

MINUTES
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BUHL CITY HALL
4/16/2024

Tuesday, April 16, 2024

6:30 P.M.

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

2. ROLL CALL:

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

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

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Add Item A.1. under 8. Business – Consider Approval and Distribution of Letter of Appreciation to State of Minnesota Tax Committees’ Chairs Thanking Those Committees for Consideration of Funding for City of Buhl Infrastructure Repair and Improvement Initiatives in 2024.

Motion by Towner to approve the agenda as amended.

Supported by Kealy.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Administrator Jeffries:

Noted that Federal funding from the Congressionally Directed Spending earmarks for City of Buhl infrastructure improvements has been approved in the amount of \$3,048,000;

Highlighted that Bonnie Sterle of Sterle & Co. will be on-site at City Hall for conducting 2023 municipal audit field work from April 17-26 – and encouraged all to stop in and say Hi! to her;

Indicated that the Engineer’s cost estimate of paving Klinx Way has been identified at \$6,700 – and noted that this item will be added as a change order to the existing Damian 2nd Addition and Add Alternate work (Jefferson St., Seville Ave., and Woodbridge Ave.) contract with Jola & Sopp Excavating; further noted that project paving activities are scheduled to be complete by June 15;

Reported that B2 Bank has indicated they are now preparing a lease for the former 1st National Bank of Buhl building for the Buhl Youth Center in the amount of \$1/year;

Noted that the League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) Loss Control Workshops conducted on April 10, 2024 in Virginia were quite good and very informative; and

Provided a reminder that the Local Board of Appeals and Equalization (LBAE) meeting is scheduled for April 23, 2024 at the Buhl/Kinney Senior Center, and further reminded all that they may request an in-person assessment from St. Louis County if desired (contact City Hall or the Hibbing office of the St. Louis County Assessor – contacting City Hall is preferred).

6. CITIZENS FORUM:

None.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes:

- i. Regular City Council Meeting – April 2, 2024

B. Claims:

- i. Payroll #7 \$ 15,112.27
- ii. A/P \$ 127,511.84

TOTAL \$ 142,624.11

Motion by Kealy to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

8. BUSINESS:

A. Presentation from Community and Economic Development Associates (CEDA) on Child-Care Facility Grant Initiatives.

Community and Economic Development Associates (CEDA) recently awarded Buhl with a Rural Capacity Program Grant to assist in exploring siting a childcare facility in the community.

CEDA works with cities, counties, organizations, and small businesses to help them be proactive and strategic about their development aspirations.

CEDA's current Rural Capacity Program includes initiatives with potential grant funds available for eligible projects related to several economic development areas.

Joshua Schuetz, Community and Business Development Specialist with CEDA, has been named as the point contact and CEDA representative working with the City regarding this initiative.

Mr. Schuetz has travelled to Buhl and is in attendance to introduce himself, CEDA, and its Rural Capacity Program. He will also share his initial impressions of the City and this project, and any insights he may see for moving this initiative forward.

Mr. Schuetz addressed the City Council and discussed these items.

Informational only.

Mr. Schuetz indicated that CEDA has awarded the City of Buhl \$15,000 in funding and 150 hours of technical assistance support to assist with child care facility siting initiatives –

He further noted that he initially finds Buhl a good location for a child care facility due to its proximity between Hibbing and Virginia –

Indicated he was able to tour the community and meet several community members and stakeholders –

Noted that next steps moving forward include drafting a First Impressions Report, including demographic and economic development data, which will be shared with the City in the near future, and determining whether a feasibility study would be appropriate and warranted –

Noted that he visited a number of potential candidate sites in the city -

The Mayor commented that child care is a huge need with a huge lack of facilities, and the young families in Buhl would be well served by a facility -

The Administrator commented, along with Mr. Schuetz, that this initiative could also serve as a resident recruitment tool, noted that there is an outside chance that we may be able to visit deeper and further with CEDA in the future for other eligible projects, noted the affirmative response which has been received from both city businesses and residents, and thanked all for their welcoming attitude and disposition toward CEDA and Mr. Schuetz -

Councilor Kealy inquired as to potential child care facility locations; the Administrator replied that all options and alternatives are on the table regarding ongoing evaluation to successfully site a workable facility -

A.1. Consider Approving and Distributing Letter of Appreciation to State of Minnesota Tax Committees' Chairs Thanking Those Committees for Consideration of Funding for City of Buhl Infrastructure Repair and Improvement Initiatives in 2024.

The City recently received notice that State Representative Dave Lislegard and State Senator Grant Hauschild have included a request for the City of Buhl to receive \$500,000 for infrastructure improvements in complimentary bills they are introducing to the state legislature in the near future.

Recommendation is to execute and distribute a letter of appreciation and support to the Chairs of various State of Minnesota legislative committees for including a request on behalf of the City of Buhl for \$500,000 for infrastructure improvements (as presently contained in House File #5198 and Senate File #5435).

Motion by Kealy to direct the Mayor to execute a letter of appreciation and support to the Chairs of various State of Minnesota legislative committees for including a request on behalf of the City of Buhl for \$500,000 for infrastructure improvements, and to forward said letter to the appropriate parties.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Consider Endorsing the State of Minnesota Constitutional Amendment to Continue Funding Natural Resources.

The (State of Minnesota) Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) was established following voter approval of a constitutional amendment in 1988.

The money in the Trust Fund is generated by the Minnesota State Lottery. The Trust Fund holds assets that can be appropriated, "for the public purpose of protection, conservation, preservation, and enhancement of the state's air, water, land, fish, wildlife, and other natural resources."

Over 30 years ago, 77% of Minnesota voters were in favor of using a portion of State Lottery proceeds to build the ENRTF.

Since 1991, the ENRTF has provided approximately \$1.027 billion to over 1,601 projects around the state.

In November, Minnesotans will have the opportunity to vote to continue this policy for another 25 years, keeping state lottery funds at work supporting clean lakes, healthy forests, and outdoor recreation. Without passage of the constitutional amendment that has been placed on the 2024 ballot, the ENRTF is in jeopardy of losing its only source of income.

Recommendation is to continue to support funding the ENRTF from Minnesota State Lottery proceeds.

Motion by Towner to continue to support funding the State of Minnesota Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF) by dedicating a portion of Minnesota State Lottery proceeds toward the ENRTF, and to endorse the efforts of the Conservation Minnesota Voter Center to reauthorize the lottery dedication to the ENRTF.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

The Administrator summarized the mission and focus of the Conservation Minnesota Voter Center and its interests in supporting the Environment and Natural Resources Trust Fund (ENRTF).

Motion carried unanimously.

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

Buhl's new property valuations for the 2024 assessment, taxes payable 2025, have now been received from the St. Louis County Assessor's office. Attached is the sales book for Buhl, which provides valuable background information on assessment specifics.

The sales book contains information on residential and land sales in Buhl from October 2022 through September 2023.

The sales book is now available to the public and can be found on the City website.

This also serves as 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.

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.

Letters of appeal should be sent to the City Clerk at least by April 19, 2024.

Additional information from the St. Louis County Assessor's office regarding this process is also attached for general information.

Informational only.

The Administrator noted and summarized several items with regard to this, including:

- 1) The 2024 Sales Book indicates that there were eleven (11) arms-length sales of property in the City of Buhl in 2023 which were included for analysis;
- 2) The median ratio (Estimated Market Value divided by the Sales Price) for the City of Buhl was below the State of Minnesota required threshold of 90% - 105%, which resulted in #3 below;
- 3) The St. Louis County Assessor's Department applied a six percent (6%) adjustment across all buildings and land values city-wide for the 2024 assessment; and
- 4) The end result of this City-wide adjustment is that the median ratio for the City of Buhl is now 95.1% for 2024.

The Administrator also noted that, if there were/are or have been any adjustments or modifications to an individual property other than the flat six percent (6%), then that would be due to new construction (additions or improved alterations), demolition of structure(s), owner-requested in-person assessments and review, or any continuing and remaining construction activities which began in the 2023 tax year.

D. Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) 2024 Construction Projects – Effect on Buhl of Cross Range Expressway Improvements.

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has announced its 2024 state construction projects.

Among the projects scheduled for 2024 is the “Resurfacing Highway 169 between Chisholm and Mountain Iron and improving intersections with signal and light replacements and pedestrian access” project, which is anticipated to result in some changes and disruptions in traffic flows and patterns.

This project will affect traffic through and around Buhl.

Specifically, lane closures and connecting road detours are anticipated at a minimum.

This cold in-place recycle and bituminous mill and overlay project will improve the ride, increase the service life of the pavement, and assist complying with ADA requirements for this portion of the highway.

The project schedule is tentatively set for May to October 2024.

This work does not appear to be related to the more involved cross-range expressway reconstruction work which is slated for 2025 – 2027.

Everyone should be made aware of this summer-long project, and be reminded to exercise caution and safety at all times when travelling on this thoroughfare.

A public meeting has been scheduled for Tuesday, May 7, at 5:00 p.m., at the MnDOT Virginia Headquarters building located at 101 North Hoover Road, Virginia, Mn 55792, to discuss construction impacts.

Informational only.

The Administrator noted that for the future, it is likely that the reference to the “Cross-Range Expressway” will refer to that area of U.S. Highway 169 between Pengilly and Taconite.

The Mayor noted that the condition of the road, especially for motorcycle traffic, has been compromised and is unsafe enough to be a concern.

The Administrator further identified the anticipated interactions of the City's planned future initiatives and the 2025-2027 Highway 169 reconstruction work, including:

- 1) Installing infrastructure water and sewer piping under and across the highway corridor to and from the Buhl Business Block;
- 2) Establishing a new north-south County State Aid Highway on the east side of town in the location of the existing Pennsylvania Avenue access, and
- 3) Establishing an additional ingress/egress control by providing highway access from Forest Street to an extended frontage road planned for the Buhl Business Block (easement(s) will be needed here).

E. Notice of 2023 Consumer Confidence Reports (CCR) Annual Water Quality Report Availability.

The US EPA requires community water systems to deliver a Consumer Confidence Report, also known as an annual drinking water quality report, to their customers. These reports provide Americans information about their local drinking water quality.

This report contains various information, including:

- The lake, river, aquifer, or other source of the drinking water;
- A brief summary of the risk of contamination of the local drinking water source;
- The regulated contaminant found in local drinking water;
- The potential health effects of any contaminant detected in violation of an EPA health standard;
- An accounting of the system's actions to restore safe drinking water;
- An educational statement for vulnerable populations about avoiding Cryptosporidium;
- Educational information on nitrate, arsenic, or lead in areas where these contaminants may be a concern;
- Phone numbers of additional sources of information, including the water system;
- EPA's Safe Drinking Water Hotline number 1-800-426-4791.

The City's 2023 Drinking Water Consumer Confidence Report has now been finalized and is available for public consumption.

The 2023 CCR is available on the City website (www.cityofbuhlmn.com) for all.

The CCR was attached and issued for distribution.

Informational only.

The Administrator gave a highlighted summary of the results of this monitoring and testing event, which include:

- 1) Lead results were all below established action level thresholds and limits;
- 2) Copper results were all below established action level thresholds and limits;
- 3) Inorganic/Organic constituents results, primarily in the form of Nitrates, were all below established action level thresholds and limits, and
- 4) Fluoride levels were all below established action level thresholds and limits.

The CCR is available on the City website.

F. Reminder of 2024 Election Candidacy Filing Period.

As all are aware, 2024 is an election year including the election cycle for the presidency of the United States, as well as many other elected offices and positions, including local, school district, county, state, and national seats.

In Buhl, there will be two (2) City Council seats and one (1) mayoral seat on the ballot in 2024.

The municipal general election shall be held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November, or November 5, 2024.

The primary election will be held on Tuesday, August 13, 2024; there will be a local municipal primary election conducted at that same time.

The **filing period** for candidacy for a Buhl municipal office (both councilor and mayor) will open on **Tuesday, May 21, 2024**, will remain open for a two-week (2-week) period, and will close at 5:00 p.m. on **Tuesday, June 4, 2024**.

Anyone interested in filing for municipal public office will need to obtain an Affidavit Of Candidacy from City Hall during regular City Hall business hours (Monday – Thursday 7:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m.; Friday 7:00 a.m.–11:00 a.m.), complete this, and file this with the City Clerk prior to the expiration of the filing period.

Any questions should be directed to City staff during normal business hours.

Informational only.

The Administrator noted that the filing fee is \$2, and that City Hall will be staffed until 5:00 p.m. on Tuesday, June 4, 2024, to accommodate potential candidate filings.

The Mayor encouraged anybody and everybody to consider filing for candidacy for public office.

G. Other Business.

None.

H. Councilor's Comments.

Councilor Kealy –

Inquired as to whether any funding has been identified or sourced for assisting the comprehensive plan update process, as this has been identified as an item the City desires to move forward with (yes, staff is looking into this).

Councilor Loeffler –

Indicated that the gardening activity held on April 14 at the Buhl Community Center (Curling Club) was well-attended -

Noted that the next community event to be offered will be on May 19 from 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. at the Buhl/Kinney Senior Center, and, in the spirit of celebrating Asian/Pacific Islander Heritage Month, will offer an opportunity to make Lumpias and Won-Tons -

Councilor Towner –

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

I. Mayor's Comments.

Offered CONGRATULATIONS to the City of Buhl for securing and receiving the Federal Congressionally Directed Spending appropriation of \$3,048,000 for infrastructure initiatives;

Announced that he will not be seeking re-election to, nor filing for, the Mayoral position because of changes in his personal and family life – the next chapter - which will likely result in moving outside of the city limits of the community and would potentially compromise his ability to serve another full term in the position;

Encouraged anybody and everybody to consider running for public office, as he believes it is one's civic duty, and there will be a need to fill the Mayoral position; and

Noted that serving has been an amazing experience, that there is a long ways to go as there is a lot yet to be accomplished in the remainder of this year, and thanked everybody for their ongoing support, assistance, and cooperation.

9. ADJOURN:

Motion by Kealy to adjourn.

Supported by Towner.

Motion carried Unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:28 p.m.


Brandin Carter, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk