

**MINUTES  
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
BUHL SENIOR CENTER**

Tuesday, April 20th, 2021.

6:30 p.m.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** By Mayor Klarich at 6:30 P.M.
  
2. **ROLL CALL:** Councilors Lehman, Carter, Markas, Kuechle, and Mayor Klarich. Also, in attendance: Attorney Kearney & Clerk Pervenanze.
  
3. **COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:** Motion Kuechle to approve the agenda with the addition of a request from Jen Larsen representing the Cherry Scout Troop. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.

4. **CONSENT AGENDA:**

A. Minutes:

- i. Regular Meeting April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021

B. Claims:

i. Payroll #8	\$ 12,500.32
ii. A/P	\$ <u>95,868.61</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 108,368.96</b>

Motion by Markas to approve the above consent agenda. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously.

5. **BUSINESS:**

- A. Stubler Campground Use Request. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Jen Larsen representing the Cherry Scout Troop requested to reserve the Stubler Campground

from May 21<sup>st</sup> through May 23<sup>rd</sup>. A covid plan was presented to the City prior to the request. Motion by Lehman to allow the troop to reserve Stubler Campground from May 21<sup>st</sup> May 23<sup>rd</sup>. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.

- B. Woodbridge/Whiteside Sidewalks. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Mayor Klarich stated that based on the public input there is a benefit to having sidewalks on both sides of Woodbridge/Whiteside. Motion by Klarich to approve option B, sidewalks on both sides of Woodbridge/Whiteside. Supported by Kuechle. Markas and Carter abstained. Motion carried.
- C. Resolution 21-26 (Adopting Assessment). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated that this resolution does four different things. It adopts the assessment roles for the project, established an interest rate of 2%, sets the payment structure over ten years, and authorizes the Clerk to submit the assessment to the County Auditor. Motion by Klarich to approve Resolution 21-26 for the Woodbridge/Whiteside project. Supported by Lehman. Markas and Carter abstained. Motion carried.
- D. Special Assessment Deferment Policy. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated that state statute gives authority to the Council to defer payments for property owners that are senior citizens, disabled, or are in active military service. A policy is recommended to outline the process should anyone choose to defer their assessment. Motion by Lehman to approve the special assessment deferment policy. Supported by Kuechle. Motion carried unanimously.
- E. Preliminary Engineering Report (Water Tower). Discussion. Approve/Reject. JPJ Engineering submitted the preliminary engineering report for the water tower which outlines options and cost estimates to address the deteriorating water tower. Motion by Klarich to approve the PER and direct the Clerk to work with the City Engineer and the Costin Group to formulate and submit funding proposals for the project. Supported by Kuechle. Motion carried unanimously.
- F. Resolution 21-27 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Kuechle to approve resolution 21-27, authorizing the sale of lot 5 and the south half of lot four to Dustin Calgaro. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.

- G. Resolution 21-28 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Carter to approves resolution 21-28, authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to execute the sale documents for the Stubler lot. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- H. NEMMPA Board Appointment. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Mayor Klarich stated that after discussing this appointment with Gary Cerkenik who also represents the NEMMPA, that Clerk Pervenanz would be the best person to serve in this capacity. Motion by Klarich to appoint Ryan Pervenanz as Buhl's representative to the NEMMPA. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously.
- I. Capital Equipment Financing. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanz stated that he worked with the First National Bank of Buhl on options for the upcoming purchases of the firetruck and grader. Motion by Kuechle to approve financing the firetruck through the First National Bank of Buhl over 7 years with \$200,000 down. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously. Motion by Kuechle to approve financing the grader through the First National Bank of Buhl over 7 years with \$75,000 down. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.

Councilor's Comments:

- Councilor Lehman has an upcoming RAMS meeting.
- Councilor Carter asked Clerk Pervenanz the status of the playground improvements. Clerk Pervenanz stated that the DNR grant was submitted, and we will know sometime in July of the results. Clerk Pervenanz stated that there are other opportunities through the IRRR and other that will be coming available in the coming months. Applications will be submitted to those when they come available.
- Councilor Kuechle stated that he understands both sides of the sidewalk issue but based on public input the majority wanted sidewalks on both sides.
- Councilor Markas stated he would prefer keeping that assessment as it was in the past.

Mayor's Comments:

After following the utility rate discussion on "ALL Things Buhl", I feel obligated to clarify utility costs and procedure and address the issue of Buhl utility rates compared to neighboring cities. The first issue to be clarified is that the billings are based on consumption and associated fees added on by county or state statute. Also, we need to realize that some costs are negotiated by the City of Buhl with other entities such as, ALLETE (Minnesota Power) for electricity, and Waste Management for garbage. The sewer rates for the City have multiple factors that account

for the total bill including usage, operation and maintenance costs (O/M), and debt service for the CIRSSD. This debt service which was approved by a previous Council will last until 2040. Utility consumption is based on usage which can vary based on the number of household members and the number of electrical devices needed to run a household such as stoves, refrigerators, freezers, in floor heat, outdoor (porch, grounds, security, garage lighting), air conditioning or central air units. Recreational expenses for hot tubs, Jacuzzis, swimming pools (portable or fixed), or lawn sprinkling systems also increase utility costs. There are numerous ways Buhl residents can help control their utility costs including but not limited to, upgrading to a radio read meter, controlling consumption of water and electric, upgrading appliances and furnaces to more efficient models, converting to a natural gas furnace, proper home insulation, among others. There are programs offered by MN Energy, MN Power, and AEOA that can assist residents with these associated improvement costs as well.

An area average utility matrix is at the end of this discussion for residents to develop their own conclusions on utility rates in Buhl compared to other entities. Next, I will walk through individual charges on utility bills for your information.

These are the charges that will be on your utility bill.

- Water – This billing is based on consumption a major increase was approved by a previous Council that went into effect at the beginning of 2019.
- Sewer – This is for usage on sewer.
- Refuse- Fee that is passed on from Waste Management per household.
- Electric- Base charge of \$5 for operation and maintenance and to replace damaged polls and lines plus your usage.
- Wtr Test Fee (Water test fee, this is a state fee that we must remit to them quarterly)
- Fuel Adj Chg (Fuel Adjustment Change, Changes monthly and is set by MN Power to all residents based on usage for their cost of doing business.)
- Capital Improv (Capital Improvement, standard fee that everyone pays for physical capital improvements)
- SW Mgmt Tx-R (Solid Waste Management Tax, Tax on the refuse service set by the State)
- SW Svc Fee (Solid Waste Service Fee, This is a county fee that we must remit to them quarterly that is standard for every household)
- Sewer Svc Fee (Sewer Service Fee, Fee for the debt & operations/maintenance of the Central Iron Range Sanitary Sewer District that was passed by a previous Council to fund the construction of the CIRSSD plant)
- Tx-Fuel Adj (Tax on Fuel Adjustment that is state mandated)
- Sales Tx – E (Tax on the electric that is state mandated that is different for every household that is based on consumption)
- Non-radio Ele (This is a surcharge only for those residents that have not converted over to an electric radio read meter)

We have posted this information in our City Newsletter several times over the past two years. Much information is covered in the City Newsletter and I highly recommend reading this to stay informed on City events and better understand the issues before the City and how the Mayor and Council are evaluating and addressing the various issues. As a reminder, utility customers are now receiving a full-page bill instead of the postcard due to changes at the post office beyond our control. The City also offers paperless billing and online/automatic payments in addition to the standard forms of payment. Information is available on our website [www.cityofbuhlman.com](http://www.cityofbuhlman.com) or by calling City Hall at 218-258-3226.

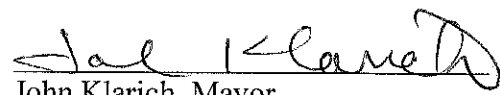
In an upcoming Mayor's comments, I will provide an update on the construction project scheduled to resume shortly. Thankfully, this Council along with City staff has put the leg work in over the past few years and positioned us to be able to fund these much needed repairs to our infrastructure. Also, the City with the help of our local Legislator's, County Commissioners, lobbyists, and staff has secured roughly \$3,600,000 in grant funds which meant the burden on rate payers was significantly less than what increases could have been.

6. **ADJOURN:** Motion by Lehman to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:07 P.M.



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Ryan Pervenanze, Clerk-Treasurer



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John Klarich, Mayor