

RECORD OF PROCEEDINGS

Meeting of the Evansville Town Council, Evansville, Wyoming

September 11, 2023

The regular meeting of the Evansville Town Council of the Town of Evansville, County of Natrona, State of Wyoming, was held at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of the Town Hall.

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Chad Edwards at 7:00 p.m. and upon roll call the following were present: Council Members Candace Machado, Dacia Edwards, Greg Flesvig and Phil Gierke, Town Attorney Scott Murray, Town Treasurer Lexi Erickson, Chief of Police Mike Thompson, Fire Chief Leo Malsom, Public Works Director Robert Lewallen, Town Clerk Janelle Underwood, and interested citizens.

Mayor Edwards led the Pledge of Allegiance. He then asked for a moment of silence honoring the victims that lost their lives on September 11, 2001.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: Motion was made by Greg Flesvig and seconded by Phil Gierke to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

- a) Approval of Minutes for Regular Meeting August 28, 2023
- b) Approval of Bills

Motion was made by Dacia Edwards and seconded by Greg Flesvig to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION OF 5TH CENT TAX: Mayor Edwards stated that he would like to provide an explanation about the 5th Cent Tax and how it benefits the Town and our citizens. He stated that the 5th Cent Tax provides funding for the street repairs, critical gear and vehicles for the police and fire, as well as allowing the Town to complete additional projects around town that would not be possible if this additional funding was not in place. Mayor Edwards stated that the 5th Cent Tax provides approximately seventeen percent (17%) of Evansville's annual budget. He stated that the Town along with the citizens of Natrona County has always supported the 5th Cent Tax, which is evident in its continued approval over the last forty-nine (49) years. Mayor Edwards stated that the discussion for tonight is about not if the 5th Cent Tax is supported, because it clearly is supported, but how the 5th Cent Tax is to be renewed. He stated that there has been a desire of some of the other municipalities in Natrona County to have the 5th Cent Tax extended beyond the renewal of it every four (4) years, which would create some assurance that future funds would be available and allow for better planning of long-term projects. He stated that there are two (2) ways that the Wyoming State Statute allows for such an extension. He stated that the first way would be that half the municipalities within the county would pass an ordinance asking the Natrona County Commissioners to extend the 5th Cent Tax by way of a resolution. He stated that the second way would be that half the municipalities within Natrona County would pass an ordinance asking the Natrona County Commissioners to place this question on the ballot and allow the voters to decide. Mayor Edwards stated that at this time, he believes two (2) municipalities have passed an ordinance asking the county to extend the 5th Cent Tax by way of Resolution. He stated that the goal of tonight's discussion is to provide staff with a direction the Council would like to take regarding the 5th Cent Tax. He stated that there are three (3) options that he has outlined as possible directions.

- Option One – Pass an ordinance asking Natrona County to extend the 5th Cent by passing a resolution.
- Option Two – Pass an ordinance requesting that the voters decide if the 5th Cent Tax should be extended without a renewal vote every four (4) years.
- Option Three – to leave as is and to continue to allow the voters to decide every four (4) years.

Council Member Phil Gierke stated that he is a huge supporter of the 5th Cent Tax however, he feels that the 5th Cent Tax should be left the way it is. He also stated that he fears if the 5th Cent Tax was made permanent, then to follow would be a 6th Cent Tax, and that he feels that the municipalities have a responsibility to the taxpayers.

Council Member Greg Flesvig stated that the 5th Cent Tax should be up to the voters and that he is concerned that it might lead to a 6th or 7th Cent Tax.

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Mayor Edwards stated that a 6th Cent Tax would have to be approved by the voters.

Council Member Candace Machado stated that she agreed that the 5th Cent Tax should be in the hands of the voters. She stated that this is something that has been in place for forty-nine years, that it has worked, and that it should be left alone.

Council Member Dacia Edwards stated that she agreed as well that keeping the 5th Cent Tax should be left to the voters to decide.

Mayor Edwards stated that at this point, the consensus is to choose Option Three to leave the tax as is and allow the voters to make the decision.

COUNCIL UPDATES: Council Member Phil Gierke stated that he has spoken to a representative for the railroad and that he has been advised that repairs to the railroad crossing on Curtis Street will start in two weeks.

Council Member Gierke stated that he has spoken to the Wyoming Department of Transportation and that they plan to remove the fence located between Highway 20-26 and the frontage road, which should help with maintenance and appearance. He stated that the Wyoming Department of Transportation is still waiting on Rocky Mountain Power to bring electricity into the new traffic light at the intersection of Highway 20-26 and Western Avenue.

Council Member Gierke stated that he is still working with the Post Office on getting the issue with the mailboxes located at Platte Park Road. He stated that he would like to thank Public Works Director Robert Lewallen for his assistance in coming up with solutions.

Council Member Gierke also advised that he is refinishing some park benches that have been donated for the Dog Park.

Council Member Candace Machado stated that the Community Garden has done very well and that the harvest has been plentiful.

Council Member Greg Flesvig stated that he was in touch with Public Works Director Robert Lewallen concerning a trip hazard at the picnic shelter at Stoneking Park.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: During public comments, Pat Sweeney spoke to the Governing Body about extending the 5th Cent Tax and that he understands where the Governing Body stands on not extending the 5th Cent Tax. He also spoke about the Wyoming State Statutes and how a 6th Cent Tax would work if the voters so desired. Mr. Sweeney stated that there has been some confusion in the 5th Cent Tax and property taxes and that he just wanted to make it clear that the two taxes have nothing to do with the other.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, motion was made by Greg Flesvig and seconded by Dacia Edwards to adjourn at 7:26 p.m. Motion carried.

APPROVED: _____

Chad Edwards, Mayor

ATTESTED: _____

Janelle Underwood, Town Clerk