

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN OF PLEVNA—Thursday, February 27, 2020, 7 p.m.
Town Office

Mayor Benner called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

Councilmen present were Jordan Hoffman, Kyle Vennes, Alba Higgins and Gary Thielen.

Also present: Krista Nemitz, Clerk/Treasurer
Rick Schell, Water Operator

Members of the public present: none

Public Comment:

No Public Comment

Pre-disciplinary Meeting Discussion:

Mayor Benner announced that this is a pre-disciplinary discussion meeting in regard to the mowing at the lagoon site. Mayor Benner turned the meeting over to Councilman Hoffman to proceed.

Councilman Hoffman noted that the Wastewater Operator, Corrine Sander, is not present and did not request the meeting to be closed. The Operator sent an email response to the Pre-disciplinary Meeting Notice at approximately 4 p.m. today, 02/27/2020. The email reads as follows, verbatim:

“As has been mentioned many times before.. At the time the mowing was done at the lagoon system, a bat wing mower was not available to rent. This mower type would have allowed for a longer reach. Neither Baker or Miles City rental businesses had these mower types. The town of Plevna does not own a mower so a rental unit was the option that was available. If Councilman Higgins and Councilman Thielen expressed interest enough to visit the lagoon system, then why have they not offered a method to complete the mowing? Why has none of the council offered a proactive, helpful, remedy to the task of getting the "rim of weeds" at the water's edge mowed? Why does the council not function well as a cohesive unit? Just so we all clearly understand this letter, you are calling me in subordinate with regards to a mowing process that could not be completed with the equipment that was available and the town has not made any measurable effort to seek a remedy. It is true also that this "rim of weeds" does not constitute a fineable offense with regards to DEQ standards. IF the Plevna system could be operated in such a way that the water level could be elevated enough to cover the weeds, drown the weeds, etc. then this could easily be a good option. However, that is not possible here. It is true also that the mowing of this "rim of weeds" should be done when the town could hire a contractor with the mower type needed. When the system dries out eliminating the chance for dyke damage. That would be my suggestion. Hire a contractor. Lastly, as per Basic Wastewater Treatment Training Manual, Chapter eight, page 52 = "Venturing upon an ice covered lagoon presents a serious hazard and should NEVER be done".....”

It was stated that if a Formal Written Warning was to be issued it would be on the grounds of incompleteness of duties that are outlined in the Wastewater Treatment Operator Job Description and unsatisfactory job performance.

Councilman Higgins stated that moving forward the Town will have a more active role in finding the appropriate equipment for completion of the lagoon mowing.

Councilman Thielen stated that if the Operator had requested any equipment to begin with, the Council could have provided it. The Operator needed to communicate that there was a need.

Mayor Benner expressed his frustration that the Wastewater Operator rented mowing equipment in July 2019 with no prior directive to do so and without the knowledge of the Council. This was not an approved expenditure nor was it a budgeted expense.

Councilman Hoffman feels the Wastewater Operator is unwilling to work with the Council and is oftentimes uncooperative.

Councilman Higgins stated that he would like the Wastewater Operator to improve on her communication with the Council. When she has a need in order to complete her job duties, she must communicate the need.

Councilman Hoffman, addressing the line from the Wastewater Operator's email correspondence about "venturing upon an ice-covered lagoon...", stated that we have never asked Corrine to go out onto the ice at all. He cannot think of a time that it would ever be appropriate.

Councilman Thielen makes the point that the Wastewater Operator refuses to acknowledge that she is an employee of the Town of Plevna. Looking back through past meeting minutes, the Operator has stated that she answers to DEQ and her task items come directly from DEQ.

All Councilmen agree that the Wastewater Operator needs to better communicate with the Council if additional equipment, training, or resources are needed to perform her job duties.

It was unanimously decided that the Wastewater Operator will receive a Written Warning with the following expectations:

- You are expected to perform your job duties in a satisfactory manner.
- You are expected to follow directives from the Council.
- You are expected to work cooperatively and respectfully with the Council.
- You are expected to communicate with the Council if additional equipment, training, and/or resources are needed to perform your job duties.

The Council decided that the lagoon mowing will be put on hold until weather conditions allow. This may not be until spring. When the ground has dried up and the sewer budget allows, the Council will give the directive to proceed with vegetation maintenance. At that time, the Wastewater Operator will be offered training on all rented equipment. A staff gauge will be installed when weather conditions permit.