



**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 September 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 September 19, 2023 at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor Jamie Miller; Aldermen: Nathan Hunsucker, David Cates and Amber Schoenrock; Library Director Tiffany Christiansen; Payroll Clerk Patti Hutton; City Attorney Daniel Jones (present by phone)

Absent: 0

Guests present: 11; Independent Observer, McKenzie Graye, present by phone

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

Read & Approve Minutes of September 5, 2023, Regular Meeting

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, second by Alderman Hunsucker, to Approve Minutes of the September 5, 2023 Regular Meeting.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Claims #27500 through #27538 (refer to the claims register/claims approval list)

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, second by Alderman Hunsucker, to approve the claims, as presented along with the statement for intern services dated September 19, 2023 from Daniel Jones.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Water Contracts: Application for Single User Rural Water Permit (Transfer)

- Motion by Alderman Hunsucker, second by Alderman Cates, to approve the rural water contract with Brian and Jackie Jones.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Correspondence: None

Public Comment (no action taken): Mrs. Walter presented a document to Council and the Mayor with the matters of comment. Mrs. Walter's comments were in response to the reported ballfield losses reported at the September 5, 2023 council meeting. A request was made for the losses [expenditures] for the parks and pools in addition to a breakdown of the ballfield fund. Clarification if the pool is ran as a business in comparison to the parks in addition to explanation of some of the expense lines/ballfield lights mentioned in the report she received from the last meeting, were also requested. Mrs. Walter expressed the ballfield lights are an added improvement for many to enjoy and noted they are being funded separately funded by the community to the tune of \$150,000. It was said the Genevieve Reiken money is not City funds and to be considered a loss of revenue is inaccurate; a report of where these funds have been allocated in the past 5 years was requested. A question was asked if the splash park will show a revenue and expected costs. The planned bleachers for the ballfields were also mentioned and it was noted this is after many years of disrepair and liability issues that they have been ordered; she asked what funds purchased the bleachers. Information about the ballfields was also shared and noted that there is a joint effort to maintain and many hours have been donated by community members to help make it the wonderful experience it is. Mrs. Walter

reported 220 kids utilized the ballfields this year and over 500 community members spend time at the ballfield each week.

City of Conrad Department Reports:

Conrad Public Library

Library Director Christensen Reported the Conrad Library had 1,601 visits in August. 15 programs were held with 182 attendees. The library hosted a face painting table at National Night Out. The Summer reading program has wrapped up and the fall youth programs (story hour, toddler time, daycare/preschool outreach totes, two after school clubs (1st-3rd grade, 4th-6th grade have begun; student class visits are expected to begin soon. Registration is available for the Democracy Project this is a teen-led civic program. A new program for adults is forthcoming that will be a stitching circle the 1st and 3rd Monday of each month from 7pm-9pm at the library. The library is in the process of conducting interviews for a part time library assistant. A video intercom/doorbell is being installed at the backdoor. The library had two library staff members and one trustee attend the recent Montana State Library Workshop.

Discussion: Need for Pickleball Courts

Mr. Berg discussed starting a Pickleball experience in Conrad. Mr. Berg shared his experiences with the sport and noted it is the fastest growing sport in the U.S. and is a sport for a wide-range of ages. Mr. Berg shared he is hearing there is an interest by people in the community to bring this to Conrad. A thought would be for the city to consider a location for the courts and several recommendations (unused courts at Blue Sky Villa, etc.) were made. He reported his research indicates these courts could be retro-fitted for around \$25,000 or a new court may cost around \$50,000; at least 2 courts would be recommended. Mayor Miller agreed this would be a wonderful addition to the community and said she would like to start a pickleball committee that could bring this to fruition in the city; she asked C. Berg if he would be on it. He agreed he would be willing to serve on this committee.

Discussion: Time for a Change-Conrad Community Event Ideas

Mrs. Beninger discussed with family, friends, and neighbors what could bring in interest to our community and businesses. She presented a list of wonderful ideas and events that could include/be school projects and/or showcase student's work such as community student art walk. Other events she suggested were a holiday craft fair, flea market held on 4th and Main, a quilt show as there many quilters in Conrad, a garden expo as there are also exceptional gardeners in the Conrad, Rock the Block, a fun run, a Renaissance Fair, and Rendezvous (Mountain Men). Mrs. Beninger also commented that it is important to the community to refresh the appearance of our Main Street.

Discussion: Veteran's Memorial Plan Update

Tim and Amy Salois presented an update on the proposed Veteran's Memorial. Their hope is to build this memorial in Conrad; their first desire of placement would be the area previously identified on the Blue Sky Villa property and they expressed that it is understood that only if the future lease agreement would allow for this; if not, another location on city property would be okay. The Salois' presented a sketch of what the memorial would potentially look like, including dimensions. They clarified the plan is for there to be no cost to the City other than maybe a flag light but the plan is currently to fund the project by donations. The Mayor and Council voiced gratitude to the Salois' for bringing this idea forth and for the desire to acknowledge members in the community who have served our Country.

Discussion: Triple Tree Engineering Project Update

Brad Koon from Triple Tree Engineering presented an update on city projects (Storm Water/Sewer Lift Stations, Wastewater Plant, and Splash Park). He explained the 2nd Street lift station is failing and the hope is to get it started as soon as possible however, the project has been delayed due to supply chain problems and backlog with the engineers who review the pumps; it is guesstimated that it will be 14 to 20 weeks before the pumps can be supplied/available. Mr. Koon spoke to the contractor and they said they are willing to work on the project in the

winter depending on weather. Triple Tree is coordinating with Public Works and is aware of the urgency of the project. There are plans to keep the station working during the installation. Mr. Koon also discussed the Storm Water-Lift Station/ARPA Project. Surveying has been completed and Triple Tree is working on the design now, some parts will require DEQ approval. Triple Tree plans to have the specs done by early February with the project bidding and roll-out beginning soon after. ARPA funds need to be spent by the end of 2025 thus there is a need to complete the projects by then. Budget updates to the project are being worked on by Triple Tree and are forthcoming. Mr. Koon discussed the Wastewater PER: a grant was received to complete the PER for future wastewater plant updates; another grant is in works to help with the PER and Triple Tree will keep the city informed on this process. Mr. Koon presented an update on the Splash Park; there has been lots of work by the splash park committee to establish the design; the plans for the Splash Park are currently pending approval by the DPHHS; the hope is the approval will be expedited and received soon. Triple Tree recommends ordering the splash park materials/ components as soon as possible to save around \$10,000; it was confirmed that Sandy Crawford at the Fish Wildlife and Parks confirmed there would not be any issues with ordering the materials now as long as the Build America Buy American rules are followed. The mayor reported there is no plan to charge for use of the splash park. Mr. Koon also provided a list of engineering invoices for the projects.

Discussion: Pondera Port Authority Update

Mr. Cook reviewed a program from the recent legislative session; a Board of Investment program provides an interest-free loan for 2 years which could allow for additional rent money to go towards the interest-free loan; the backside of the deal that if the unit is leased for 5-years, an escrow account for the renter is established that allows that money to only be applied as a down-payment towards the purchase of a house. Mr. Cook explained there could be a rule that, if done in Conrad, that the down-payment could only be used on a domicile in Pondera County. This would help address publicly or privately, a severe housing shortage in the golden triangle/Pondera County. Mr. Cook then discussed the Brownfield program in response to the mayor's inquiry; the program is run by EPA to ensure properties do not sit vacant because they have contamination issues (e.g., fuel tank, asbestos, or other contaminants); the first phase is assessment. The three criteria for a Brownfield are: reuse, redevelopment or expansion; the degree of clean-up is dependent of the new use. Mr. Cook explained the assessment process and clean-up process boundaries. Mr. Cook agreed to provide the mayor an inventory of non-structural contaminated areas in town, including a map, and a status of what has been done, what remains to be done, and the status of the currently monitored sites.

Discussion/Action: Finance Officer Hire Approval Request

Finance Officer Hire Approval Request Joani Mink be hired as the City of Conrad Finance Officer

- Motion by Alderman Hunsucker to approve Joani Mink as the City of Conrad Finance Officer with a salary of \$55,000 annually with a \$500 increase after 12 months and \$500 increase after 24 months effective October 2, 2023. Second by Alderman Schoenrock.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion/Action: Cancellation of General Election – Resolution #23-1288

- Motion by Alderman Cates, second by Alderman Schoenrock, to approve Resolution #23-1288 (Ward 1)
Ward 1 Vote
Ayes: 2
Nays: 0
Abstain: 1 (Alderman Hunsucker)
 - Motion Carried
- Motion by Alderman Cates, second by Alderman Hunsucker, to approve Resolution #23-1288 (Ward 2)
Ward 2 Vote
Ayes: 2
Nays: 0
Abstain: 1 (Alderman Schoenrock)
 - Motion Carried

Discussion/Action: Conrad High School Homecoming Parade Request

The Conrad High School Homecoming Parade Request for Street Closure/Police Escort (October 6, 2023) was discussed. An audience member mentioned a safety concern regarding the parade entering and departing on Main Street; it was said that last year a parent had to assist in blocking-off Main Street to prevent cars from driving through the parade. The mayor noted this complaint had not been previously reported to the city, that she was aware of and that it will be communicated to the police chief. The permission to approve a parade route on Main Street was discussed as this street is state highway and permission from the State should be requested as well.

- Motion by Alderman Hunsucker, second by Alderman Cates, to approve Conrad High Schools Request for the Closure/Police Escort for the Homecoming Parade October 6, 2023.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion/Action: Appointment of Member to Library Board of Trustees

Nancy Nell Powell was brought by the mayor to council for appointment approval. The mayor noted there were several applicants however the Library Director and Board identified Nancy Powell as their selection. The mayor voice gratitude and appreciate for all who had applied for this position. The mayor is appointing Nancy Nell Powell per the recommendation made by the Library Director and Library Board.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, second by Alderman Cates, to approve Nancy Nell Powell to the Library Board of Trustees.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion/Action: Alderman Vacancy Position Appointment

Council President Nathan Hunsucker led the discussion. Alderman Hunsucker expressed he did not feel it is wise to temporarily appoint someone to the position. Alderman Hunsucker inquired as to why the candidates who applied didn't apply before [election]. An audience member asked if Ms. Breeding was planning to come back. Discussion ensued with some of the candidates about their interest and answers to some questions from the council. Alderman Cates noted this position requires a lot of commitment and requires a lot more than just the council meeting twice a month.

- Motion by Alderman Hunsucker, second by Alderman Schoenrock, to Table the decision to the October 3rd council meeting
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion/Action: First Reading of Ordinance #426 Repealing Section 1-6-1(C) of the Conrad City Code

This is the section that is in conflict with the charter that was passed in the last election and was discussed at the last council meeting. Mayor Miller read the ordinance.

- Motion by Cates, second by Alderman Hunsucker, to approve ordinance #426 repealing section 1-6-1(C) title 1 chapter 6 of the Conrad City Code.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion: Review of Draft Ordinance #427

Draft changes to Title 2, Chapter 5 Park and Recreation Board were reviewed. The mayor, followed by, City Attorney Jones, explained that the city is currently not in compliance with this ordinance as the city does not currently have a Park and Recreation Board and/or this position has not been formally delegated to the Parks and Rec, Inc. Different options for what could be included in the ordinance were reviewed, including simplifying more. This agenda item will be discussed and reviewed again at a council meeting.

Executive Session: None

Other Business: The mayor reminded everyone there will be an informal gathering to celebrate the retirement of Jerry Griggs on September 29th at 2:30 p.m. at City Hall. Mayor Miller will attend the Montana Downtown Main Street Conference in October. The Contract for the Montana League financial clerk assistance contract will need to be amended and will be on the next agenda.

Items to Appear on Next/Future Agenda: Blue Sky Villa/Horizon Lodge Garden Apartments, Inc. Surplus Funds Letter 2022-2023 – tabled on 8/1/2023. Montana League of Cities and Towns finance clerk contract.

Meeting Adjourned:

There being no further business to come before the council, motion by Alderman Hunsucker, second by Alderman Schoenrock, to adjourn the meeting at 8:38 p.m.

- Motion Carried Unanimously



Mayor *Jamie Miller*

Attest:

[Signature]
Finance Officer