

**MINUTES - BENSON CITY COUNCIL – SPECIAL MEETING
JUNE 19, 2019
BENSON GOLF CLUB**

Members Present: Terri Collins, Lucas Olson, Mark Schreck, Jack Evenson

Members Absent: Jon Buyck

Also present: City Manager Rob Wolfington, Public Works Director Dan Gens and neighborhood residents.

The Mayor called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Wolfington said he wanted to go over the 2011 History of flood event, flood plain and zoning and a short review of this year's event. He passed out maps showing the area in the Hawleywood subdivision flood plain areas and elevations. He gave the history of FEMA. The floodplain map in place when Hawleywood was developed was from 1978 which was effective until 2005. At that time FEMA folded into the Department of Homeland Security, and new maps were created. Those determined to be in the 100 year floodplains had a year to apply for flood insurance to be grandfathered in at the existing lower rate. The program is now running a \$28 Billion deficit, and along came the Biggers Waters Act which made all people in the floodplain insurance premiums risk based for their cost for insurance. It was expensive and in 2014 congress passed the affordable flood insurance program which went back to extending the previous grandfather clause getting away from the risk based assessment. The City of Benson ordinance does not require those living in the floodplain to carry flood insurance.

With the 2012 flood event there was sandbagging on the north end of Hawleywood. After this, a survey was sent to 26 homeowners affected by the flood plain asking if they would be willing to pay to have a levee built outside the City limits north of the Corporate City Limits. 13 said yes and 13 said no. Costs would have been assessed based on risk, running a homeowner between \$2,500 - \$7,000. Back in 2013 the engineering estimate was \$570,000 to build a swell to 1036' elevation. Residents would have paid a quarter of the cost, the rest would have come out of the City budget. Building this structure will not allow homeowners to opt out of flood insurance. The only way that could happen is if there was a federally engineered project, which would span well beyond the Hawleywood subdivision and the City cannot afford to build the protection. There would be cost/benefit analysis and it would come back showing not much benefit for the cost to build it, therefore we would not qualify for assistance. The City could apply for a State grant and may get the grant, but when we applied for a grant in 2013, we ended up returning the grant.

Going forward Wolfington said the structure would have to be moved onto the homeowner's property on the north city limits, as Great River Energy has an easement and a major transmission line along those properties, and will not allow any structure of any kind to be built under the power line. If we chose to use plastic barriers, we will need 700, and they will need to be stored, and have a shelf life which creates a challenge.

Wolfington discussed the 2019 high water event. They had a total of 5 excavators to break up the ice and kept the river flowing. Bagsters were deployed on the golf course road with the help of the Fire Department. Once the ice was broken up, the water level subsided. Wolfington said if the bridge is not dealt with each year, it could cause the floodplain to back up to 17th St. N. in theory.

BNSF Railroad, when asked about replacing the bridge to span the river, replied to the City of Benson we could pay for a new bridge at our expense. Wolfington, the Mayor and another Council-member has a meeting with the railroad at their request to discuss operations in the City. He is not convinced they will entertain bridge improvements.

The Mayor asked for questions from the audience. Following are answers to questions:

- The levee does not take anyone out of the flood plain
- Life expectancy of the railroad bridge as answered by McGeary: He spoke to a railroad employee who said it will last forever and protects those downstream.
- The City needs to include protection for our wastewater treatment plant in the next improvement. Cannot protect the Civic Center.
- 2013 Estimates for assessments to property owners of \$2,500 - \$7,000 per household depending on risk are only estimates from 2013. Current costs could be more.
- 2013 Plans call for raising the golf course road on the west side of Hawleywood, and building a levee on the north side. Great River Energy will not allow the levee under their power lines. Also water could get trapped inside the levee area, also keeping water build up to the north to the property owner that way.
- The City planned for 2 excavators, railroad brought one and we had 5 total working on breaking up the ice. An excavator was sent to a farmer's bridge north of Benson as well.
- When Hawleywood subdivision was done, the flood plain maps were from 1978 before the current FEMA map.
- Additions and outbuildings are not permitted in the flood plain, or the entire city could lose the availability of flood insurance to their citizens. One resident in the floodplain built a fancy dog house, which took the city 3 letters to FEMA to clear this up.
- One home owner said it comes down to the feelings today of the current home owners willingness to participate in the expense of a structure.
- Engineer who conducted the study last time will do a new study if Council directs at a cost of around \$10,000 just to survey the area.
- Costs for the 2019 flood event: \$10,000 Excavators, \$10,000 labor, \$20,000 supplies. This was not budgeted for 2019.
- Wolfington said the City needs to spend some money protecting and improving the wastewater treatment plant as it has been operating at 150% since the snow melt.

Mayor Collins said this was in information gathering session, and they will take all the comments under advisement and will be discussing it at future Council meeting. Holte thanked everyone involved in the flood fight this year.

There being no further business, it was moved by Evenson, seconded by Schreck and carried unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:38 p.m.