



**CITY OF BLACKFOOT  
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 24, 2022**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Carroll called the meeting to order at 3:38 PM and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Roll call was taken and those in attendance were: Councilman Brown, Councilman Gardner, Councilman Jensen, and Councilwoman Simpson.

**APPROVAL OF BURA BOARD NOMINEE**

Mayor Carroll nominated Christi Kotter as a BURA board member. Councilwoman Simpson made a motion to approve the nomination of Christi Kotter as a member to the BURA board. Councilman Gardner seconded the motion; All were in favor, motion carried.

**DISCUSSION ON THE CITY OF BLACKFOOT'S 5-YEAR AND 10-YEAR PLANS**

Mayor Carroll explained that during his State of the City Address, he talked about a lot of changes, mainly because of COVID. Mayor Carroll spoke about the unprecedented inflation and delays in getting materials for various projects. He said that for the first time, he has required written higher-level goals from each department head that will take a bit longer to achieve. Mayor Carroll would like to start on a five-year goal for the city and would then like to work on a ten-year plan for the city. He talked about meeting with ITD regarding their plans to widen the interstate and make it into a three-lane freeway between Pocatello and Idaho Falls. Per ITD this project is estimated to cost one billion dollars. He said there is Federal money out there, he doesn't know how hard it will be to get it but will be trying. The department heads have done the best they can for many years with the equipment they have but the equipment will soon need to be replaced.

Implementing a new billing system is the first topic of discussion on the Department Goals. The city has printed the monthly bills on a small postcard for many years. On these postcards, there isn't much room to print any other important information and is looking into possibly doing a monthly newsletter.

An enhanced Public Communications program would be an alert system that would increase communication. For example, if the city found itself under a boil order or if there were to be a railroad derailment; there would be a way to almost instantly communicate this information throughout the city by phone and by text.

Chief of Police, Scott Gay, spoke in regard to reducing drug abuse through targeted enforcement. The police department seized about 2500 opioid tabs in the last month. This is a disturbing trend that we want to target. Chief Gay said his department is really switching our targeted enforcement toward fentanyl which is ten times stronger than morphine and other types of opioids and added they are really focusing on targeting this as a nation, as well as community.

Mayor Carroll said it has been identified that there is a need for a full-time evidence technician. There will later be a discussion on other staffing needs such as the need for an ordinance enforcement officer.



The police department detailed the animal control officer as more part-time and ordinance enforcement, as a full-time job.

Regarding deploying ops & maintenance software within the water department. Princeton Lee has done a lot of background research and has come up with a good process that is believed will work for the city. It is a software package from a company called Cartograph. It will allow us to dispatch personnel electronically. They can get their work order electronically, completed and sent back in.

Planning and Zoning Administrator, Kurt Hibbert, explained a consultant was hired to develop a scientifically prepared survey that's going to go out online to the residents regarding many things, mostly supporting the long-term planning processes of the city. It is supposed to be ready for the Planning and Zoning Commission by the end of the week for implementation in the very near future. There will be some information going out in a link that will be on the city website that residents inside the city, around the city and the impact area can participate in. It covers a broad spectrum of things, everything from housing to each of the different areas that are supposed to be included in our comprehensive plan.

Mayor Carroll explained that the Council has Chartered an Economic Development Council, the first meeting is going to be next week. The Chamber of Commerce used to do economic development, but they stopped some years back. Mayor Carroll said grant money is currently being looked at to establish a business incubation center that could be used to help new businesses get going and give them connections with the Small Business Administration and with banks. It would be a place where they could rent space from the incubation center. It wouldn't be that the city would own and manage it, but the city will be moving forward in getting something like that going in the community.

Mayor Carroll stated we are in the process of updating our comprehensive plan. We have people who have volunteered to be on the Water Conservation Committee and the Mayor has been sending them out the information we're getting on the watershed, he added that it's not looking good. Water Department Superintendent, Princeton Lee, stated that the city needs to have a water conservation Plan. We don't want to be in the position of Rigby when they had to shut down half of their wells. Blackfoot fortunately has more senior water rights. As the water situation gets more and more dire, we're afraid that calls from the senior water rights holders down south will trump our water rights and we don't want to be scrambling if there is a water call that affects us. We want to have our plan ready to go.

They explained the cross-connection program. We continually have problems with coliform showing up in water tests. A lot of that has to do with people who have less than adequate sprinkling systems. They don't have a cross-connect when they blow out the system and, in the fall, we get a lot of coliforms showing up in our water samples. We have two certified as cross-connection inspectors. They both have a lot going on that keeps them too busy to go out and do the inspections. So, one of the other staff members in the water department will take that over.

Setting up a public transit system is something that the Council has talked about for a long time. Preliminary conversations with PRT and Pocatello indicate that for \$40,000, that would be matching grant money, for them to implement a regular route system in Blackfoot. Now that is obviously nothing



we've committed to, but it's something that we want to research further, and we'll bring that to the council.

Phillip Meline, from the Grove City Cemetery gave a quick update regarding the install phase 1 of a columbarium at the cemetery and on burial numbers from last year and previous year. The highest number of burials a year was 93 and last year there were 128 burials. There is constantly an increase in the number of cremations and that is the reason for the columbarium installation project at the cemetery. The average cost of a funeral now is \$8,500 for a standard funeral and the cost of cremation is around \$2,000. Obviously, a lot of that is based on personal and religious reasons and requirements but need to be prepared with the columbarium. He stated he believes there hasn't been a final decision made yet on where exactly the columbarium will go at the cemetery, but he believes it will go central with the flagpole that is in the veteran's memorial area. It will be similar construction to the one that's at the Veterans Cemetery and will be all concrete and granite.

Golf cart paths are in need of refurbishment. Parks Superintendent, Wade Gardner, said there is a gentleman in town that has a machine that can be used to refurbish the golf cart paths. Not all paths need to be refurbished, however there are four bad paths that really need refurbishing. This person that will supply the machine will be donating his time to refurbish the paths for the city and this will be at no cost to the city. Chris Smith, from the golf course said the golf course is looking at starting an eight-week program for students, probably in the second week of July and will run through August, the biggest problem is the cost. It's about \$300 a kid but it's ran through an app and this way they would get everything set up and do all the marketing as part of the cost. Mr. Gardner said there is a need for a driving range, especially with the junior golf program. There is property that could be purchased, however, as far as how high the price of land is today, this might not be an option for now due to affordability.

The Parks & Recreation crew has been working on replacing and repairing park benches, as they are in terrible shape throughout the city and have occasionally received complaints from different individuals.

The idea of establishing a Youth and Adult Recreation Committee for the city was introduced during the last election while campaigning. Mayor Carroll said he feels there are plenty of recreational opportunities in the city, however, there needs to be better communication.

Accomplishing the Capital Improvement Plan in the transportation plan is going to be very expensive. There hasn't been enough money put aside to handle the cost of the needed improvements and take care of them before they get to be problems. For this reason, the decision was made to hire FCS to do rate studies. Mayor Carroll said the city is way behind other cities, adding that people will complain occasionally about their water bill, their sewer bill, and how much it costs to connect if their building a new house. But when they see the Scheiss Engineering study for utility rates, and it shows we're in the bottom 10% in 57 cities in this part of the state, and it is known to be cheaper here than it is on the western side of the state. Attorney Garrett Sandow explained there are several other surrounding areas that charge a wide variety of impact fees that Blackfoot is not charging right now. Any new building permit would have an impact fee associated with it, same with the fire department because it's obviously another risk for them. It would be based on the population growth because you can only



handle so many people for each ambulance and there's going to be studies that come down and say this is how many you need, then that money would go into a reserve fund for capital improvement. The impact fees would not have an option for payment plans and would need to be paid upfront.

Mayor Carroll asked Water Superintendent, Princeton Lee, when the last water rate increase? He responded the last rate increase was back in 2010, when the tank was built. There was a need to increase the rates to cover the debt service. Mayor Carroll said the WWTP still has a lot of projects and is running out of the funds needed to go forward with the projects.

The project of replacing the old bridge is going into phase II of engineering and this project will take another year to complete. The city is still working with LTAC and the freight program on when they're going to program the money.

A rate study will be done by FCS, this company has a national reputation. One of the main reasons FCS will be hired to do this is, if in case the city were to be challenged legally, the city would have a company that is extremely well-versed in how these things should be set up. Highway 39 is going to be widened from Wilson to the Highway 26 junction. There will be a signal put in right there at the crossing instead of a round-about.

WWTP Superintendent, Rex Moffatt, talked about the WWTP engineering phase three and four. There are five phases. Phase two has been completed, phase three and four will be completed at the same time. The cost of phase one and phase two is just shy of 30 million and estimated that the cost of phase three and four would be around twenty-three to twenty-five million; the cost of this has been revised to reflect a cost of thirty-three to thirty-five million dollars.

The water department will be upgrading regular water meters to radio meters. This will be a \$600,000 dollar project. Mr. Lee said his department has the base station infrastructure antenna and the processing units at their shop that will be installed at City Hall.

The Meridian Street project is where Meridian Street runs into 91, the odd angle will get straightened, making it more of a 90-degree angle approach to the highway. This is another project that was originally estimated at around \$350,000 and was just increased to a grand total amount to 575,000 because of the price increases.

Riverton Road Sewer project wants to replace 1100' of sewer line, increasing the line from 24" to 36" down by the treatment plant. This project that is in preliminary design right now, could involve water and street, curb, gutter, and storm drains, but the main project is to upsize the 24" sewer from Lansing to the treatment plant to the 36" line. One big concern is the growth and the growth potential out in that area. We got the L&R property and then we've got property on Lansing, Camas and Clark Street that are all in different stages. Councilman Jensen added that there is only one pipe that if were to fail as we saw years ago, it would affect the entire city.

Mayor Carroll said the city met with congressman Simpson back in September regarding the railroad crossing. He was extremely interested in sponsoring some earmarked money to kick off the engineering aspect of underpass or overpass. They are still trying to figure out that bipartisan infrastructure



legislation, the aid from the representative's office sent me a 471-page document that almost sounds like rather than doing their typical budget earmark, they're going to kick everything back to the bipartisan legislation that has trillions of dollars in it.

Mayor Carroll had a discussion with the Transportation Commission regarding the downtown parking study. They asked that to have a piece added to the parking study. Mayor Carroll communicated that to Keller Associate who is doing the parking study and has not heard anything back from them on this yet.

Library Director, Lisa Herral filled the Council in on the progress of the library's drive-up window. She explained this project is a five-phase project. We are starting phase four, which is the parking lot. We had a meeting last week with the project manager and all the people who contribute to decisions for that parking lot walked away with a very nice plan. There will be another meeting, March 2nd. Phase five was the exterior, but with the masonry increases, it is unclear if the city will be able to afford phase five. So that's something that the library board will look at again. Look at phase four prices that they have drafted and then look and see what we're going to do for phase five.

P&Z is going to meet on March 16th regarding an annexation and the Mayor is going to call a special Council meeting for the 17th to vote on that annexation.

Regarding the commercial and residential fiber connection, Ammon is viewed as kind of the model city in how they've done fiber installation. They basically pulled a million dollars out of reserves and gave it to one of departments and said go forward and make this happen. A meeting with Direct Communications was held to talk about fiber connection for the city's water and sewer departments for their status systems. During that meeting, Mayor Carroll says they made an interesting offer. They're going to go back and pencil it out and come back to meet again. It looks like it's very doable from the City of Blackfoot to get into the partnership with direct communications but will have to wait and see what they have to offer.

Sexton Phillip Meline talked about the cemetery sprinklers project that is currently in phase one. This will be automating the entire cemetery with sprinklers. Currently hoses are dragged around. There are approximately 90 hoses. Phase one would be redoing the infrastructure part so that a new main line will be run as well as all the tapping connections that you need for each section. Mayor Carroll added that you can't just go to a regular landscape company to do this project. If you think about the cemetery and the way the plots are, it takes some specialized knowledge to do this. It may not sound like a big deal to drag the hoses and sprinklers around until you see Phillips's trailer, so for this reason the cemetery department is very anxious to get this to completion.

The engineering phase is done on the Fisher Street project. We are currently waiting on LHTAC funds to finish this project and hoping that it is programed for FY 2023, currently it is in the 2026 LHTAC budget.

Regarding the Area of Impact Agreement legislation, the County does not seem to be annexation neutral, and I'm concerned that they're willing to change the code. Such that annexations are going to get hard unless you got an actual consent to annex from each property.



Mayor Carroll asked Tricia Mitchell to speak regarding the airport runway rehab. Tricia explained that TL Engineering is currently conducting an environmental assessment. One thing that has come out of it that many are not in favor of is that the FAA is looking at where the green belt goes around, and they are saying that we need to reroute the green belt and take it in about 30 or 40 feet into the grove to have the separation and protection of anybody who's on the Greenbelt.

Tricia Mitchell is working on a grant right now for recreation money to put in a RV dump station between the airport fence line and the parks and recreation buildings. It's much better access for RVs than where it's currently located in the alley behind the fire station.

Water Superintendent, Princeton Lee, said that water-leak detection and chlorination is one of those things that is required by DEQ. We have areas of town where leaks never surface, so there would be no way to know if there are water leaks without leak surveys. Mr. Lee contacted a leak protection company that will be doing a demonstration for us on the 22nd of March. They will sell us the equipment for this process to be done in-house if we want to. So, I'm going to compare that versus contracting out. As far as chlorination, the bigger the system gets, the more chlorination will be required and need to start planning for it.

Mayor Carroll said that he and the Council have goals and projects and commitments in the city, but everything comes down to staff facilities and equipment. A Recruitment and Retention Committee has been put together with a total of 8 members. Treasurer Graham Anderson explained there has been reoccurring issues that came up during meetings regarding issues with filling job positions because it was hard to get people to apply, regarding not getting the applications that they used to see, they have seen a lot of turn over and are not keeping our long-term employees. For these reasons a recruiting and retention committee has been put together with a group of individuals from various departments in the city. Mr. Anderson said he felt there is pretty good representation of all the departments without the committee being too big. The idea was to come together and look at what issues the city is facing with recruiting issues and to come up with some ideas and recommendations. There is a lot of employment out there and a lot of job opportunities, however, the dip during COVID created a weird glitch in the trends of things. Now the increase for job opportunities is back up and it's higher than where we were at during the recession period in 2008. There is a lot of competition for employers to get employees and there are not many states whose unemployment is lower than ours. Recruiting people is more critical today than it has been in the past and maybe even more than that, retaining employees and having that institutional knowledge that they contribute, because it's not easy to replace them. The city may have a hard time recruiting people because of the location of the city being between two bigger population sized cities, however, when people come and see what the city has to offer, such as the benefits package and salaries, the city of Blackfoot is competitive.

Mr. Anderson expressed that he believes the city needs to take a more aggressive look on how we market and how we portray our image of Blackfoot and what it has to offer. Currently if someone was to look at our website for job opportunities, you wouldn't know what the pay scale is or what benefits come with the job. The committee identified three areas to promote retention and look at what they could do to make it more appealing to stay with the city. So those three areas are longevity, recognizing



longevity and rewarding people for their tenure with the city, department recognition, and interdepartmental relationships. Mr. Anderson said that compensation for long term employees would need to be appealing so that the employees would feel that it's worth their effort, makes them feel appreciated and want to stay on longer. This would be an attempt or an idea of where we could start from to try to recognize those years of service and reward these employees.

One top issue that came up in conversations quite a bit with every department was about morale within the workplace. This was not unique to one specific department, but every department talked about morale, and the issue of feeling appreciated within their department, feeling like their work and their efforts were recognized and they aren't just another employee number. We're talking about culture and a good work environment, and a good work culture. In the budget, every department gets an On-the-Spot award they can disburse to their department employees to show recognition, however, \$350 is a bit of a small amount to spread out amongst several employees. Which brings one to the questions of what can be done that is meaningful for these individuals to show recognition and appreciation. One of the ideas is to increase that amount to give the ability to the department to reward something meaningful for someone to really instill that culture of appreciation for going above and beyond. Other topics that will be talked about in the committee will be regarding managerial training, employee training development and career advancement.

Mayor Carroll said that a salary study was conducted about three and a half years ago and normally a salary study is good for about 10 years, but because things have changed so much, Mayor Carroll will be bringing a proposal to the council to talk about funding another salary study.

Regarding staffing, Mayor Carroll had asked Chief Gray to address his need for additional firefighters and EMTs. He has done that, yet they have not had a chance yet to sit down and go through it but do have significant need in the fire department. There is a significant need currently in the police department for maybe another officer or two but are mainly looking at evidence technician and an ordinance enforcement as we grow that. As we annex, the city will be going to need another garbage truck and driver and will need to increase the street department, water department, the wastewater department, Parks and Rec, everything is going to need another look.

There are facilities in the city that are in sore need of replacement, such as the animal shelter and the fire station really need to be replaced. Mayor Carroll said they need to update the animal shelter, to get the fire department into a new fire station and need to resurrect the plan for fire station 3 on the east side of town. There is a need for a new water shop and Mayor Carroll would really like to move the street and sanitation department. He said it is sitting on prime real estate right now and thinks it can be sold and fund a new building.

Equipment such as golf carts and police cars have been leased out by the city. Just about anything can be leased, anything from fire trucks down to golf carts. Mayor Carroll will be talking more about those things at the upcoming special council meeting, this meeting will take place on March 17th.

Mayor Carroll expressed that he sees a need to have a monthly workshop meeting and recommended having second meetings each month to work through items as a council, temporarily. The



Councilmembers agreed to temporarily having a second monthly meeting at 7:00pm on the third Tuesday of each month.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The City Council meeting was adjourned at 5:44 PM.

City of Blackfoot

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Marc Carroll

Attest:

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City Clerk Suzanne McNeel

Prepared by:

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Patty Ojeda