

MINUTES
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
10/21/2025

Tuesday, October 21, 2025

6:30 P.M.

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

2. ROLL CALL:

Councilors: Kealy Loeffler Teska-Erickson Towner
Mayor: Matthews

Administrator: Jeffries
Public Works Foreman: Pink
Attorney: Kearney
Engineer: Jamnick
Fire Chief: Lehman
Police Chief: Vukad
Finance Manager: Thronson

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

A change to the consent agenda was requested by Administrator Jeffries -

A modification to the total of the accounts payable (A/P) was distributed – A/P claims for this period increased by \$373.50 for the addition of an additional month of Medica Signature Solution coverage to conform with Medica's new quarterly remitting policies –

A/P claims were also reduced for this period by <\$79.95> for a decrease of Sunlife short term disability premium –

The result of the above is an increase in the total A/P claims of \$293.55, bringing the total A/P claims to \$79,338.45, and the total Claims to \$94,226.45.

Motion by Kealy to approve the agenda as amended.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:

City Engineer John Jamnick:

Deferred any comments to those which may arise in individual agenda items -

Administrator Jeffries:

1. Noted that a thank you note from B2 Bank was received for participating in their very first Snack Drive –

Enough snacks were collected to provide every classroom at MIB Merritt Elementary School with two (2) full boxes of snacks.

They are already beginning to plan the 2nd Annual Snack Drive for next year – stay tuned!

Verified the rescheduled water tower construction bid opening date noted above;

2. Noted that the next step in the City of Buhl Comprehensive Planning Update process will be to have a meeting with the City of Buhl Long-Range Planning and Zoning Commission and ARDC, the planning consultant, on Wednesday, October 29 at 5:00 p.m.
3. Noted that the Department of Public Transformation (DoPT), whom awarded a grant to the City a couple of years ago for what has evolved into the Rusty Rock Community Guild, was sponsoring a 3-day symposium, in which Councilor Renee Loeffler was featured and participated in a panel discussion regarding the DoPT's Activate! Rural program, and how that program has impacted certain communities -

5. CITIZENS FORUM:

Melody Staffaroni, Buhl Resident –

1. Referred to Agenda Item 7.A., inquiring how the budget cutting process operates and when these activities may be occurring;

2. Referred to Agenda Item 7.B. ,inquiring as to whether funding has been appropriated yet for the water tower construction; and

3. Referred to Agenda Item 7.G. ,inquiring as to whether funding has been appropriated yet for the water main loop and other Buhl Business Block related infrastructure activities.

Pat Haley – Mayor of the City of Kinney, Minnesota

Requested that the City Council look into the (sanitary) sewer charges being applied to the City of Kinney –

Noted that the charges are increasing while the number of service connections in the City of Kinney are decreasing (the charges are based on debt service paydown schedules for the CIRSSD project, and in Kinney's case that is fixed at 10% of the CIRSSD debt burden, as well as on water consumption volumes, not on a per user basis) –

So therefore, as the number of users decrease, the per account costs (charges) per user increases -

Noted that the tax base in Kinney is rapidly eroding (they have lost over \$1 million of their tax base in the last several years) and that they are down to 32 active utility accounts (from 89 in 2022) –

Requested that the City Council look into adjusting those charges down, if possible -

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes:

Regular City Council Meeting – October 7, 2025

B. Claims:

i.	Payroll #21	\$ 14,888.00
ii.	A/P	\$ <u>79,338.45</u>
	TOTAL	\$ 94,226.45

Motion by Teska-Erickson to approve the Consent Agenda minutes and claims as amended.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

7. BUSINESS:

A. Update on Proposed 2026 Preliminary Budget.

The City has been undertaking the work of establishing the 2026 city budget since early September 2025.

The preliminary budget was constructed, and introduced to the City Council for consideration on September 16, 2025. This preliminary budget was also approved by the City Council at that time.

Subsequently, two (2) dedicated budget planning working sessions have been conducted by the City Council; three (3) additional dedicated budget planning working sessions remain and are scheduled in October – December 2025.

Additional dedicated budget planning working sessions will be scheduled and conducted, if needed.

Presently, the process is reviewing individual line items for each Department of the City, in order to attempt to identify items which may be adjusted downward to reduce the overall financial impact of the City budget.

Approximately 60% of the Departments of the City have been evaluated to date.

The schedule includes attempting to finalize this exercise by December 23, 2025, and approve a final budget for submittal to the State of Minnesota by December 28, 2025.

Informational only.

B. Update on Water Tower Construction Bid Opening of October 16, 2025 and Consider Awarding City of Buhl 200,000 Gallon Elevated Water Storage Tank Project to Recommended Contractor.

The City had previously requested bids for the construction of a 200,000 gallon elevated water storage tank (JPJ Engineering Project 2009-061).

Sealed bids were received and opened at 1:00 P.M. on Thursday, October 16, 2025.

Two (2) bids were received; the apparent low bidder was Maguire Iron, Inc., in the amount of \$2,492,000.00 for the base bid.

City Engineer John Jamnick of JPJ Engineering, Inc., has recommended that if the project is awarded, that Maguire Iron, Inc. be offered a contract for this project.

Alternatively, the City has not yet finalized the funding piece for this project, so it may be reasonable to consider tabling this item at this time so that additional clarification regarding funding and the cost elements related to this project may be obtained prior to award.

Recommendation from the City Engineer is to approve Maguire Iron, Inc. as the low responsible bidder for this project and to award Maguire Iron, Inc. the project in the amount of \$2,492,000 and to draft a contract regarding the same.

Motion by _____ to accept the bid of Maguire Iron, Inc. for the construction of the City of Buhl 200,000 Gallon Elevated Water Storage Tank, and to award a contract to Maguire Iron, Inc. for the base bid portion of this work in the amount of \$2,492,000.00.

Supported by _____.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that the bids received were extremely high –

It appears that this item will remain in a holding pattern until federal government activities resume –

Bid pricing will remain firm until at least December 16, 2025 -

Item tabled due to lack of a motion; no action taken.

- C. Update on Application for a St. Louis County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for a Grant Appropriation for Redevelopment of the Former Laundromat Site Located at 206 State Street.

The City had previously approved applying for a St. Louis County (SLC) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for a grant appropriation related to re-development of the former laundromat site located at 206 State Street.

This pre-application was submitted to the St. Louis County Community Development Department on October 15, 2025, and successfully received by SLC.

The project includes the demolition and removal of the existing laundromat structure, and sitework and construction activities related to an eight-unit (8-unit) expansion of the State Street Apartments to provide additional workforce-related housing units.

The City applied for a \$300,000 grant appropriation from the SLC CDBG program.

Final applications are due to St. Louis County by 4:30 p.m. on December 1, 2025.

Please note that the amount of information received from Zenith Property Management, the owner, regarding this project to the City was limited; substantial additional information is desired and needed for developing the final application.

The City has received comment from the SLC Community Development Department that certain criteria must be established in order to be determined as eligible for this potential appropriation. One of these items/issues is related to property ownership.

It appears that this project may have a challenging time qualifying for eligibility since the property and structure(s) are not owned by the City of Buhl.

Staff is intending to request a meeting or a series of meetings with the City Engineer and other appropriate city personnel to determine a course of strategy regarding preparing for this final application. It is desired that these meetings commence before the end of October 2025.

Informational only.

The property ownership matter referred to above is new information for the City, and may represent an obstacle in attempts to successfully compete for this grant funding appropriation -

D. Consider Renewing the Salvation Army HeatShare Agreement for 2025-26.

The Salvation Army's HeatShare program is currently celebrating its 43rd year.

HeatShare is a voluntary non-governmental program of the Salvation Army which has been in existence since 1982. The program is a one-time, last

resort opportunity for utility customers in crisis who may have no other resources available to see them through a tough period.

The program provides emergency financial assistance on a year-round basis with heating and utility bills to those in need, and is used for natural gas, oil, propane, wood, and electricity. It helps warm the lives of the elderly, disabled, and others who have nowhere else to turn. The program is especially valuable in that it may be available after state programs have closed or are otherwise unavailable.

The Salvation Army HeatShare Program seeks partnership participation from utility companies and providers in the form of notifying customers of the existence and availability of the program, as well as by encouraging and soliciting voluntary (financial) contributions from customers and employees to the program.

The City has participated previously, and will participate by placing information regarding this program in utility billings to its customers, placing this information on the City website, and by transferring any contributions received to the Program.

Recommendation is for the City to enter into an agreement to continue to promote and support the Salvation Army HeatShare Program.

Motion by Loeffler to authorize the City to enter into an Agreement with The Salvation Army HeatShare Program for the period of October 1, 2025 until September 30, 2026, and to direct the Mayor to execute this Agreement on behalf of the City of Buhl.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

E. Continue Considering Implementing a Sewer Lateral Ordinance.

The City has been contemplating and considering an ordinance to regulate the treatment of (private) sewer laterals for some time.

This initiative is intended as a part of ongoing controls, improvements, and measures to positively effect the impact of inflow and infiltration (I & I) on the city's sanitary sewage effluent stream.

A draft ordinance has been prepared regarding this initiative and was distributed for consideration at the June 10, 2025 City Council meeting.

Limited comment regarding that draft ordinance was subsequently offered by the City Council.

Staff believes that it would be in the best interests of the City to approve and create this ordinance before the end of 2025, is re-distributing this draft ordinance for consideration, and is requesting additional comment to further this endeavor.

Recommendation is for the City to approve the creation of this sewer lateral ordinance before the end of calendar 2025.

Motion by Towner to approve modifying City of Buhl Ordinances Chapter 52 to include provisions for the treatment of sewer laterals in the city.

Supported by Kealy.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

A number of comments and questions were presented, including:

When would assumed activities be “at the cost of the city?”;

Could the fines schedule be readdressed?; and

Could/should a dedicated fund be implemented for future I & I (inflow and infiltration) improvements?

A number of other minor comments were also received –

Councilor Towner will work with the Administrator to clarify and refine these items, as well as potentially be addressed at a City Council working session -

Motion carried unanimously.

F. Consider Supporting the Mountain Iron-Buhl (MIB) Public Schools Yearbook Through Sponsoring a Page or Pages in the 2025-2026 Edition.

The Mountain Iron-Buhl Public Schools memorialize each school year with a yearbook known as *The Laurentian*.

The City has received a solicitation to consider sponsoring a page or pages in *The Laurentian* to support the students and otherwise gain public exposure.

Sponsoring pages in the yearbook is a great way to show and demonstrate care for the community, the school district, and the students.

The cost of sponsorship is \$75.00 per page.

It is good and sound municipal policy for the City to support the community, including the school district and the students.

Recommendation is for the City to consider sponsoring a page or pages in this yearbook.

Motion by Kealy to authorize the City to support the Mountain Iron-Buhl Public Schools yearbook, *The Laurentian*, with a sponsorship in the amount of \$75.00 per page for one (1) page(s) in the 2025-2026 edition, and to congratulate the students of Mountain Iron-Buhl Public Schools on their achievements and accomplishments.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

G. Consider Awarding Buhl Business Block Water Main Loop Construction Project to Recommended Contractor.

NOTE: This item is an ongoing continuation of a previous agenda item –

The City solicited bids for the “Business Park Development” project (JPJ Engineering Project No. 23-207), and sealed bids were received and opened on July 24, 2025.

This project includes the expansion and installation of water and wastewater infrastructure at the Buhl Business Block, as well as the creation of a (south side) water main loop to serve the entire community-wide water distribution system.

The low responsible bidder for this phase and portion of the project was Utility Systems of America, P.O. Box 706, Eveleth, MN 55734 (USA).

JPJ Engineering, Inc., the City Engineer, has recommended that the project be awarded to USA.

It has been previously recommended that the City accept the City Engineer’s recommendation.

This action has been tabled prior to this present time due to a lack of clarity and certainty regarding previously appropriated funding allocations; if this has now been clarified, a decision and action on this item at this time may be considered.

Recommendation is to again accept the City Engineer recommendation and approve the City Engineer's recommended contractor for this project.

Motion by _____ to accept JPJ Engineering's recommendation on the Business Park Development project and to approve the selection of JPJ Engineering's recommended contractor for the Base Bid portion of JPJ Engineering Project 23-207, and to authorize JPJ Engineering to move forward with the development of a project agreement with Utility Systems of America, Inc. in the amount of \$ 742,325.75.

Supported by _____.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that the best course of action is to table this item until funding appropriations are clarified, which, at a minimum, will not occur until the federal government is no longer shut down-

Item tabled due to lack of a motion; no action taken.

H. Consider Resolution 25-40 Authorizing the City to Accept and Receive a Donation to the City of Buhl Recreation Board.

The City has received a donation from a local business who has offered goods or currency to the City's Recreation Board as a financial contribution to help offset costs related to the City of Buhl recreational events and other related recreational activities.

Specifically, the City has received a donation of currency for recreational programming from the following:

Canelake's Candies; Virginia -	\$ 25.00.
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The City wishes to recognize this contribution as continuing to make the City's important civic and recreational initiatives a popular success.

Recommendation is for the City to accept this donation.

Motion by Kealy to authorize the City to accept a donation from Canelake's Candies; Virginia, Mn to the City and its' Recreation Board as a financial contribution to help offset costs related to the City of Buhl recreational programs, events, and activities, to execute Resolution 25-40 concerning the same, and to acknowledge this donation with great appreciation.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Sincere thanks was extended to Canelake's Candies!

**Roll Call Vote: Kealy Aye, Loeffler Aye, Teska-Erickson Aye, Towner Aye ;
Matthews Aye.**

Motion carried unanimously.

I. Reminder of October 30, 2025 Budget Planning Working Session.

The preliminary budget for fiscal year 2026 was introduced on September 16, 2025 for City Council consideration.

The City also adopted a proposed tax levy for fiscal year 2026 earlier at that meeting. The City certified this proposed tax levy for fiscal year 2026 to the St. Louis County Auditor before September 30, 2025.

Dedicated budget planning working sessions of the City Council have been conducted on September 24, 2025, and October 16, 2025.

The final budget and tax levy is anticipated to be prepared and completed in December 2025, and the final tax levy must be certified to the St. Louis County Auditor by December 26, 2025.

Additional further evaluation and review is warranted in order to achieve a workable fiscal year 2026 budget that is acceptable to the City Council. Three (3) additional dedicated budget planning working sessions remain for further 2026 budget evaluation and review with the City Council in the near future.

These remaining 2025 dates (if needed) are presently set for: **October 30**; November 13; and December 11, all at 6:00 p.m., in the City Council chambers in City Hall.

Further budget working session(s) in addition to those scheduled above will be held if needed should additional evaluation and review of the fiscal year 2026 budget be necessary or desired.

Informational only.

J. Other Business.

None.

K. Councilors' Comments.

Councilor Kealy –

Noted with excitement that the Halloween party and events are coming up on October 25 –

Noted with concern the issue surrounding youth and children operating golf carts in an unsafe manner in the City, and a general lack of caution with operating behaviors and/or safety equipment, and strongly urged all to BE CAREFUL!

Councilor Teska-Erickson –

Noted that mittens and hats (for winter) will be available at the church for anyone that needs them, courtesy of the Recreation Board –

Councilor Towner –

Reported that all Halloween events are covered!

L. Mayor's Comments.

Gave a brief update on the City Clerk/Treasurer hiring process – and indicated that the personnel committee continues to review applications and will do so until finalists are selected for interviewing by the City Council –

8. ADJOURN:

Motion by Towner to adjourn.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:24 p.m.



James Matthews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk