



TOWN OF JEROME

POST OFFICE BOX 335, JEROME, ARIZONA 86331
(928) 634-7943
www.jerome.az.gov

MINUTES

SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING AND PUBLIC HEARING ON PROPOSED UTILITY RATE INCREASE OF THE TOWN OF JEROME COUNCIL CHAMBERS, JEROME TOWN HALL 600 CLARK STREET, JEROME, ARIZONA

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13, 2023, AT 6:15 PM

6:15pm (0:35) 1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor/Chairperson to call meeting to order
Town Clerk to call and record the roll.

Present were Mayor Alex Barber, Vice Mayor Jane Moore, council members Dr. Jack Dillenberg, Sage Harvey and Sonia Sheffield.

Staff present included Town Manager/Clerk Brett Klein, and Accounting Clerk/Administrative Specialist Michele Sharif

2. NEW BUSINESS

Discussion/Possible Action

6:15pm (0:47) A. Public Hearing on the Intent to Increase Water and Wastewater Rates or Rate Components, Fees or Service Charges

Mayor Alex Barber opened the public hearing at 6:15, followed by a brief introduction from Town Manager Brett Klein.

Mr. Klein then introduced Rate Consultant, Dan Jackson from economists.com to present information from their rate study regarding the proposed changes to water and wastewater rates for the Town.

Mr. Jackson addressed Council and Town residents with a power point presentation that outlined current industry trends, increasing costs, comparisons for surrounding communities, Town specific rate study information and proposed water and wastewater rate increases over the course of a 10 year plan.

Dr. Dillenberg shared his thoughts, noting that it is not an easy decision, however the Town is in a good position to implement something that will benefit the community.

Mayor Barber shared her thoughts, noting that the 400 town residents are not the need for an upgrade, it's the 2 million tourists that visit town, which makes it difficult to put the burden on the people that live here.

6:42 (27:08 – 27:20) there was some discussion amongst members of the audience causing Council members to call for order. Audience members were invited to share their thoughts or ask questions, they declined.

Jerome resident Margie Hardy asked a series of questions such as was consideration of our water availability compared to other towns included in the proposal? Were or are there any other sources of income or town subsidy such as using parking meters, increasing the number of meters, or increasing the daily parking costs? She added that seeing the proposal makes the increase not so scary.

Council member Sonia Sheffield expressed her thoughts imparting that commercial rates were changed previously to offset the costs incurred due to the increased load tourists create on the infrastructure. Additionally she is hesitant to put all responsibility onto the businesses, however perhaps there is a way to review commercial rates for businesses using more water/wastewater services than other businesses. Lastly, she is against passing on hardship to residents, however the town water rates have not been increased in over a decade.

Council member Sage Harvey followed with clarification that the Town currently subsidizes water and wastewater rates. Vice Mayor Jane Moore asked to hear from the public what their thoughts and questions and concerns are.

Jerome Resident, Ivy Stearman shared her thoughts regarding Jerome being an aging community, sharing that many families have moved away, and that many residents are on Social Security or may be in more precarious situations such as homes that may require more repairs more frequently. She expressed concern over the impact rate changes could have on the aging community and those that may have problems paying their water bill.

Ms. Hardy questioned if the Town would need more water tanks or additional funding in the future and how would it be funded? Sharing also that she believes that there should be more advertising in the town or outreach regarding the upcoming changes.

It was confirmed that this has been a project in process for a period of time now.

Jerome Resident Nancy Robinson shared with Council and fellow audience members, information from the City of Cottonwood regarding their water services. Based on the information provided by the City of Cottonwood, the city charges every customer a base charge of approximately \$95, then a volume charge per 1,000/gal.

Vice Mayor Moore shared with everyone her math based on her own personal residential water and sewer rates currently as well as at the 5 year proposal mark. Adding that over the course of the first 5 years it appears an increase of roughly \$50 total.

At approximately 6:56p.m. (41:39 – 43:12) Ms. Sheffield left the dais and council chambers for a brief period.

Ms. Moore then shared her thoughts on being a business owner in Town using water. She added businesses make money off the ability to use water and sewer, unlike a resident, so it seems fair that the businesses pay higher water and sewer rates as part of the cost of doing business. She points out in her shop they may use more water making clay, but not nearly as much, for example, as a hotel or a restaurant. Finishing, Ms. Moore acknowledges that it is hard for those retired or on fixed income, and that maybe there is something the Town can look into to assist residents having difficulty paying their utility bill.

Ms. Harvey clarified an earlier question from Ms. Hardy regarding additional water tanks. She shared that there is currently budgeting for additional water storage.

Ms. Barber invited anyone else to share their comments or thoughts.

Jerome resident Mark Krmpotich shared that the community needs to be thinking into the future, the next 50, 75 and 100 years. The town has existed and will continue to exist long after its current residents are gone, so we should be looking not just at the next few years, but more long term.

Ms. Barber asked council for their thoughts and input on 2 letters received from Jerome residents.

Ms. Stearman shared concerns regarding fire hazards, using a neighboring property as an example if water has been shut off to a residence. She was advised to address zoning issues such as trash on a property with the Zoning Administrator.

Ms. Robinson recalled there possibly having been prior conversation regarding a base charge to customers/residents that spend part of their year out of Town, instead of stopping paying for services completely while their homes in town are vacant.

Ms. Moore and Dr. Dillenberg both shared sentiments that it is a good idea.

Dr. Dillenberg reiterated earlier statements that he believes there will be future opportunities to increase revenue from visitors, and asked if there was anything that needed to be decided today.

Mayor Barber closed the public hearing at 7:12p (57:12)

7:12pm (57:20) B. Consideration of New / Increased Water and Wastewater Rates, or Rate Components or Service Charges, and Directing Staff to Take Action for Council to Adopt Water and Wastewater Rates, or Rate Components, or Service Charges at a Future Council Meeting

Following the public hearing, Council will discuss and consider new / increased water and wastewater rates, or rate components, or service charges, and may direct staff to take action for formal adoption at a future meeting.

Mayor Barber asked Council for input

Dr. Dillenberg shared that he believes there will be opportunities in the future to generate future revenue, but this increase is not excessive, and we need to move forward.

Ms. Harvey agreed.

Motion to Place Consideration of Scenario No. 1 on the Agenda of the Regular Council Meeting of December 12, 2023

COUNCILMEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	ABSTAIN
BARBER				X		
DILLENBERG	X		X			
HARVEY		X	X			
MOORE			X			
SHEFFIELD			X			

7:15pm (1:00:42) 3. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to Adjourn at 7:15pm

COUNCILMEMBER	MOTION	SECOND	AYE	NAY	ABSENT	ABSTAIN
BARBER	X		X			
DILLENBERG			X			
HARVEY			X			
MOORE			X			
SHEFFIELD		X	X			

APPROVE:

ATTEST:

Alex Barber, Mayor

Brett Klein, Town Manager/Clerk

Date

DRAFT