

*Town of Garfield*  
**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
*November 24, 2008*

**CALL TO ORDER:** Mayor Jarrod Pfaff called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** Jarrod Pfaff, Andrew Flodin, Larry Hunt, John Kuehner, Tim Southern, and Rob Watkins. Staff - Public Works Superintendent Dave Ulrick, Police Officer Joe Merry, Clerk/Treasurer Annie Pillers. Public present: Ryan Barker, Cher Curtis, Michael Rose, and Harvey Woodford.

**PUBLIC INPUT:** Mayor Pfaff opened the meeting for public input. Harvey Woodford asked about Cathie May recently hand-delivering the newsletters because there were no funds available to mail them. Mayor Pfaff confirmed there are funds available, but each mailing costs approximately \$200.

Harvey then noted he was attending the meeting to support the increases in all utilities. Cher Curtis indicated she was not against what the council was doing, but it was real poor timing with the economy. She suggested the council be a little bit better about talking with people, not just sending letters. Tim Southern said citizens could come to the council meetings.

Michael Rose said he guessed he was in favor of it, realizing that nothing in the last year has gone down and that he understand that rates need to be addressed. He asked about considering funding the utilities through a levy rather than rates. The mayor explained, like with the recent failure of the street levy, the utility funds have to have a guaranteed source of revenue to be self-supporting. Mike talked about the recent reassessment of his home this year. Mayor Pfaff explained the state required that Whitman County bring its assessment to current market value. The county is phasing in the reassessment over 3 years. He noted, however, that the maximum property taxes can increase is 1% per year, regardless of the reassessment. A 1% increase in property taxes for the town generates roughly an additional \$500 total.

**OLD BUSINESS:**

**1. 2009 Utility Rates – Main Funds:**

Water Rates - The council discussed the proposed utility rates for 2009. Mayor Pfaff noted for water, \$100,000 was the target for income with \$20,000 to reserves. He also talked about deciding on a tiered rate structure based upon usage. The state is starting to require conservation measures and a tiered rate structure promotes conservation. Council indicated the tiered rate leaves the decision for usage in the hands of the user. Dave Ulrick noted another push towards conservation was the concern with the aquifer levels dropping. There was discussion about a commercial rate or a rate based upon meter size. The mayor noted there are only about 6 larger 2" meters and historically the town has not had a commercial rate. Michael Rose talked about his problem with orange water and having to flush his lines once a month. Mayor Pfaff confirmed the rate increase would allow some of these problems to be address, but they couldn't all be fixed in one year.

It was noted the increase has an impact for the hotel apartments too. Ryan Barker is charged per unit occupied. There is only one meter so there is no option to have tenants pay direct. The water, sewer and garbage fees are all paid by Ryan direct.

Mayor Pfaff said the proposed rate increases were approximately \$4 to \$5 for water, \$3 to \$4 for sewer, and \$6 to \$7 for garbage for a total increase of roughly \$15. Mayor Pfaff said an inflation factor of roughly 3% per year, billed every 2 years was also being considered. He noted, for water, with an inflation factor of 3% every 2 years, in 2021 the rate would be \$32.09 a month. Larry Hunt noted if the state came in now the rate would be \$42.

Mayor Pfaff asked the council if the rate increase for water and sewer would be by meters or bills. Council indicated their understanding was that it would be by meter. Council consensus for the 2009 water rate increase was \$4.00 a month per meter for a basic rate of \$22.50 for 5,000 gallons with a 3% per year inflation factor, billed every 2 years, plus a tiered rate for usage. The tiered rate equaled .75 per 1,000 gals or fraction thereof for usage from 5,001, to 30,000; \$1.00 per 1,000 gals or fraction thereof for usage from 30,001 to 70,000; and \$1.25 per 1,000 gals or fraction thereof for usage from 70,001 and beyond.

Sewer Rates – Mayor Pfaff explained the sewer fund needs \$122,000 a year. Right now the fund raises approximately \$112,000. He recommended \$10,000 for reserves for maintenance. The current rate is \$32 and would require an increase of \$3 to generate \$123,000 annually. He thought the sewer fund could get by with a 2% inflation factor, rather than 3%. With a \$3 increase, the sewer rate would be \$35 a month. It currently takes \$112,000 to operate the utility. The proposed increase would allow \$10,000 to be put away into a reserve fund. Larry Hunt asked if, after a few years of watching the projections, could the inflationary factor be changed if not needed. The council agreed this was possible. Council consensus was a \$3 per month increase for sewer plus a 2% per year inflation factor, billed every 2 years.

Garbage Rates – Mayor Pfaff reported the garbage fund needs to go up \$6 a month. The fund needs \$80,000 a year right now to operate. He said the annual tipping costs per year depend on what's in the cans but on average the town dumps 280 to 300 tons a year. He talked about a \$10 increase for dumpsters and raising the extra can fee from \$2 to \$3. He proposed a 3% per year inflation factor, billed every 2 years. The county's tipping fee increase right now is at 2%. The Mayor noted it was not feasible to drop to a 1 can rate based upon economic factors. It would take 210 people each week to always have 2 cans. Council consensus was to raise the residential rate by \$6 on residential, dumpsters by \$10 and the extra can by \$1, plus a 3% per year inflation factor, billed every 2 years. The basic rate for garbage would be \$24. Mayor Pfaff noted with the inflation factor, the basic garbage rate would be \$25.46 for 2011 and \$34.22 in 2021. The current dumpster rates are \$27, \$53 and \$78. Each of these would go up \$10. The school pays for 4 dumpsters. The basic garbage service level would remain with the 2-32 gallon cans. Extra cans would be \$3.

## 2. 2009 Utility Reserve Funds:

Water – Council consensus was that \$5 per meter, per month would go towards the new Utility Reserve Fund to be established in 2009. The current transfer of \$3,000 annually to the existing Utilities Equipment Reserve Fund would continue to be done through an interfund transfer and handled through the overage.

Sewer – Council consensus was that \$2.75 per sewer connection would go towards the new Utility Reserve Fund. The current transfer of \$3,000 annually to the existing Utilities Equipment Reserve Fund would continue to be done through an interfund transfer.

Garbage – Council consensus was that \$.80 from every bill would go towards the existing

Utilities Equipment Reserve fund. This would generate approximately \$2,600 annually. Council further agreed that \$1 from every bill would go to the new Utility Reserve fund. This would generate approximately \$2,900 annually

Council affirmed the existing Utilities Equipment Reserve Fund will be separate from the new Utilities Reserve Fund.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:** Larry Hunt **MOVED** the minutes of November 12, 2008, be approved as written. Rob Watkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

**POLICE DEPARTMENT:**

Officer Joe Merry provided council with the bi-monthly activity log. He noted a recent bank alarm at State Bank Northwest and that it was a good opportunity to talk with the bank folks about procedures. Because no officer was available, as Brian just coming on duty and 10 minutes on the other side of Palouse, Joe responded on his day off. It was a mechanical error at the bank. Joe updated council on traffic enforcement on the outskirts of SR 27. He ran a 40-car study. The average rate was 42 to 43 mph. He noted when he left in February it was down to 29 mph consistently. He indicated the department has been out there in the last 2 weeks during peak hours, working hard on it, and making a couple of stops a day. He noted some recent potential suspicious activity with a Silver Chevy PU at the school. The kids reported the driver talking with them, but they did not get a license plate. Harvey Woodford noted in his travels around town, when he waves at the officers, besides Joe they either do not notice him or do not wave. His concern was that if he needed help, or was undertaking something he shouldn't be, the officers would not notice this. Joe would follow up with the chief and other officer. It was confirmed all the cars on the county crushing list (11) had been picked up. 8:20 Joe Merry left the meeting.

**PUBLIC WORKS:** Dave Ulrick reported:

1. Evergreen Rural Water – The town has a new representative with Evergreen Rural Water, Mike Pendergraft. He will be in town soon to test water meters and perform leak detection. Council discussed a possible leak at one of the local businesses after reviewing usage patterns, but noted likely there was an error in the usage spreadsheet.
  2. Sewer Flow Testing – the flow meter should be here soon. There was a paperwork problem that caused the delay. Dave confirmed the town owns a camera with 70 feet of cable. At one time Dave thought about getting an additional 200 or 300 feet of cable. He noted most of the system lines are fairly new and it's expensive to buy cable. In the past, the camera was generally used at residences to see if the leak was on the town side or the resident's side. Dave noted the camera can't be taken down a main and then up the other side.
  3. Well 2 – A breaker panel is needed for Well 2 to get it set up to use.
  4. Supplies – Wire is needed for the bailer, a new battery is needed for the transmitter at the tank. Dave will be going to Spokane for these items.
  5. B Street/3<sup>rd</sup> Street – There was a recent inquiry about water pooling, leaving an icy patch. Dave noted it is much better now. Larry Hunt asked about an area below the playfield at the school collecting lots of water on the edge of the road. Dave would follow up on this.
  6. Gravel for winter – Dave confirmed there was plenty of gravel to get through winter.
- 8:25 Harvey Woodford and Michael Rose left the meeting.

**NEW BUSINESS:**

1. Resolution 2008-23 – 2008 Firefighter Salary Schedule: Annie Pillers updated the council on the change for payment to the firefighters through payroll. Rob Watkins **MOVED** to adopt Resolution 2008-23 setting the 2008 Firefighter Salary. Larry Hunt seconded the motion and

the motion carried unanimously. Annie provided council with the Fire Chief's breakdown of attendance and payment, noting firefighters continuing into 2009 have \$10 deducted towards their firefighter pension. The firefighter checks would be issued 11/25/08. She further noted, as of 2008, the payment is exempt from federal withholding. Tim Southern explained the breakdown done by the chief includes attendance for all trainings, fires, calls, etc., and takes the lump sum divided by these for a total of \$13.85 for each point. Mayor Pfaff explained there will be a new way to do the point system in 2009.

**APPROVAL OF CHECKS:**

Andrew Flodin **MOVED** to approve the following bills presented to council for payment. Rob Watkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.  
Check Register: #8803-8813. Claims: \$132,157.35, Payroll: \$4,582.27 TOTAL: \$136,739.62.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Larry Hunt **MOVED** to adjourn the meeting at 8:31 p.m. Rob Watkins seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

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**Jarrold Pfaff, Mayor**

**ATTEST:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Annie Pillers, Clerk/Treasurer**