

Town of Encampment  
Workshop Session  
April 11, 2024  
6:00 p.m.

The Town of Encampment met in a workshop session Thursday April 11, 2024 at 6:00 p.m. with Mayor Shannon Fagan presiding. Council members Present were Stas Banach, Ashley McKinney, Susan Munson and Steve Reichert. Town personnel present were Doreen Harvey, Clerk/Treasurer and Bill Acord, Public Works Supervisor. Public Guests were Jason Armbruster, Medicine Bow-Route National Forest District Ranger; Matt Schweich, USFS LaVA Implementation Coordinator; Natahsa Collins, World Resources Institute; Abby Walther, USFS and Clint Bassett, City of Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities. Audience member was Ted Benedict.

The purpose of the workshop was the discussion and review of a grant application to the Innovative Finance for the National Forests grant program, exploring the State Revolving Loan concept.

Mr. Armbruster introduced himself as the Medicine Bow-Route District Ranger and introduced the other members of the group. He noted that during the 2019 update of the Source Water Protection Plan with Michelle Christopher, Wyoming Rural Water Source Water Protection Specialist, that catastrophic fire in the water shed was identified as one of the main concerns. A number of maps depicting areas being focused on in the grant application were posted for the council to review. He referenced the Mullen Fire which wound up being 175, 000 acres and affected the City of Cheyenne watershed from the Rob Roy reservoir area. He noted that they intend to focus on the area first, but that there also needed to be work in the upper Douglas Creek area.

Discussion ensued about planned activities and possible timber sales in merchantable areas with the notation that the areas in between the sales were not really merchantable. They plan to mitigate with fire breaks and stockpiling fuels for mid-winter burns in effort to avoid the hat intensity that happened on the Mullen Fire. Mr. Armbruster noted that the cost of such treatments was anywhere from \$200 to \$2000 per acre and that the Forest Service just did not have that type of funding available. He noted that they were looking into other options one of which was the IFNF grant using State Lands and Investment Funds. The application currently being prepared is for \$300,000 in funding to explore that option. The SLIB loan option would allow more opportunities to leverage other funding. Writing a letter in support of the to the IFNF grant, does not obligate the Town of Encampment to anything, it just enables the application to explore the issue. They City if Cheyenne will act as the administrator on the grant.

Ms. Walthers from the USFS noted that this would provide opportunities for vegetation treatments. Such as spacing stands to lower the intensity of a fire with project areas on Forest Service Road 443 and Forest Service Road 550. Council questions the Huston Park Wilderness area which makes up a majority of the area. It was noted that the area is a roadless area with restrictions. Sage, aspen and fir are some of the less desirable areas that need treatment. Part of the process may include stewardship contracts or mastication which helps keep fire out of the crown. About 1,000 acres would be cut and piled for burn in winter months. There may also be some cross boundary work with the BLM. Ideally the work would be under one contract, fully or partially funded with optional items. They are hoping for a fall 2024 or spring 2025 project.

Mr. Bassett from the Cheyenne Board of Public Utilities has been partnering already to enable projects around Lake Owen and Rob Roy reservoir for Cheyenne. He noted that they had to pay for unmerchantable areas and have been working to develop additional partnerships and open up communications on the issue. He noted that he is open to exploring the SLIB concept looking at partnerships, agreements and legal feasibility of what this scale and scope of a project would entail.

Ms. Collins advised that she was funded by a partnership offering creative funding. The current application is to fund capacity and time for funding options. Wyoming is a challenge geographically, but the SLIB funding looks promising. The Town of Encampment would qualify for 75/25 principal

forgiveness because they are a disadvantaged community. The idea of the 25% is that it would be covered by other sources not the Town of Encampment. It would be guaranteed in other ways. Mr. Bassett noted that the Town of Encampment has qualified for principal forgiveness before. He noted that the City of Cheyenne would be the applicant, sub granting to others. The current application is for \$300,000 to be spent within three years. Part of it would go to a position coordinating the effort, legal fees, workshops, MOU's, etc.

Mayor Fagan noted that the Town of Encampment would like full and complete application with time to review it.

Mr. Armbruster noted that the entire project cost would range from \$2,000,000 to \$4,000,000. Invoices would be paid in full, then reimbursement would be sought from SLIB. Entities would need to keep that in mind when preparing their budgets. The current grant application has no obligation to the Town of Encampment, it is just for funding to explore options. Mr. Bassett reiterated that the reason for Cheyenne's participation is that the work helps their watershed and they want the whole area protected.

Audience member Ted Benedict asked if it affected private property owners for skiing, grazing, or other private land. It was noted that nothing would be done on private land, but that a private land owner might be able to tap in to the funding process to get a better deal on their own defensible space project.

Mayor Fagan asked if private land owners partnered for work, if it would be kept separate. Mr. Armbruster noted that there are community defense grants and other mechanisms for private property. Councilman Banach noted that he saw no reason not to go forward with a letter of support for step one of the processes, he could see no downside. He noted that wilderness is a concept and that if they were subject to horrific fires, he questioned why it is protected. On the Mullen fire there was barely a stick left in the forest. It was noted that mechanical treatment and no roads were the issue. Mr. Armbruster noted that the wilderness is one reason that the fire breaks are so important.


Mayor Fagan reiterated that she would like to see a final copy of the grant application before it is submitted.

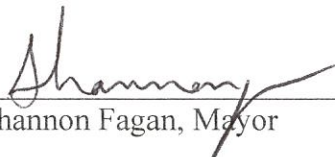
The maps were left for the council to review and it was noted that they expected loss map was one of the maps. There is a high potential for loss.

Mayor Fagan noted that the council will take their action on the matter during their regular meeting. The workshop adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Doreen Harvey, CMC  
Clerk/Treasurer

Approved: May 9, 2024

Attest:   
Doreen Harvey, CMC  
Clerk/Treasurer

  
Shannon Fagan, Mayor