

**MINUTES**  
**BUHL CITY COUNCIL WORKING SESSION**  
**BUHL CITY HALL**  
**2/15/2024**

Thursday, February 15, 2024

6:30 P.M.

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

**2. ROLL CALL:**

Councilors:     Hadrava     Kealy     Loeffler     Towner  
Mayor:         Carter

Administrator:         Jeffries  
Public Works Foreman:     Pink  
Attorney:                 Kearney  
Engineer:                 Jamnick

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA**

Items will be added to this agenda under Item 4.J. Other Business, related to:

- 1) Stubler Beach Campground; and
- 2) Public Safety Services.

**Motion by Towner to approve the agenda as presented.**

**Supported by Kealy.**

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

**Motion carried unanimously.**

**4. DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

A. Discuss CIRSSD Peak Flow and I&I Concerns and Research Strategy.

A comprehensive discussion was held regarding developing a strategy and plan to investigate and research inflow and infiltration (I&I) sources and impacts on the City of Buhl wastewater treatment system, its current impacts

on the CIRSSD wastewater treatment facility, and potential future impacts on the City of Buhl as a result of this ongoing I&I into the system –

Surprisingly, the current I&I may well be higher now after the CIP (city-wide Capital Improvements Project) than it was previously.

Techniques to be considered for these studies will include, but not be limited to (in no particular order):

Smoke Testing; Flow Metering; Splitting the city into “sewer sheds”; Research into cross connections between the wastewater collection system and various potential sources; and Examining and evaluating the design specifications of the City’s main lift station and its storage vault.

Two separate issues appear to be in play here – 1) a technical and engineering issue, and 2) a policy issue which where the City should be engaged in administering proactive ordinances, policies, and regulations -

It is recommended to utilize the services of the Minnesota Rural Water Association (MWRA) (Buhl is a member -) to assist in planning, designing, or conducting these studies –

Administrator commented that he was aware that “certain improvements” to the “Buhl system” have been budgeted by CIRSSD for 2024.

It is extremely important to not compromise further and future development due to a technical or engineering issue, which can be alleviated -

B. Consider Sump Ordinance.

The intent here is to reduce drain tile contributions to sanitary system –

This is presently addressed in current ordinance, however a separate sump ordinance could be considered, or the administrative mechanisms to achieve compliance should be revisited

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C. Consider Sewer Lateral Ordinance.

The intent is to reduce broken private service line I&I contributions to sanitary system, and thus the amount of water entering these lines –

This also is presently addressed in current ordinance, however separate sewer lateral ordinance could be considered, or the administrative mechanisms to achieve compliance should be revisited -

Televising of these lines is very valuable and important to consider –

It is also very important to consider addressing this when property is sold –

Staff will attempt to compare water usage versus sanitary wastewater (sewer) volume to attempt to correlate and quantify I&I volumes -

Staff will invite the CIRSSA Executive Director to address and present on these topics to the City Council in the near future

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D. Consider Nuisance Parking and Storage Ordinance.

The intent here is to cut down on blight – this is partially administered by current Ordinance Chapter 92- Nuisances –

Question was raised regarding towing of vehicles – has this been budgeted for in 2024? Not really –

Current parking provisions in Buhl ordinance are general, rather than specific, in nature –

The issue centrally is “What is the impact on the community?” for having too much stuff on one’s property, and how to reduce and/or minimize it –

Staff will consider: 1) creating templates for full council consideration; 2) creating a registry of rental properties and creating a revolving list of effected properties; and 3) creating or increasing enforcement penalties (i.e. fines) for non-compliance with these provisions –

Examples of several properties throughout the city were recalled and discussed –

Discussion regarding where driveways access private properties – be it from streets or alleys – and whether this can be regulated, ensued -

Questions were raised regarding what is actually considered acceptable, and what threshold crosses the line into unacceptable –

Discussions regarding when vehicles are parked on the street versus in a private yard, ensued -

Calendar parking, and how it may affect these discussions and/or policies was entertained -

Discussions were also entertained on the historical approach to enforcing calendar parking as a safety and emergency preparedness measure -

Staff will present (a) template(s) of potential ordinance provisions and/or additions to the City Council in the near future –

An additional idea of requiring a “registry” of rental properties to be maintained at City Hall was entertained -

E. Consider Forming Internal Audit Committee.

The question was recently raised regarding whether there should be an internal audit committee to review all bills/invoices/checks at times other than at a City Council meeting –

Other sets of eyes on these matters reflects good business acumen -

Existing city policy (created from (City) Auditor’s comments) recognizes that the municipality is too small to realize a clear segregation of duties amongst city (administrative) staff – and the policy allows for city council members to meet with staff on a quarterly basis to review bank activity and any other relevant accounting activities and compile summary briefs on these findings.

There are also purchasing policies in the City – intended to provide control over the procurement of goods and services.

There does not appear to be a clear need for additional formal audit review, however this oversight is welcome as it provides additional sets of eyes on all disbursements originating on the procured items.

Staff believes this is a great idea and encourages City Council members to become more active in periodically reviewing these materials. Staff is firm that checks-and-balances are welcome and encouraged to provide residents and the public with greater transparency in all business affairs.

Any number of city councilors are invited to participate; ideally there will be at least two (2) independent sets of eyes on these materials.

Staff will bring to all city councilors’ attention the opportunity to engage in this policy initiative.

F. Consider Establishing Formal Policy for Public Forum.

Recent occasions of participation in the Public Forum item on regular City Council meeting agendas suggest revisiting (any) policies regarding Public Forum participation and decorum -

No specific formal policy regarding this is believed to exist at present in Buhl – and there has been occasion that the time and content of public forum (public comment) activities has come into question.

The default for these activities is Robert’s Rules of Order, and the Buhl policy is that each individual who has signed the public forum sign-up sheet (required) is afforded a reasonable amount of time (3 minutes specified) to present comments. It is fairly well established that there is no discourse or debate regarding the comments received at this portion of a meeting, and no action may be taken on these comments.

Many times there are questions posed by audience members during the public forum; although the Mayor and City Council wish to accommodate the public to the greatest extent possible and attempts to do so, debate and discourse is not typically included as a part of this public forum since the forum is designed to receive input and public comment from the audience, but not to discuss and/or act on these comments.

Questions arose regarding allowing public discussion during agenda items – in these instances, the conversation by design is limited to the governing body, however the present City Council is acutely sensitive to opening the meetings to the greatest extent to the public.

In general, the overall feeling of this council is that City Hall is “the peoples’ house”, and that in general the city council want to “let the people talk” – Rather than put a finite “limit” on the amount of time each person is afforded, instead this will continue to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis to continue to attempt to prudently manage items that arise at council meetings while entertaining civil and orderly public comments.

No change to present policy and no further development of any more specific policy will be forthcoming at the present time.

G. Broadband Initiatives – Consider Resident Survey.

The Administrator, in spite of offering this topic forward for discussion, is not sure if it is needed, but wondered if it may be helpful in working with Paul Bunyan Communications in 2024 in determining the number of potential users and their physical locations in town –

Whiteside Industrial Park is not slated to receive this broadband infrastructure installation in this round of construction, if ever -

Paul Bunyan intending on installing fiber throughout town in 2024 Whiteside Industrial Park service not yet determined-

After discussion, it was decided that the City will not move forward with doing a survey, as there is no clear advantage to doing such a survey, however, given the intent of Paul Bunyan Communications to invest in broadband infrastructure installation in 2024, the City will move forward with working with them and supporting the installation of fiber optic broadband services throughout the community .

H. Lead Line Inventory Status – due October 2024.

The intent here is to identify water service lines which contain or may contain lead, and ultimately change out these lines with non-lead materials.

The initial inventory to identify these lines is due to the Minnesota Department of Health by October 16, 2024.

This program is currently underway – photos are being requested of property owners and being received by the City at present –

The City will continue this program as it presently exists and will continue to work with city residents to identify these service lines materials and add it to the ongoing inventory -

It is requested to all residents to help promote this by getting the word out...and helping friends or neighbors understand what is being asked for and how to do it -

I. Consider Water Tower Alternatives and Public Hearing.

This item was placed on the workshop agenda to remind the City Council and all that (a) public hearing(s) will need to be, and should be, conducted later in 2024 to address all alternatives open to the ultimate disposition of the municipal water storage and distribution system, and specifically how this relates to the City's existing storage system, including the elevated water storage tank.

Other items and initiatives ongoing include working on corrective language from the 2023 state bonding initiative, which ultimately included outdated language and not the language presented in 2023 –

The council was reminded that:

These conversations should begin the decision-making process soon -  
Options continue to include renovation/refurbishment/replacement -  
Storage capacity issues go away if emergency power is provided -

Public comments were received regarding a number of items, including:

- 1) The age of the existing structure (approximately 100 years);
- 2) The use of glass linings;
- 3) Structural steel and potential issues with existing coatings;
- 4) The potential use of specialized concrete-like marine coatings;
- 5) VOC (volatile organic compounds) emissions related to the level of VOCs in coatings (paints); and
- 6) The use of constant pressure pumps.

The Condition Assessment Report prepared by USG Water Solutions is available on the City website.

J. Consider City Hall operating policy when there is no one here.

A central question here is - Is this (such a policy) really needed?

Although there are (very infrequent) times when City Hall is not open, it remains City staff's ongoing desire and intent to accommodate the general public during the posted regularly established City Hall operating hours to the greatest extent possible, however there will be some times which the facility may be closed due to circumstances beyond staff's control.

It was determined that the policy should be to close City Hall as little and infrequently as possible, however no formal policy is needed to address this matter –

The public was encouraged to work with staff and recognize that there will be (infrequent) times when the facility may be closed for a short period of time.

K. Other Business.

1) Stubler Beach Campground:

The campground at Stubler Beach has been the subject of several recent conversations, including introducing an on-line reservations system to

replace the current manual reservations system if determined to be superior to the existing system –

Matters raised for consideration through discussions included:

- 1) Consider raising campground fees to at least \$15/night;
- 2) Consider expanding campground (physically);
- 3) Consider expanding campground amenities (power hook-ups; etc.).

Historical statistics will be compiled to provide a deeper understanding of this matter.

These matters will be brought to a regular City Council meeting for consideration and action.

2) Public Safety Services:

The City has public safety services provided by the Chisholm Police Department under a specific contract for these services.

This contract is in the last year of its current service life, expires at the end of 2024, and negotiations will begin in earnest in the next several months to potentially renew this service arrangement.

Presently, the contract service amount for these services is approximately \$85,000 per year.

**5. ADJOURN:**

**Motion by Kealy to adjourn.**

**Supported by Towner.**

**Motion carried Unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:12 p.m.**



Brandin Carter, Mayor

**ATTEST:**



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk