



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 December 19, 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 December 19, 2023, at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Interim Mayor Nathan Hunsucker, Alderman David Cates, Alderman Scott Mycke, Library Director Tiffany Christenson; Finance Officer Joani Mink, Public Works Director Dave Zimbelman, and City Attorney Daniel Jones.

Absent: Alderman Amber Schoenrock with permission.

Guests present: 6

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

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 5, 2023, and the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2023.

- Motion by Alderman Cates, second by Alderman Mycke to approve the Special Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2023, and the Regular Meeting Minutes of December 5, 2023.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Executive Session/Litigation Strategy:

- Motion by Alderman Cates, Second by Alderman Mycke to close Regular Meeting.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.
- Motion by Alderman Cates, Second by Alderman Mycke to reopen Regular Meeting:
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Discussion/Action on Claims:

Claims #27695-#27704 and #27706-#27721(refer to the claims register/claims approval list):

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

Correspondence: MT League of Cities and Towns

Interim Mayor Hunsucker read an email from the Montana League of Cities and Towns that informed the City of Conrad that the MT League will be continuing their accounting and financial services and assist in balancing the budget for the City of Conrad.

City of Conrad Department Reports

Library Report: Library Director, Tiffany Christenson, gave an updated library report. The Director told Council that she does not have her preliminary report yet, but she did supply a list of library



infrastructure projects to be submitted for HB 355. She also provided a project budget showing funding sources and construction costs for the library.

Public Comment (no action taken): none

Discussion/Action: Wage increase for Public Works Department

Interim Mayor Hunsucker told the Council that he had spent a lot of time reviewing wage reports and calculating wage increase costs. He said that based on previous wage totals, total amounts saved by not paying two employees that resigned, and the inclusion of the new works department employee, the budget had a total excess of \$17,990.00. Mayor Hunsucker stated that figure was more than enough to compensate for a \$2.00/hour wage increase for the works department. He also gave his appreciation to Works Director Dave Zimbelman and asked Council to include him in the wage increase. Interim Mayor Hunsucker said that Director Zimbelman is a valued asset to the city, and he hopes he stays in his current position. Alderman Cates asked if the new Works Department employee was to be included in the wage increase? The Interim Mayor said no because he was hired at a set wage. He also stated that he had figured withholdings and employee liabilities in his budgeting of this decision and didn't think there needed to be a budget amendment. It was also brought up by Karla Breeding that there could be more wage increases in the future, and she asked how the city will be able to sustain wage increases in future budgets. The Interim Mayor said the Council may have to look at utility increases to cover wage increases in the future if the city can't keep employees. Director Zimbelman responded to that by stating that he would do everything he could to help the city of Conrad in scheduling, managing overtime, and the use of the extra 120 hours in sustaining the current budget. Alderman Mycke asked about Union negotiations. He suggested seeing separation of wages for employees that have or obtain special licenses. Director Zimbelman said that the current increase in wages will help when the works employees and City of Conrad negotiate with the Union. Lastly, Director Zimbelman thanked Interim Mayor Hunsucker and Council for the wage increase and their consideration of the Works Department employees.

- Motion by Interim Mayor Hunsucker, seconded by Alderman Cates to give a \$2.00/hour wage increase for all public works effective on payroll December 1, 2023.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

Discussion: Mayor's Position

Interim Mayor Hunsucker told Council that City Attorney Jones and MMIA appointed Attorney Trish Klanke suggested the mayor vacancy remain open and as is until after the new year.

Discussion: House Bill 355

Public Works Director Zimbelman told Council that he would like to add playground equipment for the swimming pool park and ball fields to the infrastructure list for HB355. Maria Cates asked Council if she could add the sprinkler system for Blue Sky Villa to the list. She stated that they had more than enough funds to match the request. The Finance Officer passed out a form for those wishing to add items to the infrastructure list and mentioned the compilation needed to be turned into Council no later than December 31, 2023.

Discussion/Action: Water Shares

Interim Mayor Hunsucker talked about the 121-water share request to supply water to Power. He told Council that he had a lot of citizens ask him not to part with the shares or the water. Director Zimbelman



asked what was happening to the unused water shares that the City of Conrad gave Brady. It was assumed they didn't need them at this time. Karla Breeding asked if anyone had contacted the Canal Company about the share request. Mayor Hunsucker said that City Engineer Brad Koon had discussed the issue with them and was told the City would have to have an approval letter from the Canal Company before issuing the shares to another party. Works Director Zimbelman said that a spokesperson from the Canal Company asked him if the City of Conrad would be interested in selling shares back to the canal company. He said that they had discussed the probability that the Canal Company had oversold shares.

- Motion by Interim Mayor Hunsucker to give 123 shares to NCRWA.
 - Motion died due to lack of a second.

Other Business

Maria Cates asked Council if the Pondera Health Care Foundation could have a free pass/donation for the use of Norley Hall. Karla Breeding told her to ask Horizon Garden Apartments, and Interim Mayor told her he would discuss it at the next meeting.

Director Zimbelman brought up the Tri-County Interlocal Dinner Meeting that is scheduled to be in Conrad January 18, 2024, around 6:00 PM. Interim Mayor Hunsucker suggested that Director Zimbelman and Finance Officer Mink work together on organizing the event. Interim Mayor Hunsucker said there will probably be around 30 guests.

Interim Mayor Hunsucker brought up the subject of hiring Trey Kinamon as an administrative assistant that answers directly to the mayor. Mayor Hunsucker told Council it would help him with his workload. He felt he couldn't do the job justice without assistance, and that Trey Kinamon had an impressive resume' which included working as an assistant to the Governor of Montana. Finance Officer Mink suggested having Interns in the future for City office positions, as well.

Items to Appear on the Next/Future Agenda:

Hiring of Julie Orcutt for the Payroll/Administrative Clerk

Discussion/Action: House Bill 355

Tri-County Interlocal Dinner Party

Meeting Adjourned

There being no further business to come before the Council, motion by Interim Mayor Hunsucker, seconded by Alderman Cates, to adjourn the meeting at 7:50pm.

- Motion Carried Unanimously.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nathan Hunsucker".

Interim Mayor Nathan Hunsucker

Attest: _____

Finance Officer, Joani Mink

