



MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF CONRAD, COUNTY OF PONDERA, STATE OF MONTANA
HELD AT CONRAD CITY HALL ON NOVEMBER 21, 2023

The City Council of the City of Conrad, County of Pondera, State of Montana, met in regular session at the Conrad City Hall on November 21, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order by Interim Mayor Hunsucker at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Interim Mayor Nathan Hunsucker, Alderman Scott Mycke, Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Finance Officer Joani Mink, Sergeant Cory Smith of the CPD and Daniel Jones, City Attorney

Absent: Alderman David Cates absent with permission.

Read & Approve Minutes of October 29, 2023, Special Meeting and Minutes of November 7, 2023, Regular Meeting

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, second by Alderman Mycke, to approve the October 29, 2023, Special Meeting Minutes and the November 7, 2023, Regular Meeting Minutes.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Action on Claims

Claims #27643 through #27660 (refer to the claims register/claims approval list)

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, seconded by Alderman Mycke to approve the claims as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Water Contracts: None

Correspondence: None

City of Conrad Department Reports: Police Department presented by Seargent Cory Smith

Seargent Smith reported the following: 230 calls for service, 24 routine security checks, 8 arrests, 10 alarms, 3 assaults/harassment/threats, 6 Burglary/Thefts, 4 Court Orders, 5 Criminal Mischief/Trespass/Vandalism, 2 Domestic incidents, 2 child abuse, 8 medical emergencies, 5 noise complaints, 3 suicide/mental health calls, 19 suspicious activity/vehicles, 7 warrant attempts, 1 missing persons, 8 citizen assists, 5 civil standbys, 3 citizen disputes, 7 vehicle lockouts, 1 VIN inspection, 5 welfare checks, 3 utility complaints, 3 juvenile complaints, 2 privacy & communications, 1 prisoner transport, 13 misc., 2 traffic accidents, 5 traffic complaints, and 23 traffic initiated. Seargent Smith also reported on assisting other agencies 4 sheriff's office, 8 ambulance, 1 fire department, Dillon PD 1, and he reported on animal control calls in which there were 15 dogs and 3 cats.

6:10 Public Comment /No action

Former Mayor Jamie Miller voiced her disagreement with her removal of office. She stated that Conrad City Council should have conducted the meeting in an open session, and that the way they removed her from the office was illegal. She further said that she never engaged in any conduct that was



misappropriate or that supported her removal from the office. She is asking the court that she be placed back into office and recognize the illegal actions of the Council. She gave each Council member a copy of her lawsuit (**MT Ninth Judicial District Court Pondera County, Jamie Miller and James Coombs, Plaintiffs v. City of Conrad, Complaint for declaratory relief/petition to set aside agency action**), and then she left the meeting.

Mr. Coombs asked the Council on what authority they had to remove Miller from the office in a closed-door session. City Attorney Daniel Jones answered by stating the law **MCA 7-4-4111 subsection 6**. He further explained that Miller had openly neglected or refused to discharge her duties. City Attorney Jones further explained employee rights to privacy, and informed Mr. Coombs that the duties Miller neglected had to do with employee rights. He also informed Mr. Coombs that constitutional employee privacy rights trump the citizen's right to know. Mr. Coombs responded to this by accusing Council of forming a cue and putting a person of their own selection in office. City Attorney Jones informed Mr. Coombs that when there is a vacancy, then the Council decides who to put in place. Mr. Coombs stated that Council has a responsibility to answer to the taxpayers. He also asked if the vote to remove the former Mayor was unanimous. Mr. Coombs was informed that it was a unanimous decision. Mr. Coombs then asked again what was so bad that the former Mayor got removed? Mr. Coombs made an accusation of corruption, and he further stated the Council's lack of response was unethical. Mr. Coombs was very upset that he did not have the right to know why the Mayor was removed. Another person spoke up and said that 70% of Conrad had voted for the former Mayor and then accused the Council of not caring about the citizens. City Attorney Jones defended the Council by stating that Council was following the law. A citizen openly accused Council of being in cahoots and having self-interest motives. She also accused Council of not caring about the citizens and only caring about themselves. Another citizen spoke up and told the public that if someone is elected to office and they aren't doing their duties, then they need to be removed. Mr. Coombs spoke up again and said that was correct, but the public doesn't know what the former Mayor had done wrong. City Attorney Jones responded that the City can't disclose private information. The city can't tell you who did the investigation. Mr. Coombs responded to City Attorney Jones' comments by saying it was spineless of Council not to give the public notice that this was going to take place.

Former Alderman Karla Breeding spoke out and asked the citizens of Conrad to pray for this council. She told the town members that being an Alderman is a hard job. Karla said she would like to see the people present at the meeting apply for these positions. The lack of support and hostility is turning the City of Conrad into a sinking ship. She further said it was sinking before, and now the most experienced person is out. She further said there are rules and guidelines that Council must following, and it is frustrating that they can't tell you what is going on because of employee privacy rights. Mr. Coombs interrupted Karla and said Council should step down if they felt it was too hard or stressful. He also added that he would like to be a Council member. Mr. Coombs would not be quiet, he used up his five minutes, and he was very disrespectful, interrupting Karla as she spoke.

Jack Hadcock spoke next and told everyone that the only one in the room that he had voted for just walked out. He asked what right's the former Mayor had. He also asked if Scott Mycke was present at the executive session. It was stated that he was out of state at the time and was not present. Jack accused Council of opening a can of worms. He warned Council that they should be concerned since they had been served. Another person spoke up and said that it was unfair and illegal to remove a mayor in a private session. He didn't think it was a good way to run the city. He told Council that he thought the removal of the mayor was a big liability for this city.



Alderman Amber Schoenrock addressed the meeting, and she told the public that her and Nathan's positions were open in the previous election, but no one ran against them. Alderman Schoenrock said it told her that the public liked and trusted them. Alderman Schoenrock further stated that she cares about Conrad, and that she listens to people's concerns and tries to convey that to Council. Alderman Schoenrock doesn't believe that anyone on Council is trying to put anyone special in the mayor's position. She said she hoped that the public would trust them to put the best person in that position, even if it is the former Mayor. Mr. Coombs broke the rules of conduct and disrupted the meeting again by interrupting Alderman Schoenrock. At this point, City Attorney Jones asked him to stop disrupting the meeting and stop speaking over people. Daniel just asked that the meeting be run accordingly, and that Mr. Coombs quit interrupting.

Kurt Miller spoke up next in support of his wife Jamie Miller. He said his biggest concern in all this is the public questioning of what she had done that was so bad that she got removed from office. He said as someone that runs a business, got 72% of the vote and loves Conrad, he couldn't understand what she could have done that was so bad. He noted that he and the former Mayor are concerned about the questions and what the community is thinking about her. He also said that Jamie Miller ran to make a difference, and that she made big sacrifices to fill the role as Mayor. Kurt said that Miller made a choice that she was all in, and that she's been very stressed working 60 hours a week. He said she had given up her high paying professional job. Kurt also said Jamie was the most honest and caring person. He finished by saying that he didn't know what she had done, but he wanted to know.

Another citizen spoke and asked if there was an investigation, and if it was paid for by the city. Council members answered yes, and that it was paid for by the city. The citizen went on to say that when Jamie started her role as Mayor, she had very little support from the Council. The citizen also said that the city government was disenfranchised and that it was an embarrassment. Another person spoke up and said that Jamie was out for the community and probably the most honest person ever. She noted that Jamie wanted to liven up the dead town of Conrad and attract new people. She voiced that she thought this whole thing was a crock, and that Jamie deserves to be Mayor. She then asked Council how many votes in the meeting were required to remove her. City Attorney Jones told her that it took 3 votes to make a quorum, and that all three council members voted in favor of removing her. This ended the public discussion.

Discussion/Action: The addition of Finance Officer Joani Mink and removal of Jamie Miller and Patricia Hutton on all City of Conrad investment and bank accounts including Stockman Bank, US Bank, DA Davidson (Genevieve Rieken Anderson Chaitable TR), Independence Bank, Wells Fargo, Raymond James, MT Board of Investments (STIP), and 1st Liberty Federal Credit Union.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, seconded by Alderman Hunsucker to approve the addition of Finance Officer Joani Mink on all City of Conrad investment and bank accounts including Stockman Bank, US Bank, DA Davidson (Genevieve Rieken Anderson Chaitable TR), Independence Bank, Wells Fargo, Raymond James, MT Board of Investments (STIP), and 1st Liberty Federal Credit Union.
 - Motion carried unanimously.



- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock seconded by Alderman Mycke to approve the removal of Jamie Miller and Patricia Hutton from all bank accounts.
 - Motion carried unanimously.

Discussion/Action: request by Amber Schoenrock to be absent Dec 15 – Dec 25 2023

- Motion by Alderman Hunsucker, seconded by Alderman Mycke to approve Alderman Amber Schoenrock’s request to be absent.
 - Motion carried Unanimously.

Discussion- Filling the vacancy position of the Mayor

There was discussion on how to go about the process of citizens coming forward with interest in being the Mayor of Conrad. City Attorney Jones said that they should request letters of interest from the public within 30 days of the day of vacancy to accept letters. Alderman Schoenrock asked if they needed to set an end time for the acceptance of the letters. It was decided by Council at the suggestion of the City Attorney to accept letters by December 1, 2023, and if no letters are submitted by the deadline, the next deadline can be determined at the next meeting. It was also noted that it will be on the next Agenda for the meeting scheduled for 12-08-2023. The Council was asked by a citizen how they were going to decide who gets to be mayor. City Attorney Jones suggested that it would be based on qualifications and experience in the form of a resume’.

Items to Appear on Next/Future Agenda:

- Audit
- Power water share
- Boards and commission appointments

Meeting Adjourned:

There being no further business to come before the council, motion by Alderman Schoenrock second by Alderman Hunsucker, to adjourn the meeting at 6:45 p.m.

- Motion Carried Unanimously



Nathan Hunsucker

Nathan Hunsucker, Mayor Interim

Attest:

[Signature]

*Finance Officer