

**MINUTES  
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
BUHL CITY HALL**

Tuesday, June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

6:30 p.m.

1. **CALL TO ORDER:** By Mayor Klarich at 6:30 P.M.
2. **ROLL CALL:** Councilors Lehman, Carter, Markas, and Mayor Klarich. Also, in attendance: Engineer Jamnick, Attorney Kearney, Auditor Sterle, Foreman Pink, Finance Manager Thronson, & Clerk Pervenanze.
3. **PUBLIC HEARING (FIREHALL EXPANSION):** No attendees. Clerk Pervenanze stated that this public hearing is a requirement if the City decides to bond for the expansion of the firehall.
4. **REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:** Foreman Pink addressed the lack of water pressure that has occurred a few times in town. The cause of the problem is electrical. MN Power is working with the City to isolate the issue.
5. **COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:** Motion by Lehman to add resolution 21-41, declaring a council vacancy, and to schedule a special meeting for MN Power negotiations to the agenda. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.
6. **CONSENT AGENDA:**

A. Minutes:

- i. Regular Meeting June 1st, 2021

B. Claims:

i. Payroll #12	\$ 13,346.51
ii. A/P	\$ 95,543.71
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 108,890.22</b>

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

**7. BUSINESS:**

- A. CIP Update (Informational). Engineer Jamnick stated that paving will begin later this week. Crews continue to work on concrete on State St. The plans call for Casper to move out of main part of town by the end of the month.
- B. JPJ Invoice #13. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Klarich to approve JPJ Invoice # 13 in the amount of \$50,337.23. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.
- C. Pay Application #6 CIP. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Lehman to approve pay application #6 for Casper Construction in the amount of \$576,058.25. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- D. 2020 Audit. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Auditor Sterle presented the 2020 audit to the Council and public. The City received a clean audit report. Motion by Lehman to approve the 2020 audit. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.
- E. Resolution 21-33 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Markas to approve resolution 21-33, authorizing the sale of lots 6 & 7, block 3, in the Stubler Addition to Scott & Gretchen Mousseau. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously.
- F. Resolution 21-34 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Carter to approve resolution 21-34, authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to execute the sale documents for the Stubler lot. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- G. Resolution 21-35 (American Rescue Plan). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated the League is recommending cities pass a resolution that gives the Mayor and City Staff authorization to secure funds dedicated to cities through the American Rescue Plan. Motion by Klarich to approve resolution 21-35. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously.

- H. Resolution 21-36 (Firehall). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated that this resolution gives preliminary approval for the issuance of a capital improvement bond. The City is actively pursuing grants for this project as well. Motion by Carter to approve resolution 21-36. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- I. Resolution 21-37 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Lehman to approve resolution 21-37, authorizing the sale of lot 6 and the east half of lot 5, block 2 in the Stubler Addition to Jennifer Krenner. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- J. Resolution 21-38 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Carter to approve resolution 21-38, authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to execute the sale documents for the Stubler lot. Supported by Klarich. Motion carried unanimously.
- K. Resolution 21-39 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Lehman to approve resolution 21-39, authorizing the sale of lot 1 and the west half of lot 2, block 2, in the Stubler Addition to Daniel & Laurie Jorgenson. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- L. Resolution 21-40 (Stubler). Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Klarich to approve resolution 21-40, authorizing the Mayor and Clerk to execute the sale documents for the Stubler lot. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.
- M. Public Meeting-Housing Development. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated that with the passage of the previous resolutions all lots in the Stubler Addition have been sold. The Council has previously discussed a new development on the site of the vacant ball fields near Burton Park. It is recommended that before moving forward the Council give the public the option to weigh in on the proposed development. Motion by Lehman to hold a public meeting on July 13<sup>th</sup> at 6:30 P.M. at the Sr. Center to hear public input on the development. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- N. MN Rural Water Association Dues. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated the Rural Water provides several benefits including updates to the City's wellhead protection plan. Motion by Klarich to approve MN Rural Water Association annual dues in the amount of \$300. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously.

- O. Ice Rink Boards. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated that the boards at the ice rink are in disrepair. Councilor Markas stated that the City should look at different options. Motion by Lehman to table. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.
- P. Hydeaway Request. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Clerk Pervenanze stated that the Hydeaway is requesting to hold an outdoor event on July 10<sup>th</sup>. They are requesting to block off portion of State St. Motion by Klarich to approve the Hydeaway's request. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously.
- Q. Attorney Authorization-Blight Violation. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Mayor Klarich stated that he would like to see blight violation for repeat offenders a mandatory court appearance. Motion by Lehman to direct the City Attorney to petition the Court to make blight ordinance violations a mandatory court appearance. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously.
- R. Parking Ordinance Updates. Discussion. Approve/Reject. The Council discussed congestion on City streets. Safety issues are a concern especially access for emergency vehicles and reduced visibility. Motion by Lehman to direct the Attorney and Clerk to work on recommendations to bring back to Council. Supported by Klarich. Motion carried unanimously.
- S. Resolution 21-41. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Markas to approve resolution 21-41, declaring a vacancy on the Council due to the resignation of Paul Keuchle. Supported by Lehman. Motion carried unanimously. The process to appoint a Councilor will be discussed at the next Council meeting.
- T. Special Council Meeting-MN Power Negotiations. Discussion. Approve/Reject. Motion by Lehman to schedule a special meeting to discuss MN Power contract proposals on June 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30 P.M. at City Hall. Supported by Carter. Motion carried unanimously.
- Councilor Lehman stated RAMS hired Ida Rukavina as the new Executive Director.
  - Councilor Carter asked how the City handles complaints regarding construction vehicles and safety concerns. Clerk Pervenanze stated that any complaints City Hall receives are past on to management at Casper and our Engineer. The Buhl/Chisholm PD has also notified if there are safety concerns.
  - Councilor Markas stated the City will be looking to grind stumps later on this year. In the past the City has had a signup sheet for residents to have their stumps grinded.

## Mayor's Comments

In response to the outcry on Facebook regarding utility bills. Here are the facts. Since the beginning of 2020 utility rates for water, sewer, and electric have not changed. The only adjustments/increases were in two areas:

1. Garbage increased \$.75 as a result of a new contract with Waste Management.
2. Solid Waste Service Fee, which is a fee imposed by St. Louis County, increased \$1.36.

Simply put if your bills are going up it is because **YOU ARE USING MORE WATER & ELECTRICITY.**

It also appears that there is still some confusion on utility bills. Utility bills have been explained in newsletters both this year and in 2020 and most recently in the April 20<sup>th</sup>, 2021 Mayor's comments. The City has done its due diligence to explain how these services are billed contrary to comments on Facebook. Residents and businesses are billed for all services provided. Residential utility rates are lower than commercial rates. Utility accounts are not identical among residents and businesses. Accounts can have charges for additional meters, non-radio reads, and late fees just to name a few. If there are specific questions on your personal utility bills, please contact City Hall. The City can only discuss your personal utility bill due to data privacy.

There have also been many questions regarding the cost of Buhl membership in the Central Iron Range Sanitary Sewer District (CIRSSD). As context to the CIRSSD here is a brief history.

In 2001 the Buhl City Council consisting of Councilor's Matthew, Kayfes, Sundich, Palkovich, and Mayor Denny Marks approved Buhl's participation in a study to explore the formation of a sewer district.

On February 8<sup>th</sup> 2003, the Buhl City Council consisting of Councilor's Swanson, Plombon, Matthew, Sundich, & Mayor Craig Pulford approved a letter of supported for the creation of the sewer district.

On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2003 this same Council approved Resolution 03-33 on a 4-1 vote (Matthews opposed) to support the enabling legislation of the CIRSSD. This legislation was adopted by the MN Legislature in December of 2003.

2004-2008 Studies were being conducted no relevant motions or discussions in Council minutes.

On September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2008 the Buhl City Council consisting of Councilor's White, Swanson, Primeau, Mathew, & Mayor Craig Pulford unanimously approved Resolution 08-25 which re-affirmed Buhl membership in the CIRSSD after Hibbing dropped out of the partnership.

2009-2014 Permitting & Reviews

October of 2014 Ribbon Cutting/CIRSSD Fully operational.

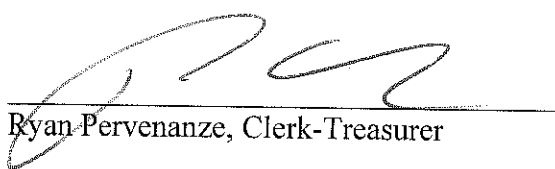
The decision to join the CIRSSD was made long before this current Council took office and before a number of the City's current residents even moved to town. In any event the cost to treat wastewater is extremely expensive. Rules, regulations, and industry standards are constantly changing, and with this comes an increased cost. Unfortunately, this is a cost that is passed on to the residents in every City across Minnesota, including Buhl. Buhl's overall utility rates are still below many of our neighbors and the state-wide averages. Yes, water & sewer are higher than some cities, due to the fact that we are a part of the CIRSSD and have a debt service attached. The City is also in the middle of a \$6,000,000 infrastructure project. We have no data that suggests replacing our old sewer plant would have been more cost effective than being a member of the CIRSSD. However, residents should take note that the City's electric rates are among the lowest in the State. All of these combined result in an average utility bill still lower than most of neighboring cities as mentioned before. The comparison of utility rates has been posted at the post office.

Residents in town who have a pool or hot tubs pay the water and sewer for what it takes to fill it up. These is not one time credit to do so. Residents in town who have an above ground, in-ground, or portable pools or hot tubs pay for both the water & sewer even though the water does not enter the sewer system.

As of last week all lots in the Stubler Development have been sold. City is aggressively exploring options to develop other areas in the City for new housing. The City is aggressively pursuing developing behind the school and on the south end of park where the vacant baseball fields are. Initial costs for the development of lots behind the school is \$2,000,000-\$3,000,000. Development of lots near the park is around \$300,000. The City has no intent to infringe upon Burton Park for future expansion. The City is actively trying to enhance the current Burton Park area, as well as creating a sliding hill on the east end of the town. The Recreation Board has openings for anyone interested is serving their community.

Due to congestion on the City streets the City is seriously considering a year-round calendar parking due to vehicles, trailers, motorhomes, restricting access for emergency vehicles. This is based upon advice of City officials, police officers, emergency personnel.

8. **ADJOURN:** Motion by Cater to adjourn the meeting. Supported by Markas. Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 P.M.

  
Ryan Pervenanze, Clerk-Treasurer

  
John Klarich, Mayor