

November 20, 2013 Special Meeting Minutes

ALLIANCE CITY COUNCIL

SPECIAL MEETING, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 20, 2013

STATE OF NEBRASKA)
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COUNTY OF BOX BUTTE) §
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CITY OF ALLIANCE)

The Alliance City Council met in a Special Joint Meeting, November 20, 2013 at 7:00 a.m., at the Knight Museum and Sandhills Center, 908 Yellowstone Avenue. A notice of meeting was published in the Alliance Times Herald on November 13, 2013. The notice stated the date, hour and place of the meeting, that the meeting was open to the public, and that an agenda of the meeting, kept continuously current, was available for public inspection at the office of the City Clerk in the Municipal Building.

Present at the meeting were Mayor Feldges, Council members Benzel, Lewis, Yeager, and Seiler. Also present were City Manager Cox, City Attorney Olsen, Assistant City Manager Waggener, and City Clerk Jines. Representing the Box Butte County Commissioners were members Hashman, Lore, and McCarthy. Box Butte County staff members were County Clerk Messersmith, and County Attorney Hutchinson.

The Special Meeting began with Box Butte County Commission Chair Lore and Mayor Feldges opening the meeting for their respective Boards. Mayor Feldges made the Open Meetings Law announcement and indicated the required posting was on the south wall of the room.

- The first item on the agenda was a discussion regarding City/County relations. Both Boards shared a strong desire to work together to efficiently serve the public, maximize the use of tax dollars for the benefit of our citizens and to conduct business in a transparent manner.

- The next matter for discussion was the road from Highway 2 to the Veterans Cemetery. The discussion began with snow removal operations. Box Butte County Roads Superintendent Barb Keegan stated there is approximately 1.7 miles of road of which the County may be responsible for 1.05 miles. Airport Manager Lynn Placek stated that since she has been located at the airport (5 years) and she believes for years prior, the City of Alliance has been doing the snow removal from the Airport Terminal to Highway 2. This is being done by the City, as the road needs to be cleared in order to serve the commercial air service and associated services. Currently there is an early morning flight and a late evening flight. The City only has one employee currently assigned this duty and their work day schedule is 4:00 a.m. to noon. So depending on weather conditions, it would be nice if the County could put this road on their snow removal route for later in the day, if additional snow removal is required. That would enable the County to serve their other customers early in the day to meet their demands and the City would continue to provide early morning removal.

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Box Butte County Road Superintendent Keegan was asked who the Veterans Cemetery would call if they needed assistance. She responded most likely the County; however they would only go to the top of the hill. Ms. Keegan stated the Veterans Cemetery has equipment and staff which maintains the actual cemetery.

The second portion of the discussion regarding this road was the cost sharing of the repaving project. When the Veterans Cemetery was established, the State of Nebraska placed this road in a special classification which would allow the use of State funds for the maintenance/repair of a portion of the road. The funding mechanism established was through the Nebraska Game and Parks Division. At this time, the County is seeking the City's participation in the proposed resurfacing project on a percentage basis for that portion not covered by the State of Nebraska. The estimated percentage split at this time is proposed to be approximately 87% to Box Butte County and 13% to the City of Alliance. This percentage will be confirmed prior to approving an agreement.

- The next issue for discussion was the use of the City of Alliance Landfill by the Box Butte County Road Department. The Box Butte County Road Department is charged with picking up debris which is left or disposed on public right-of-ways. It is unclear who is disposing the items but there is a common belief that a portion is derived from Alliance citizens dumping on right-of-ways in lieu of proper disposal at the landfill to avoid paying landfill fees. Both Boards expressed a need for increased littering enforcement and potentially increasing the fines charged. At this time, the County would like the City to consider accepting this material free of charge. Prior to taking action on this request, the Box Butte County Commissioners will review what their actual expenditures have been over the last year or two.

- Discussion on potential efficiencies within the Law Enforcement Center was the next matter before the Boards. Police Chief John Kiss explained the inability to transfer incoming calls between the Sheriff's Department and the Police Department. When the City of Alliance purchased the new phone system they selected the same vendor that Box Butte County had used, Mobius. It was thought both systems would be compatible; but it was later determined they were not due to upgrades in the new equipment. Presently a customer may call either department on their non-emergency number and even though the departments are located in the same facility they can not be properly transferred. In order for calls to be transferred an upgrade may be required to the County's phone system. Alliance Police Dispatcher Elizabeth Zerck was in attendance at the meeting and stated the problem is usually experienced during administrative hours (Monday through Friday – 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.).

Another efficiency within the Law Enforcement Center discussed was the potential of consolidating dispatch responsibilities. Both Boards expressed a very strong desire to move forward in this direction. Chief Kiss reported that consolidating dispatch services has been the recent trend throughout the State of Nebraska. He provided several regional examples of where consolidation is or has taken place and appears to be beneficial to the taxpayers as grant funds are depleting and the duplication of equipment is very expensive.

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Councilman Seiler asked the Commissioners how the County governing body provided oversight of a division which is overseen by an elected official. He was informed that the Commissioners have the budget authority over all of the County divisions. The County's fiscal year is July 1st through June 30th, and the City's fiscal year is October 1st through September 30th.

Police Dispatcher Zerck stated there are seniority issues with the dispatchers that would be encountered with a consolidation between the two departments. Ms. Zerck requested that these be addressed in the discussion of consolidation. Currently, dispatchers are concerned that some could potentially lose their jobs.

In order to move this project forward, it was determined to establish a sub-committee to address this topic. Requesting the E911 Board to take on this project was considered; however it was felt all would be better served if a separate task force were established. It was determined that a Committee co-chaired by Commissioner Hashman and Councilman Benzel be created. The Sheriff and the Police Chief would also serve on the Committee along with a dispatch representative from both departments. Other individuals may be requested to join the Committee at a later date.

- The next item for discussion was the recently adopted Legislative Bill 140 which deals with Airport Zoning. This item will require cooperation between both the City and the County; and will most likely include the neighboring counties of Morrill, Sheridan and Garden. The new regulations which became effective in September not only cover a three-mile jurisdiction around the airport but also place restrictions on property within the flight approach zone. The restrictions are not only based on height but now will also be based on elevation. Airport Manager Placek will be moving forward in researching the requirements and would like to begin implementation as soon as possible to insure all new construction will be in compliance. As we become aware of all the requirements, the County will be informed and requested to participate in an Airport Zoning Board.

- The City of Alliance's Sidewalk Replacement Program was the next issue for discussion. City Manager Cox informed the group that there was potentially an outstanding issue with the County participating in the City's program. The City Council has recently made modification to our program which limits the City's participation in the cost share for commercial properties to \$1,000. Under the former program, the County may have been expecting a 50/50 cost share; but it is the City's understanding that since payment was not received the contract expired.

The Commissioners stated that was not their understanding. They believed that both the former Public Facilities Director and City Manager Cox presented the program and contract to the Commission and that they would be billed when the work was completed. City Manager Cox stated he did not recall his attendance at the meeting. This matter will be re-addressed following the review of the Commission's minutes and the actual document which was signed by the County.

In another sidewalk related matter, the County requested the City of Alliance to consider including them in our snow removal program for the downtown area. The current downtown

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snow removal was described to the Commissioners. It is funded by Downtown Improvement District A-1 which assesses its members an occupation tax which political entities are exempt. The service is performed only during non-business hours (usually early morning) using a broom on a tractor which usually makes two driving sweeps by and does not perform any entryway or detail removal. Property owners are responsible for maintaining snow removal throughout the business day.

The Commission clarified that they were interested in receiving a quote from the City for their snow removal needs at the Courthouse block.

- The Boards briefly touched on the possibility of locating a “community garden” on County property. Several location ideas were offered for the City to consider such as the farm ground around the landfill and property within the Homestead Addition.
- The last item on the agenda was public comment time.

Judy Messersmith, 5591 Otoe Road, addressed the Boards as a private citizen and not as the County Clerk. Mrs. Messersmith requested the City Council to re-address the charging of a \$25.00 annual fee for non-residents to check out material from the Alliance Public Library. Several individuals have come to her expressing displeasure with the new policy. Many of the individuals do own property and/or businesses within the community. Allowing the check-out of materials requires a return visit and thus another opportunity to do business in Alliance which adds to the sales tax base.

Commissioner McCarthy asked the City to review the ambulance service, as she has heard it may be unreliable with regard to transporting patients to other medical facilities.

Deb Dopheide, 424 Toluca Avenue addressed the Boards as the Director of Keep Alliance Beautiful. Mrs. Dopheide stated she would like the Boards to consider finding a method to allow County residents to have access to the landfill free of charge during the City-wide amnesty week. She suggested that there may be opportunities to off-set the fees with other cost share programs.

- Prior to closing, both Boards consented to meet on a quarterly basis with the next meeting being scheduled in February, 2014.
- Mayor Feldges stated, “there being no further business to come before the Alliance City Council, the meeting is adjourned at 8:50 a.m.”

(SEAL)

Fred Feldges, Mayor

Linda S. Jines, City Clerk