or concerns that were not on the agenda.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS
Mayor Johnston asked Reagan Hooton how the tree planting went. Reagan replied, "There were a lot of people there, mostly children: Girl Scouts and American Heritage Girls. I really want to thank Ed, Garret and Lindsie (Garret's wife) for pounding stakes in, cleaning up, and removing extra dirt." Mayor Jonston said he likes the [water] bags, "Anthony has been

filling them, and we planted the third tree at the rodeo grounds." Ed said Reagan did a really good job, took charge, kept the kids busy, and everything went smoothly. Reagan encouraged the volunteers to think about a location for next year, "And I suggested to the Girl Scouts to plant daffodils around the trees as another community project."

Gene Townsend updated the Council on the grants he applied for this year: Recreation Trails, which is a successful award of $37,000; Montana Stewardship, which is a successful award of $47,000; Gallatin County Open Space, which is a successful award of $100,000; and the AARP Community Challenge Grant was not selected for award. Gene said, "With match money that is being donated, we will have $200,000 towards trail maintenance. We already finished one project, which was added riprap, topsoil and seeding the edge of the 3rd pit (GCC-Trident donated all the rock, Roadarmel placed them and the topsoil, and Anthony seeded it). I am unhappy about the Community Challenge Grant which was pitched to be for a bird watching station. I gathered a lot of information on the Audubon and Sacajawea Audubon Society and still believe this would be a beneficial project. Since I was unsuccessful, if Gene and Pat come up with half the cost, would the City parks department be willing to put up the other half?" Reagan asked what a birdwatching station entails? Gene replied it would be near the gazebo, he hoped to have a paved path or maybe gravel to start, a little building with a hip roof and open for viewing, benches to sit underneath on a slab, and benches going back-to-back so a birdwatcher could watch the second or third ponds. Little tables to set your binoculars or cameras would be a nice addition too. It would be constructed out of rough timber approximately 15x20-foot. Crystal suggested this be on the next budget committee agenda.

The Mayor said it would be good to have the spruce trees sprayed for scale again this year. Reagan Hooton asked if it needed to be done annually. Gene Townsend replied no. Crystal Turner said the City has paid to have the spruce trees sprayed for several years in a row. Reagan thought maybe we could skip a year and have extra money for the birdwatching station.

The next meeting will be on June 9, 2026, at 6PM and will have the following items:

- Resolution to Accept First West Insurance as the City's Workers' Compensation Agency

ADJOURNMENT

Councilwoman Hooton motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Councilman Townsend. The Mayor adjourned the meeting at 6:56 P.M.

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Randy Johnston, Mayor Crystal Turner, City Clerk