



**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 JANUARY 02, 2024**

The City Council of the City of Conrad, County of Pondera, State of Montana, met in regular session at the Conrad City Hall on January 02, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Interim Mayor Nathan Hunsucker, Alderman David Cates, Alderman Scott Mycke, Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Finance Officer Joani Mink, and Chief of Police Ernie Padilla.

Absent: 0

Guests: 12

Teleconference Guests: McKenzie with the IO, Attorney Jeff Hindoiem, and 8 Anonymous guests

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

Read & Approve Minutes:

Read and approve the Special Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2023, and the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2023.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, second by Alderman Mycke to approve the Regular City Council Meeting Minutes of December 19, 2023.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, second by Alderman Cates to approve the Special City Council Meeting Minutes as presented on December 19, 2023.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Discussion/Action on Claims:

Claims #27725-#27751 (refer to the claims register/claims approval list):

- Motion by Alderman Cates, second by Alderman Schoenrock to approve the claims, as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Correspondence: None

City of Conrad Department Reports:

Conrad Police Department: Chief Padilla reported the following: 217 calls for service, routine security checks, 2 arrests, 13 alarms, 4 assaults/harassment/threats, 9 burglary/thefts, 1 court order, 6 criminal mischief/trespass/vandalism, 5 domestic incidents, 2 child abuse, 1 lost and found, 15 medical emergencies, 4 noise complaints, 6 suicide/mental health calls, 15 suspicious activity/vehicles, 7 warrant attempts, 1 missing persons, 8 citizen assists, 3 civil standbys, 13 information only calls, 2 vehicle lockouts, 3 VIN inspections, 7 welfare checks, 2 SRO/public events, 1 utility complaint, 2 juvenile complaints, 1 privacy & communications, 2 accidents investigated, 10 complaints reported, 49 traffic initiated incidents, 8 sheriff's office assists, 11 ambulance assists, and 1 fire department assist. Lastly, Chief Padilla reported on animal control calls in which there were 16 dogs, 3 cats and 1 chicken permit.



Finance Report: Finance Officer Joani Mink reported the following: The month end balances for December 23' were as follows: \$236,016.18 in main account, \$5,800,000.00 in STIP, and \$227,300.45 in the Money Market. The last Raymond James statement showed the City of Conrad had a balance of \$2,072,509.49 which is \$133,590.89 down from October. She told Council that she would be looking at how the investments are doing from the December statement, and she said she hoped to see an increase with the recent rise in the stock market. The Finance Officer said there was \$513.15 in the Wells Fargo Account and 3x\$100,000.00 CDs at Independence Bank. She reported that one of those CDs was at a .6% rate and the other 2.05 %. Finance Officer Mink told Council that she cancelled and renewed the CDs into two 6- month CDs @ 5.10% with combined interest after forfeiture amounts equals \$1,794.35. She also reported that there are 3x200,000.00 CDs in Stockman Bank and 2x\$100,000.00 CDs at 1st Liberty Credit Union. Finance Officer Mink said the City of Conrad received \$115,632.44 from State of Montana DOT and \$252,552.85 for water/sewer, licenses, permits, accounts receipting and utility billing. The total liabilities for the month of December were as follows: claims totaled \$151,189.74, payroll totaled \$104,716.12 plus \$25.50, and service charge fees totaled: \$60.00.

Public Comment (no action taken): none

Jack Hadcock discussed his dissatisfaction with the removal of Mayor Miller. He scrutinized the Council, except for Alderman Mycke, for the meeting held November 17, 2023. He said that it was an embarrassment for the City of Conrad. He also said when issues like this arise, it is up to voters to decide these issues when they cast their votes. Jack Hadcock said he was really irritated in this instance that his vote had been disenfranchised by the acts of Council. He compared it to Colorado where candidates are being taken off the ballots. Jack Hadcock stated that instead of praying for the people in the room, they should be praying for the voters in Conrad. Mr. Hadcock addressed Alderman Schoenrock and said she was professional up until she said she would support the Chief of Police. He firmly stated that Alderman Cates, Hunsucker and Schoenrock should turn in their Letters of Resignation and leave it up to Mayor Miller to accept or deny them. He offered this as a solution to save the City of Conrad taxpayer dollars in Court fees.

Carolyn Donath spoke next and read the comments she had prepared beforehand. She discussed some of her background as a library department head and city employee. She said she has known and liked Mayor Miller for 13 years, and that she enjoyed seeing her and her family in the library. She noted, like Jack Hadcock, that she does not include Alderman Mycke in her disappointment with Council. Carolyn Donath said the video released from the meeting on November 17, 2023, made her sick. She spoke about glitches and timing issues in the video and questioned if it had been edited. Carolyn Donath asked if Conrad City Attorney Jones had been recording the November 17, 2023, meeting on his cell phone, and if he had did he disclose it? She also made a public information request and asked for the total amount of money the City of Conrad paid City Attorney Daniel Jones dating June 1, 2022, until present. Carolyn Donath then asked what happened that was so bad that the Council changed their minds about Mayor Miller when before they trusted and welcomed her. Carolyn Donath spoke of corruption in the city government and how she and others worked tirelessly to get Jamie Miller elected to address the issue. She also noted that Mayor Miller was the only one that mentioned concern for voters in the video. Carolyn Donath then mentioned the statement made by Alderman Cates that for the first 18 months things ran smoothly, and then there was the issue of paranoia. Carolyn Donath said Miller was feeling uncomfortable with her reception at the city office for good cause. She then mentioned Alderman Cate's comments about working with female clerks and told him that kind of talk wasn't acceptable. Carolyn Donath then talked about how much she liked the former City of Conrad Attorney Justin Lee and wondered how Attorney Jones got involved. She also said that Mayor Miller's computer should have been sent to DSI for investigation. She



said that would have solved all the accusations. Carolyn Donath then said she didn't like Attorney Jones' three options, and said she supported the option of keeping Mayor Miller in office. She then told Council that she supported Mayor Miller's involvement in the budget process, and said Mayor Miller was well within her right to question the police department wages. Carolyn Donath asked if Patti Hutton's privacy rights had been addressed? She then commented on Padilla's grievance and stated that he had not followed procedure. Carolyn Donath asked why Attorney Jones didn't reclude himself from this issue on the matter of a conflict of interest. She then reprimanded Finance Officer Joani Mink for her comment about Agnes Fowler and called it a lie. She would not specifically say what the comment was, but Finance Officer Mink argued that she had told the truth. Lastly, Carolyn Donath finished by asking how those individuals present that were so instrumental in getting Jamie Miller elected as Mayor could turn around and do what they did to her?

Maria Cates spoke next and asked the question if the individuals Carolyn Donath spoke of were so instrumental in getting Mayor Miller elected, then don't you think they thought long and hard before making this decision?

A concerned citizen spoke next and said "kudos" to Jack Hadcock and Carolyn Donath for their comments. The Citizen then asked Council if they ever looked back and remembered the Oath they took to remind themselves of the words they promised to follow on behalf of the taxpayers? She also stated that the video made her very angry. Former Mayor Don McClain spoke up and said that in previous meetings the same people were complaining about not being informed or being given access to the video. He said now that the information has been released, they are upset about that. Carolyn Donath then said that Alderman Schoenrock acted professionally throughout the meeting until she gave her allegiance to Chief Padilla. Alderman Schoenrock responded to that by stating she stands by her stated support of the Chief, and that she stood by the process Chief Padilla followed.

Former Police Officer Darryl Burditt spoke up and discussed how in the past the Chief of Police was always paid a salary and then had to take comp time but no overtime, because he didn't have time to take off. He then asked if all Department heads should be allowed comp time or overtime? Carolyn Donath said it was a process where procedure had to be followed. Alderman Cates said that Attorney Jones was the one that came up with the Montana Statute that specifically states the Chief of Police can get overtime except when working on administrative duties when there are a low number of officers available to work. He added that hiring another officer would eliminate that. Carolyn Donath asked if there was an officer on the street 24/7? Chief Padilla told her that there is an officer available on duty not on the street 24/7. Another Citizen asked about the right to privacy, and how the video was allowed on Facebook. The Interim Mayor answered by stating that the Chief of Police waived his right to privacy.

Discussion/Action: Employment of Julie Orcutt as Payroll/Administrative Clerk for the City of Conrad effective January 2, 2024.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, seconded by Alderman Cates to approve the hiring of Julie Orcutt starting January 2, 2024, at the wage of \$18.00 an hour.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Discussion: Mayor's Position: Interim Mayor discussed the Special Council Meeting to be held at Norley Hall on Thursday, January 4th, 2024. The Special Meeting was to be held by a motion made by Alderman Schoenrock in the Executive Session December 19, 2023, to have a public meeting that held the November 17, 2023, meeting in an open setting at the advice of MMIA appointed Attorney Trish Klanke. Carolyn Donath asked if the Council was going to redo the meeting because they knew they made a mistake or as an admission that they were in the wrong. Interim Mayor Hunsucker said it was taking



place by advice of the MMIA Attorney in reaction the present lawsuit. Carolyn Donath said Attorney Daniel Jones has had a lot more business with the City of Conrad since June 22' until present and requested a complete accounting of all invoices the city received for his services. Alderman Cates asked if anyone had read the Investigation report? Carolyn Donath said she had read it, and that it was boring.

Discussion/Action: House Bill 355

Interim Mayor Hunsucker discussed the City of Conrad HB 355 Infrastructure Funding Allotted Funds (\$198,671.00) Potential Eligible Project List that he put together. The list included the following projects: mechanical system replacement HVAC for the library, new playground equipment for swimming pool and ballfield parks, second floor office addition for the Conrad Public Library, roof runoff and drainage evaluation for City of Conrad office, tuckpointing of historic façade at library, Conrad pathway sprinkler system, and side window replacement at library. Interim Mayor Hunsucker said there is a 25% cost match on the projects, and that the list had to be completed and submitted to City of Conrad Executives by December 31, 2023. He added that in the next coming weeks there will be public hearings for project comments and information. Interim Mayor Hunsucker also said that the project list will be submitted to a State Commission where the projects will be approved or denied. He suggested that those that submitted projects provide match funding and cost detail for each project.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, seconded by Alderman Cates, to approve the HB 355 Infrastructure list of potential projects.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Other Business

Interim Mayor Hunsucker discussed a Resolution to be submitted to the Pondera Clerk and Recorder for a Ballot issue request. He said every ten years municipalities have the option to have their local governments reviewed by a committee who makes recommendations, and it is due by the first of February.

Interim Mayor Hunsucker spoke about the possibility of hiring Trey Kinamon as an assistant at the previous meeting, but he asked for that to be put on hold for the moment.

Items to Appear on the Next/Future Agenda:

Blue Sky Villa

Pondera Health Care Foundation request for free day use of Norley Hall.

Set Hearing for HB 355

Meeting Adjourned

There being no further business to come before the Council, motion by Alderman Schoenrock, seconded by Alderman Cates, to adjourn the meeting at 6:50pm.

- Motion Carried Unanimously.


Interim Mayor Nathan Hunsucker

Attest: 
Finance Officer, Joani Mink

