

Town of Empire
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Board of Trustees Regular Meeting Minutes
March 18, 2025 ~ 6:30 pm

1. Call Meeting to Order - Mayor ProTem Jacob Belcher called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM. The meeting was held in person and through Zoom.

2. Roll Call – The Empire Board of Trustees requires a simple majority of four trustees present at the meeting for a quorum.

Present: Mayor Wendy Koch, Mayor ProTem Jacob Belcher, Trustee Randy Horning, Trustee Denise Tennant, Trustee Jessie Reiman and Trustee Stephanie Kline. Also in attendance were Town Attorney Betsy Stewart, Town Administrator Jeannette Piel, and Deputy Town Clerk Lisa Kunze. Chief Andrew Lorenz joined later by Zoom. A quorum was present at the meeting.

3. Approval of Agenda - March 18, 2025 Regular Meeting Agenda

TRUSTEE HORNING MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA FOR MARCH 18, 2025, MAYOR KOCH SECONDED THE MOTION, CLERK BUDA CONDUCTED A ROLL CALL VOTE, ALL WERE IN FAVOR, MOTION PASSED.

The Agenda was approved.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

a. Minutes February 18, 2025 Regular Meeting

b. Minutes March 4, 2025 Joint BOT/PC Housing Work Session

TRUSTEE HORNING MOTIONED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA FOR MARCH 18, 2025, TRUSTEE REIMAN SECONDED THE MOTION, CLERK BUDA CONDUCTED A ROLL CALL VOTE, ALL WERE IN FAVOR, MOTION PASSED.

The Consent Agenda was approved.

5. Announcement: Meeting Decorum Reminder

Reminder to all in attendance to keep private conversations at a minimum during official meetings, others may be in attendance in person or online and it is important to remain professional while in town hall.

6. Resolutions for Consideration:

a. Resolution 25-05: A Resolution of The Town of Empire, Colorado, Establishing The Town's Official Elevation

i. Discussion by Board of Trustees

No discussion.

ii. Public Discussion

No public discussion.

iii. Vote to Adopt

TRUSTEE HORNING MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION 25-05: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF EMPIRE, COLORADO, ESTABLISHING THE TOWN'S OFFICIAL ELEVATION, TRUSTEE REIMAN SECONDED THE MOTION, CLERK BUDA CONDUCTED A ROLL CALL VOTE, ALL WERE IN FAVOR, MOTION PASSED.

Resolution 25-05 was adopted and is effective immediately.

7. Discussion: Fee Schedule

a. Present Information

Town Administrator Piel explained that the Board has a handout (attached) with the title fee discussion; notes added from the last meeting. The items in red show where we will be requiring permits. The items in blue are areas that we still need to research. We plan to have research for you at the April work session, to include in our discussion with Chief Lorenz.

b. Discussion by the Board of Trustees

No discussion.

c. Chief Lorenz will attend the April Work Session to discuss parking enforcement

8. Discussion: CCRHA/Housing

a. Report: Town Administrator Piel informed Trustees that the Clear Creek Regional Housing Authority (CCRHA) Board members have identified initial goals and timeline to start operating (office space, PO Box, Website, Bank Account, etc.) They will draft bylaws and a charter at the next meeting. All parties agreed that a regional grant application for the DOLA Local Planning Capacity grant will give us the best chance of success. Each jurisdiction is asked to approve a letter of support, and CCRHA will show matching funds from the contributions that we each will make once we have a bank account.

b. Discussion by the Board of Trustees

No discussion.

c. Vote to approve Letter of Support for DOLA LPC Grant Regional Application.

TRUSTEE REIMAN MOVED TO APPROVE THE LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR DOLA LPC GRANT REGIONAL APPLICATION, TRUSTEE HORNING SECONDED THE MOTION, CLERK BUDA CONDUCTED A ROLL CALL VOTE, ALL WERE IN FAVOR, MOTION PASSED.

The letter of support will be submitted to CCRHA.

d. The Board and Planning Commission held a joint work session to discuss our Housing Vision, and we will hold at least two additional meetings to complete the process.

e. We are still under a Moratorium for all development. We will look at our progress in April to decide next steps.

9. Discussion: HMP Letter of Intent

a. Present Information - Town Administrator Piel explained that the County and the Office of Emergency Management are officially on the books this year to begin updating the Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). We last completed this process in 2022, and Empire was an active participant. As part of the grant application, the County is requesting signed Letters of Intent from jurisdictions within the county to confirm participation in the update. By taking part in the process, Empire will remain eligible for future mitigation grants.

b. Discussion by the Board of Trustees

No discussion.

c. Vote to approve Letter of Intent to participate in the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan.

TRUSTEE TENNANT MOVED TO APPROVE THE LETTER OF INTENT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE COUNTY-WIDE HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN, TRUSTEE REIMAN SECONDED THE MOTION, CLERK BUDA CONDUCTED A ROLL CALL VOTE, ALL WERE IN FAVOR, MOTION PASSED.

The Letter of Intent to participate in the County-wide Hazard Mitigation Plan has been approved

10. Discussion: PD After-Action Review

a. Report:

Attendees: Chief Andrew Lorenz, Mayor Wendy Koch, Trustee Randy Horning, Town Administrator Jeannette Piel, HR Jennifer Boswell

Purpose of Meeting: To ensure that the Empire Police Department take the correct steps to ensure officers can return to service after a critical incident. We will evaluate actions taken during the incident, and the health and well-being of anyone involved in the incident.

Town Administrator Piel chose a small committee so that we could meet as soon as possible and give

Chief Lorenz a safe and comfortable setting for our after-action review.

We followed the same procedure that the County follows after this type of incident. Chief Lorenz has already scheduled an appointment through the Clear Creek County Peer Support to be evaluated on Friday March 14th. On Monday, March 17th, the same group of people will meet again to hear the results of the evaluation and continue the review process, and the entire Board of Trustees will receive a detailed report the very next day, Tuesday, at the Regular Board Meeting.

The incident involved Clear Creek Sheriff Deputies firing their weapons at a suspect. Chief Lorenz did not fire his weapon but was involved in the call. All other details of the incident will not be discussed in this report because it is an open investigation.

First Evaluation by the Committee on Monday, Mar 10, 2025:

We asked Chief Lorenz to be on light duty for the rest of that week. He and Officer Johnson already had scheduled training on Wednesday and Thursday, so that allowed Chief Lorenz to not be in service for the remainder of the week, but he was still working administratively and attending training. He was not on leave; he was on light duty. We reevaluated that decision on Monday Mar 17 based on the results of the professional evaluation.

Second Evaluation by the Committee on Monday, Mar 17, 2025:

Chief Lorenz attended a professional evaluation on Friday, Mar 14. The Peer Support Therapist has no concerns with Chief Lorenz returning to full duty. Another session is scheduled in two weeks, on Friday Mar 28, to evaluate any ongoing stress.

We recommend that no further review committee meetings are necessary unless there are any concerns voiced by the staff, the committee, or the Board.

We believe Chief Lorenz acted appropriately and professionally on this call, and we followed procedures to monitor his mental health and give him time and support to use the resources available to him. We want to give the Board the opportunity to evaluate the situation at the Board meeting and participate in deciding next steps.

b. Discussion by the Board of Trustees

No discussion.

c. Recommendation for next steps

No recommendations.

11. Discussion: Tourism Bureau Placer Data

a. Present Research from Placer AI

Town Administrator Piel explained that the County is using phone technology called Placer AI, and that Empire can benefit as well through the Tourism Bureau. The app tracks visitors using cell phone data. It is too detailed to give you a full explanation tonight, but the County is looking at ways that we can make informed decisions around Tourism using this data. It will show us what businesses are doing well, and where we are losing our visitors because they go further afield instead of staying in Clear Creek County. That's called leakage. We will be having more discussion over the next several months, and I will invite the Tourism Director, Cass Patton, to explain Placer AI and show you how Empire can use this data for our businesses.

b. Pond Hockey data

Town Administrator Piel shared an example from the Pond Hockey weekend raw data from Placer AI. This information can help us in vision planning for businesses and economic development, so we have a few things to learn about this new resource.

c. Discussion by the Board of Trustees

The town would have to learn how to use this data. Further discussion included:

- How the town can learn to use the data; does it track out of state vs in state?
- The County has begun learning how as well.
- Does this mean they stop in front of the business, or that they actually go inside? How closely does it track, and it may not be associated with spending any money at the businesses.
- The role of the county's tourism bureau to help Empire, as a small town without dedicated staff to tourism.
- Using Placer AI data to track how other events, or even heavy ski weekends near us, impact our businesses, is there a limit?

12. Discussion: CCEDC Resilience Team

- a. Lindsey Valdez of the Clear Creek Economic Development Corporation (CCEDC) has offered Quarterly Meeting Reports to the Board of Trustees.
- b. Discussion by the Board of Trustees

All Trustees agreed that more information is always good, and staff will begin to schedule updates.

13. Discussion: EVENTS

Board members can get involved in planning events; with staffing shortages a new event requires more help. Two members may serve on a committee by law, or have a few help staff more informally.

- a. Double Bypass – July 12th. Trustee Belcher volunteered to head up the committee, beginning with cowbells for town residents to cheer on bypass participants at the start. Trustee Horning will also assist. Event organizers will be invited to zoom into a meeting soon so we can coordinate with them.
- b. Burro Races – Trustees discussed previous Burrow Races, liability issues, and all agreed that Empire could offer camping at the ball field. Trustee Tennant will follow up.
- c. Rotary's Epic Day of Service - County-wide Clean-up Day May 17

The town is participating and will have a dumpster. They asked for town volunteers. More details will be available soon.

- d. 2025 Wreaths across America - wreath-laying ceremony Dec 13

Town Administrator Piel explained that this is the first time in 5 years that the ceremony will be in Empire. The Clear Creek Veterans Coalition performs the ceremony. She will find out closer to the event if there is anything we can do to help and would love it if we could all put this on our calendars and attend. It happens to be the same Saturday that we have our Town Christmas Celebration scheduled too.

14. Reports:

Town Administrator Piel explained the new, more efficient reporting format based on the public meeting of our neighbors. The report will be a separate piece of paper highlighting operational activities, and it will be posted when we post the agenda and available for the Board and public to stay informed. This will also expedite the meeting and allow Trustees to focus on decisions required as action items. Questions about operational reports also have a place at the end of this agenda item. All action items now become Discussion agenda items earlier in the meeting agenda.

- a. Financial Reports
 - i. Audit Report Template

Trustees requested an update on the questions from the auditor; Town Administrator Piel will be presenting the quarterly audit, budget and grant reports to the Board in April.

- b. Police Department
 - i. Monthly report and stats from Chief Lorenz (attached.)
- c. Planning Commission
 - i. All Planning Commission meetings are in-person with remote access.
 - ii. The next Regular Planning Commission Meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 26, 2025, at 6:30 pm.
 - iii. The next Training/ Work Session for the Planning Commission will be held on Wednesday, May 14, 2025 at 6:30 pm.
- d. Answering Questions from the Previous Meeting
 - i. Rob Collins' comments were incorporated in a previous agenda item.
- e. **Operational Reports are sent to the Board to review for information only, and do not contain any action items. For operational questions, please email the clerk.**

15. Board of Trustees Goal for the 2024 - 2026 Term: Ongoing

The Town of Empire will increase revenue within this Board of Trustee term by supporting the economic needs of current and future businesses by capitalizing on our unique location and the traffic it provides, without compromising the non-monetizable assets that gives Empire its' unique charm.

16. Public Comment: Public comment is limited to 3 minutes per person. The Board does not respond to questions during this time. For operational questions, please email the clerk.
No public comment.

17. Moment of Appreciation – At each of our Board and Planning Commission Regular Meetings, we want all of you to tell us what you appreciate about Empire. It can be anything. What’s the first thing that comes to your mind, or what’s the first thing you show people when they visit, or what do you miss the most when you are away. Short and sweet – please keep it positive!

- That zoning officer enforced barriers for construction garbage. Put a tarp on the dumpster at the construction site near her house.
- Snow has melted off the roof! Icicles don’t break gutters now.
- Spring is coming!
- Red wing blackbirds have been seen; trees starting to bud.
- The Huge skeleton dressed in green for Saint Patty's Day!
- The night sky and so many stars!

18. New Business from Board of Trustee Members

Trustee Belcher reported that Yeti cycles has moved to Golden and is no longer looking for locations.

19. Board of Trustees Upcoming Meetings and Topics

- a. Upcoming Topics from Administrative Overview

Town Administrator Piel shared the 11 x 17 chart (attached) and explained that summer will swiftly be here, road and bridge is a priority; most other projects are pushed back due to staffing shortages; August is highlighted because Teana will be back from maternity leave then.

- b. The Next Board of Trustees Work Session/Training is Tuesday, April 1, 2025, at 6:30 pm. In person with remote access.
- c. Training for current and future Chairpersons of the BOT and PC has been rescheduled to Wednesday, April 9, 2025 at 6:30 pm.
- d. The Next Board of Trustees Regular Meeting is Tuesday, April 15, 2025, at 6:30 pm. In person with remote access.
- e. A Joint Work Session with the Board and PC to discuss our Vision for Housing and Land Use has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 23, 2025 at 6:30 pm.

20. Adjourn Meeting

MAYOR KOCH MOTIONED TO ADJOURN, TRUSTEE HORNING SECONDED THE MOTION, CLERK BUDA CONDUCTED A ROLL CALL VOTE, ALL WERE IN FAVOR, MOTION PASSED.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 PM.

(Mayor ProTem Jacob Belcher)

(Deputy Town Clerk Lisa Kunze)