

MINUTES
BUHL CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
2/11/2025

Tuesday, February 11, 2025

6:00 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER by Mayor Matthews at 6:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

Councilors: X Kealy X Loeffler ___ Teska-Erickson ___ Towner
Mayor: X Matthews

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

Motion by Kealy to approve the agenda as presented.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:

City Engineer John Jamnick:

Deferred comments to individual agenda items, as appropriate -

Police Chief Vern Manner:

Introduced the Captains at the Chisholm Police department – Patrol Captain Justin (Rock?) and Investigative Captain Jim (Pukhat?) – who run the Chisholm Police Department in Chief Manner’s absence -

Noted that there was an increased law enforcement presence in town the weekend of February 7 – 8 due to social events which attracted a large motorcycle enthusiast presence -

Noted that there is a (St. Louis) County task force assembled to monitor activities related to motorcycle clubs' activities and noted the Chisholm Police department wants to closely monitor this situation on an ongoing basis to promote and enforce lawful behavior(s) –

Noted that he will be retiring in April 2025 and that a search for a new Police Chief will get underway soon –

Noted that there were several traffic stops but no arrests as a result of the increased monitoring activity noted above -

5. CITIZENS FORUM:

Written correspondence regarding naming individual(s) to the Buhl Economic Development Authority (BEDA) Board of Commissioners received from Ms. Mary Markas; received and read at this meeting.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes:

- i. None.

B. Claims:

- i. Payroll: None. \$ 0.00

- ii. A/P \$ 0.00

TOTAL \$ 0.00

7. BUSINESS:

A. Discuss Current Status and Next Steps for Buhl Water Tower Project.

The City Council voted in late 2024 to move forward with the construction of a new elevated water tower to serve the City's present and future needs.

State and Federal Funding has been appropriated to assist with this project, which is anticipated to have a project budget not to exceed \$ 2,000,000.

Interim financing to fund this project may be required from the City depending upon the allowances and requirements of the state and federal funding processes.

At this point the project is now in the design phase, which is being spearheaded by the City Engineer, JPJ Engineering, Inc.

The federal process is awaiting the submittal of a project environmental review, which is being developed at this time.

Mr. John Jamnick, of JPJ Engineering, was in attendance and provided a summary update on the project and where it currently stands.

Following this, the City Council, with the input of the City Engineer, discussed next steps as this project moves forward.

Informational only.

City Engineer John Jamnick of JPJ Engineering, Inc., indicated that materials have been distributed which outlines the preliminary budget for this project, including sources (and uses) of funds –

Summarized the interrelationship between the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority (MPFA) – the entity that administers the funding provided by the State of Minnesota “bonding bill” allocated from the 2023 legislative session – and the City -

The overall budgetary strategy was discussed, including a potential water line “loop” (budgeted at \$600K - \$700K) and a concept-level potential residential expansion (budgeted at \$950K) –

Identified several additional potential construction projects, including the possibility additional work on south Memorial Drive and the possibility of entertaining a project to pave all remaining unpaved alleys in the city –

Indicated a “package” is being assembled for submission to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Rural Development (RD) for the larger project of water tower site improvements, Buhl Business Block improvements, and east residential infrastructure development -

Discussion of whether roads are an eligible project cost under the Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) award previously allocated to the City (this is the funding being administered by the USDA RD) ensued – no clear conclusion as to what is or will be eligible and what is or will be not –

Indicated that the scope of the Buhl Business Block improvements project has not yet been finalized –

Indicated that the city needs to get the MPFA completed cost estimates, which is in process –

What needs to be completed next are the Preliminary Engineering Reports (PERs), which is also in process –

Mayor Matthews commented that there are basically two (2) main projects under consideration at this time – 1) the water tower construction project, which includes the water main loop extension to the south, and 2) a “BEDA” (Buhl Economic Development Authority) project aimed at potentially developing new residential lots on lands located to the east of the former Martin Hughes School, as well as re-developing the Buhl Business Block –

State funding has been allocated for the water tower project, and federal funding has been allocated (with a 25% local match) for water and sewer improvements – the latter project which has not yet been finalized by the City Council – and noted that these two projects are “linked” together, to a degree, which adds a level of complexity to the preliminary budget –

Various other miscellaneous infrastructure items and their present (and future potential) status were discussed –

Comments received regarding recognizing that there is the potential that the scope of these projects is still in the discussion stage(s) and may be modified in the future depending upon city needs -

Motion by Loeffler to direct staff to move forward with completing the application process required by the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority to keep the water tower project moving forward, as well as a second phase of completing the application process required by the United States Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, to keep the Congressionally Directed Spending project(s) moving forward as well.

Supported by Kealy.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

B. Consider Amending City of Buhl Ordinance § 31.04 Regarding the Makeup of the Buhl Economic Development Authority (BEDA).

This item is a continuation of recent discussions of the City Council.

Sections § 31.01 through § 31.05 of the Buhl, Minnesota, Code of Ordinances sets forth certain provisions guiding the establishment and operation of the Buhl Economic Development Authority (BEDA).

Included in Section § 31.04 is the overall makeup of BEDA, as well as the terms and appointments authorized therein.

The current ordinance calls for a 7-commissioner (BEDA) board, with three (3) of these commissioners being members of the City Council.

A consideration has been initiated to review these provisions, and to potentially alter the current 3-commissioner City Council requirement.

A legal opinion is forthcoming regarding this consideration.

In order to alter these provisions, an amendment to Section § 31.04 would be necessary.

Recommendation is for the staff to City to begin the process of amending this ordinance, in conformance with the findings of the anticipated legal opinion and the direction of the City Council.

Motion by _____ to direct the Administrator to begin the process of amending the City of Buhl Code of Ordinances Section § 31.04 requiring that _____ commissioners of the Buhl Economic Development Authority (BEDA) be members of the City Council.

Supported by _____.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

No motion was offered up on this item.

Mayor Matthews indicated he has spent considerable time reviewing the history of BEDA in the city –

Noted that the size of BEDA at one time was set at eleven (11) members–

Noted that there are references to amendments related to the BEDA composition which, to date, have not yet been located –

Noted that he really does care about the city and what he has seen historically have been actions which were divisive to the community, and his desire to minimize if not eliminate that – as well as a potential lack of sufficient information distributed to the community on certain initiatives which have left the community with less than a full understanding of what was or is being considered -

Noted that there appears to have been instances historically where BEDA has made decisions independently of the City Council, and, as a body who is consultive or advisory to the City Council, this has not necessarily been appropriate –

Noted that there have not been (regular) updates to the city council from BEDA in some time –

Noted that a re-formation of the BEDA structure may improve this operational relationship between BEDA and the City Council – as well as give the general community, as well as the remainder of the City Council, a larger “voice” to be heard in these initiatives – which would be better served by

having two (2) BEDA commissioners as City Council members rather than three (3) –

Councilor Kealy commented on the process as to how this has been approached, and indicated that there are differing independent opinions on this matter –

Also commented that the entire council should be involved in these matters, or at least more involved than they are at present -

Noted that there appears to potentially have been some resistance to posting the availability of these positions –

Councilor Loeffler commented that there appear to be upsides and downsides to both having three (3) City Councilors as BEDA commissioners as well as two (2) -

Question raised as to why change the present status quo if it has not been that “bad” –

Mayor Matthews commented further that he could not locate any enabling resolution for BEDA which indicates three (3) City Councilors to be Commissioners of BEDA –

Also indicated that, since there is not a full complement of city councilors in attendance at this meeting, there would be no vote or action on this matter at this meeting –

Additionally commented that reducing the number of city councilors on BEDA from 3 to 2, that is opens up another “at-large” seat for a member of the community to serve on BEDA –

Councilor Kealy further commented that posting of available seats gives the community a better sense of what is available, as well as what is going on at any particular time -

C. Consider Filling BEDA Board Member Vacancies.

This item is a continuation of recent discussions of the City Council.

There are presently two (2) vacancies on the Buhl Economic Development Authority (BEDA) board of commissioners.

One (1) of these existing vacancies is currently required to be filled with a member of the City of Buhl City Council. The term of this vacancy will coincide with the term of office of the selected member of the City Council.

The other (at-large) vacancy will serve to fill a recently vacated seat on BEDA, and will have a term which expires on December 31, 2026.

Three (3) Buhl residents have currently expressed an interest in serving in this capacity on BEDA.

Recommendation is for the City to fill these available openings on the Buhl Economic Development Authority (BEDA) board of commissioners as soon as practicable.

Motion by Matthews to direct staff to publicly post the availability of an available seat on the BEDA board of commissioners for a period of two (2) weeks, until 11:00 a.m. on February 28, 2025, and to require interested individuals to complete and submit an Expression Of Interest as a requisite for consideration.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

An "Expression Of Interest" document has been developed and is proposed to be utilized for individuals interested in any City board or commission, and should be utilized in this instance –

This document will be finalized and used during this process – the Administrator will require this document to be a requisite of applying by interested individuals -

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Other Business.

None.

E. Councilor's Comments.

None.

F. Mayor's Comments.

Noted that he believes a lot of progress has been make on the above agenda items this evening –

8. ADJOURN:

Motion by Kealy to adjourn.

Supported by Loeffler.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.

James Matthews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk