

MINUTES
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BUHL CITY HALL
4/2/2024

Tuesday, April 2, 2024

6:30 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER by Mayor Carter at 6:30 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Councilors: X Hadrava X Kealy X Loeffler X Towner
Mayor: X Carter

Administrator: X Jeffries
Public Works Foreman: X Pink
Attorney: ___ Kearney
Engineer: ___ Jamnick
Police Chief: ___ Manner

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

None.

Motion by Hadrava to approve the agenda as presented.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Trent Pink – Public Works Foreman:

Reported that electrical power at Damian 2nd Addition – installation of bringing power to the new neighborhood development - will be at or under budget – we

will be able to use a transformer which the City presently owns, rather than need to purchase a new transformer -

Administrator Jeffries:

No comments.

6. CITIZENS FORUM:

1) Cheryl Kivi; 612 Woodbridge Ave.

Inquired as to the approval of paving the wear course on Klinx Way and whether or not the funding of these activities had previously been included in bid documents and/or contract documents –

Raised the question on who had requested this item to be placed on the agenda – Ms. Kivi indicated that she had not, but rather that Councilor Kealy had -

The Administrator explained and clarified this item, and highlighted that whether or not this item had or had not been previously included, that paving the Klinx Way wear course has been approved and authorized by the City Council as of March 2024, that this specific item has not presently been conclusively identified as a project activity included in any existing current contract, and is presently proposed to be managed and administered as a change order and absorbed into existing project costs.

The question remains that it has not conclusively been determined to date as to whether the Klinx Way wear course paving was ever included in any contract items previously –

Ms. Kivi also questioned how much more this was going to cost – if it was not previously included in project costs –

The Administrator has posed questions to the City Engineer and will continue to research this item and provide additional information if and when available.

2) Melody Staffaroni; 321 Culver Ave.

Raised the question, based upon several news articles, as to how much funding the city may have received for continued infrastructure improvements initiatives, including the proposed water tower work –

Ms. Staffaroni referenced that a press release from the (U.S.) Senators' offices specifically refers to a new water tower (and the \$3,048,000), and then later in that article it referred to an additional series of money amounts of funding made available -

Ms. Staffaroni's questions were "exactly how much money are we going to receive other than the (\$3,048,000) federal funding?", "When did you apply for this?", and "How much did you (the City) ask for?"

Mayor Carter touched on the fact that on occasion the press does not necessarily put all information forward, and that also, on occasion, information is reported before it has been finalized.

This appears to be the case with the federal funding component, as it is the City's understanding at this time that the initiative has been passed by the U.S. House of Representatives, but still needs to be passed by the U.S. Senate, and ultimately signed by the President of the United States.

Mayor Carter continued that when additional information is received by the City, it will be communicated to all -

He also indicated that the efforts and initiatives to try to obtain this funding began in March 2023, and that the additional monies requested are for State funding, and include an expansion to the Fire Hall (\$900,000), new residential development infrastructure (\$1,375,000), and Buhl Business Block (former South Industrial Park) infrastructure installation (\$1,100,000).

Mayor Carter also explained that when the federal funding was applied for, the City had not yet secured any State funding for the same initiatives, so applying for federal funding was another avenue which the City utilized to try and locate and source funding. Further, the ultimate disposition of the water tower project and its scope of activities has not yet been determined.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes:

- i. Regular City Council Meeting – March 19, 2024
- ii. City Council Working Session – February 15, 2024

B. Claims:

i. Payroll #6	\$ 15,838.80
Payroll 3 (Mar 2024)	\$ 2,350.00
ii. A/P	<u>\$ 28,748.92</u>

TOTAL **\$ 46,937.72**

Motion by Towner to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Supported by Kealy.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

A question was posed about a couple of claims (and checks) to the St. Louis County Auditor – 1) \$325.00 for Leander “General Waste”, and 2) \$8.00 for “Damian II Lot” -

The Administrator indicated and clarified that 1) this is the annual St. Louis County solid waste surcharge for the city-owned camp at Lake Leander, and 2) this is for property tax on an unimproved lot in the Damian 2nd Addition which had previously been sold and was returned to the City (the original sale “triggers” the property tax burden due on this parcel).

The City is not generally subject to property taxes on all the vacant lots and lands that it holds or owns.

Motion carried unanimously.

8. BUSINESS:

A. Consider Request from Paul Bunyan Communications to Install Fiber Optic Network Throughout the City.

Paul Bunyan Communications, headquartered in Bemidji, will be expanding its all-fiber optic broadband network, the GigaZone, to more parts of rural Minnesota in 2024.

A portion of this expansion in St. Louis County will include over 530 locations in the City of Buhl.

Construction activities and installation of the infrastructure for these services is anticipated to be complete by November 15, 2024, with service to individual locations (homes and businesses) anticipated by late 2024 into early 2025.

These construction activities are not anticipated to affect or disrupt streets or their condition(s) in the city; construction activities will be conducted in the alleys or on the sides of street rights-of-way utilizing horizontal directional boring technology.

Anyone interested in getting connected to the all-fiber optic broadband network should sign up for service now. That can be done online, over the

phone, or in person at Paul Bunyan's Grand Rapids Customer Service & Technology Center or Cooperative Headquarters in Bemidji.

Recommendation is to approve the installation of fiber-optic broadband infrastructure in the city limits by Paul Bunyan Communications.

Motion by Towner to approve the request of Paul Bunyan Communications to install fiber-optic broadband technology infrastructure throughout the City of Buhl, with a condition that there will be no disruption to any existing paved surfaces in the city unless approved in advance by the City Council of the City of Buhl, Minnesota.

Supported by Hadrava.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Question was raised as to whether or not the city knows whether these installations will be on the street side or the alley side; although these specifics are not known at this time, Public Works will work with Paul Bunyan Communications throughout this process to coordinate activities -

Discussion related to the siting of a required equipment shed ensued -

It was noted that the City cannot in effect control whether or not these facilities are installed, and, therefore, the City does not have approval authority over these activities –

Councilor Kealy indicated that her understanding is that the City does not have a choice in the matter of approving this work, and that the City cannot tell Paul Bunyan Communications they could not move forward with these initiatives –

It was noted that the majority of these installations will be on the alley side versus the street side, with some exceptions, and that street side work will be minimal -

It was suggested that the motion should be reworded to reflect "acknowledge" vs. "approve" and to strike the last part of the motion sentence.

Restated motion:

Amended motion by Towner to acknowledge the request of Paul Bunyan Communications to install fiber-optic broadband technology infrastructure throughout the City of Buhl.

Amended support by Hadrava.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Consider Naming an Individual to the Recreation Board.

The City presently has two (2) vacancies on its Recreation Board.

Notice of these vacancies was previously posted, and the public was notified and requested that anyone interested in serving in this capacity should contact City Hall for potential consideration.

This posting remains in effect until all vacancies are filled.

Shannon Lee is a resident of Buhl and has expressed an interest in joining the Recreation Board.

She is interested in a two-year (2-year) term, which is available.

She has lived in Buhl for 13 years, and loves being involved with this great town. She has helped the Recreation Board with numerous activities and events in town, including the 4th of July, the Halloween parade and party, the Winter Frolic, and the Christmas party. She would like to join the board and be involved with more!

Recommendation is to appoint Shannon Lee to the Recreation Board.

Motion by Kealy to appoint Shannon Lee to serve on the City of Buhl Recreation Board, with a term that expires December 31, 2025.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that Shannon will be an excellent addition to the Recreation Board.

One (1) one-year vacancy remains on the Recreation Board.

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Consider Notice of Advertisement for 2024 Summer Beach Attendants – Authorization for Staff to Publicly Post and Publish.

The City desires additional professional services over the summer months to assist in maintaining the recreational and public safety services of the community.

Specifically, the City wants to hire summer beach attendants for the City of Buhl Public Beach at Stubler Pit.

Recommendation is to authorize staff to publicly post and publish a Notice of Advertisement to fill these positions.

Motion by Kealy to authorize staff to publicly post and publish a Notice of Advertisement for 2024 Summer Beach Attendants positions.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was discussed that there should be some consideration for higher wages for individuals who have previously worked for the City in a same or similar capacity –

The notice to be published will indicate that “rate of pay starts at” a certain number (Mn minimum wage of \$10.85/hour proposed), and will indicate “depending upon City of Buhl experience” -

A discussion on the number of people and hours of work anticipated per week ensued.

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Notice of Advertisement for 2024 Public Works Department Summer Street Labor - Authorization for Staff to Publicly Post and Publish.

The City desires additional labor services over the summer months to assist in maintaining the attractiveness of the community.

Specifically, the City wants to hire summer street labor for Public Works Department activities, including lawn mowing, weed whacking and other light duties.

Recommendation is to authorize staff to publicly post and publish a Notice of Advertisement to fill these positions.

Motion by Kealy to authorize staff to publicly post and publish a Notice of Advertisement for 2024 Public Works Department Summer Street Labor positions.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

The same provision(s) contained in item 8.C. above regarding a scalable wage consideration for individuals with prior City employment in a same or similar capacity will be included in this posting.

A question regarding whether work schedules would/could be offered on a one-week-on/one-week-off basis ensued – this would be dependent upon the number of individuals who apply –

Discussion regarding allowing individuals to “cross-over” from Beach Attendants to Summer Street Labor ensued –

Discussion regarding considering hiring an adult to be a supervisor of Beach Attendants ensued -

Motion carried unanimously.

E. Recommendation to Review and Consider Proposals for Portable Toilet Services for 2024.

The City provides portable toilet services in the seasonal months at four (4) locations throughout the city as follows:

Campground (1 standard and 1 handicapped)
Burton Park (1 handicapped)
Beach (1 Standard)
Mesabi Trail at the Boat Landing (1)

The approximate rental season is for five (5) months – from May to October.

Staff has solicited for these services, and received bids from two (2) service providers.

A memorandum from city Finance Manager Dianna Thronson is attached with additional detail.

Costs for 2023 were approved at \$1,839.50.

Recommendation is to approve the proposal of “Option A” for portable toilet services for 2024 in the amount of \$2,150.00.

Motion by Kealy to approve the proposal of “Option A” for portable toilet services for 2024 in the amount of \$2,150.00.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

This item will be posted in the usual locations and placed on the City website in the near future.

Motion carried unanimously.

- F. League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT): Safety and Loss Control Workshop – Authorization for Administrator to attend April 10, 2024.

The League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) is hosting their 2024 Safety and Loss Control workshops throughout the state in March and April.

This workshop focuses on providing practical information to help cities reduce costs and avoid losses, and will provide comprehensive information on risk management.

It is important and valuable for the City to have its leadership attend this session, in order to further gain understanding on managing municipal administrative risk.

Recommendation is to authorize the Administrator to attend.

Motion by Loeffler to authorize the Administrator to attend a League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust “Safety and Loss Control Workshop” on the City’s behalf.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

- G. League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) Annual Conference – Authorization for Administrator to Attend June 26 – 28, 2024.

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) will be holding its 2024 Annual Conference on June 26-28 in Rochester, Minnesota.

The LMC provides valuable services to the City, who is a member.

The conference sessions will provide valuable information on city people, city infrastructure, city budgets, city solutions, and city planning.

Cities with a population of less than 1,000 can enjoy an early bird pricing of \$275 per attendee before May 3. Pricing will be \$475 per attendee after that date.

Recommendation is to authorize the Administrator to attend.

Motion by Towner to authorize the Administrator to attend the League of Minnesota Cities 2024 Annual Conference on the City's behalf.

Supported by Kealy.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Mayor Carter inquired as to whether or not city councilors could attend – Administrator Jeffries indicated that yes, city councilors can attend at the same rate -

Motion carried unanimously.

H. Consider Request from Sheila LaBarge to Begin Initiatives to Form a New Committee to Plan the Buhl Quasquicentennial (125th Anniversary) Celebration.

The City of Buhl was originally incorporated as the Village of Buhl in St. Louis County, Minnesota, on February 25, 1901.

In 2026, the City will be 125 years old!

Buhl resident Sheila LaBarge has requested that the City consider establishing a committee to plan a quasquicentennial (125th) anniversary celebration.

Ms. LaBarge was to be in attendance to discuss this request with the City Council.

Supporting a 125th anniversary celebration would be a good civic-relations initiative for the City and its residents.

Recommendation is to support such a celebration, and to authorize the formation of such a committee.

Motion by Kealy to support a quasquicentennial (125th anniversary) celebration for the City of Buhl for 2026, and to authorize the formation of an event committee to oversee the planning for this event.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Ms. LaBarge was unable to attend this City Council meeting, and a memorandum from her outlining some of her thoughts on this matter was

distributed to the City Council. She may be in attendance at the April 16, 2024 City Council meeting for further conversation.

It was noted that this initiative is a great idea, and should absolutely be pursued.

Administrator Jeffries offered some comments on the role of the committee versus the role of the City –

It is encouraged that this committee be a civic grass-roots initiative, and that the committee not be under the direct authority of city control; this will allow the committee greater flexibility to explore what they think might be a good (great) event –

It was also recommended that the committee consider partnering with another organization to serve as fiscal sponsor or fiscal agent to assist in managing and administrating fund raising efforts and collected funds management – and to lessen the relationship between the committee and the City, especially with regard to holding monies or accepting donations -

This structure would be similar to that which was (successfully) utilized by the All-Class Reunion Committee -

The City Council agreed that this would be a preferred structure for the committee -

A couple of outside organizations – the Buhl Honor Guard, and the Iron Range Tourism Bureau – were identified and discussed regarding serving as the fiscal partner -

Motion carried unanimously.

- I. Reminder of St. Louis County Local Board of Appeal and Equalization (LBAE) Meeting of April 23, 2024.

The St. Louis County Assessor has now issued 2025 Valuation and Classification Notices to all property owners. This establishes Taxable Market Values for property tax assessments payable in 2025.

Property owners are allowed to appeal or question their classification and/or valuation for a prescribed period of time, but not after the County LBAE meeting.

This is a reminder that St. Louis County has scheduled Buhl's LBAE meeting for Tuesday, April 23rd beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Buhl-Kinney Senior Center.

The city Local Board of Appeal and Equalization will hold an Open Book session jointly with representatives of the St. Louis County Assessor's office on **April 23, 2024, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Buhl Senior Center**, located at 302 Frantz Street. Property owners may discuss or appeal their value and/or classification at this open book session.

The Board will vote on any changes recommended to valuations and/or classifications.

The sales book for 2024 compiled by the St. Louis County Assessor will be distributed to the public on the city website when it becomes available.

It was noted that individuals are also encouraged to contact the St. Louis County Assessor personally and directly – earlier and in writing is OK, too –

It was also mentioned that there is potentially some programs and assistance available for property tax relief – contact the St. Louis County Assessor for details –

Melody Staffaroni commented that St. Louis County did a blanket adjustment city-wide in 2023, and did not go to individual homes in the city; however now they will send an individual out to homes for this assessment year -

Informational only.

J. Other Business.

None.

K. Councilor's Comments.

Councilor Kealy –

The curling season has now concluded, and the curling club ice plant functioned adequately throughout the season!

Chisholm has offered Buhl its compressor, since they are getting a new ice plant, however it is unfortunately too large for the Buhl facility and will not work –

The club will continue to try and locate a replacement compressor to improve its ice plant -

All-in-all it was a positive year for the curling club –

See you on April 23 at the LBAE meeting!

Councilor Loeffler –

The gardening activity previously set for April 7 IS NOW SET FOR APRIL 14 – at the Buhl Community Center (Curling Club) -

Food offerings at this event will be from the instructor's personal garden -

Councilor Towner –

Noted that the Recreation Board is planning on conducting its own spring clean-up at the park, beach, campground, and disc golf course, on Sunday, May 5 at 1:00 p.m. – meet at Burton Park -

Noted that the Library has a new website – it is:

buhllibrarymn.wordpress.com

A link is on the City website to this webpage, and the site looks good!

A question was raised whether or not the Library newsletter will now be continued and posted on that site now – that is unknown at this time -

L. Mayor's Comments.

Noted that the temperatures are warming, the snow is melting, and the ice is thinning – STAY OFF OF IT!

Noted that the weather is beautiful, and noticed that some birds and geese are returning to our area - and encouraged all to get outside and enjoy this time of year!

Mentioned that this is an election year – there are two (2) city council seats and one (1) mayor seat that will be open and are up for election –

Filing details will be presented at the next City Council meeting –

Encouraged all to get involved -

EVERYBODY'S OPINION MATTERS! ALL OF US AS A COMMUNITY AS A WHOLE!

9. ADJOURN:

Motion by Kealy to adjourn.


Supported by Towner.

Motion carried Unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:55 p.m.



Brandin Carter, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk