

MINUTES
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
11/18/2025

Tuesday, November 18, 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:

Motion by Kealy to approve the agenda as presented.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Administrator Jeffries:

Noted that a meeting that was held on November 18, 2025 with representatives of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and personnel in United States Congressman Pete Stauber's office regarding interpretation of the work activities contemplated by the city infrastructure project, which previously received a Congression Directed

Spending (CDS) appropriation, and which of those activities would be eligible to utilize USDA-administered (federal (CDS)) funds, yielded favorable results.

He further explained that an earlier interpretation of restricting CDS funding administered by USDA to drinking water-only related activities was re-interpreted on a broader scale, and now includes drinking water, domestic wastewater, municipal stormwater, and other associated infrastructure activities, which is what was understood initially, and which fits Buhl's plans much more favorably –

Additionally noted that it may be necessary that the project elements which were solicited for bids earlier in the year be re-bid, in order to comply with USDA bidding protocols and bid forms -

5. CITIZENS FORUM:

Dustin Reini; 111 Franklin St., Buhl, MN –

1. Noted that he is the owner of the above referenced property which has not yet to-date commenced construction of a single-family dwelling, leading to a communication from the City that the process (for the City) to re-acquire the property may begin soon –
2. Indicated that he does still want to build a single-family home on that property and retain ownership thereof;
3. Indicated that one of his main intentions is to protect the Disc Golf Course, which he is very active and involved in, and which is adjacent to the property;
4. Indicated that he would like to get dirt work and the foundation work completed in the next year; and
5. Requested a five-year window in which to complete construction, in part due to financial as well as health issues.

The discussed request will be considered by the City Council.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes:

Regular City Council Meeting – November 4, 2025

City Council Budget Working Session – October 30, 2025

B. Claims:

i.	Payroll #23	\$ 15,007.82
ii.	A/P	<u>\$ 84,223.74</u>
	TOTAL	\$ 99,231.56

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

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

7. BUSINESS:

A. Presentation by Paul Peltier, Executive Director, About the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), and Discussion Regarding 2026 City Priorities.

Paul Peltier, Executive Director of the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS), of which the City has been a long-term member, was in attendance and presented to the City Council on several matters related to RAMS and its' present and future initiatives.

Additionally, time was allocated to questions, and specifically to addressing the priorities of the City of Buhl.

Discussion.

Mr. Peltier presented a comprehensive overview of the RAMS organization, both current-time as well as from a historical perspective –

It was noted that the focus from last legislative session going into the 2026 session is/was:

1. Mineral development and permitting reform;
2. Protecting LGA (Local Governmental Aid); and
3. Brownfields development.

Informational only.

B. Consider Requesting and Soliciting Bids and Proposals for Buhl City Hall Repairs, Including Scope, Options, and Possibilities.

The City received a \$100,000 appropriation from the State of Minnesota for City Hall improvements and repairs in 2023.

Although several discussions have been held with vendors and service providers regarding potential specific initiatives and activities, no concrete scope of work nor proposals or bids regarding specific or aggregate work activities and items have been selected or arrived at.

It would be prudent to move these initiatives forward by establishing a scope of work for desired services and repairs/improvements, and to request a solicitation for bids be issued regarding the same.

There is no time limit on this appropriation, however moving these initiatives forward at this time is appropriate.

Recommendation is to approve a project scope and soliciting bids and proposals for these activities.

Motion by Kealy to authorize the City to select a scope of work for City Hall improvements and repairs and to solicit bids and proposals for said work from qualified vendors and service providers, in an amount not to exceed \$100,000.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Consensus was to approach the scope of work for this project from a safety perspective, as the condition of the front steps at City Hall continues to deteriorate and may ultimately pose a safety risk to the general public –

The Administrator suggested that costs of concrete/masonry work are such that there may not be any residual funds available for other repair items after receiving bids for the front steps/front entrance repair –

Miscellaneous discussion regarding roof issues and potential replacement ensued -

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Consider Authorizing Soliciting and Receiving Bid Proposals for City of Buhl Water Tower Site Improvements.

As a portion of its 2026 city-wide infrastructure improvements initiatives, a separate project titled City of Buhl Water Tower Site Improvements has been identified.

This project is related to the existing ground storage tank and ancillary components, including interior wet coating(s), exterior dry coating(s), east and west pumphouse improvements, structural spot repairs, and a back-up generating system and controls.

This portion of the overall project is estimated at \$ 754,000.

Although several discussions have been held with vendors and service providers regarding potential specific initiatives and activities, no concrete scope of work nor proposals or bids regarding specific or aggregate work activities and items have been selected or arrived at.

It would be prudent to move these initiatives forward by establishing a scope of work for desired services and repairs/improvements, and to request a solicitation for bids be issued regarding the same.

Recommendation is to direct the City Engineer to issue bid documents related to the above-referenced scope of work.

Motion by Towner to direct the City Engineer to complete the scope of work and to solicit bids and proposals for said work from qualified vendors and service providers for the City of Buhl Water Tower Site Improvements project.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Consider Authorizing Soliciting and Receiving Bids for Memorial Drive Improvements.

As a portion of its 2026 city-wide infrastructure improvements initiatives, a separate project titled Memorial Drive Improvements has been identified.

This project is related to the existing roadway of (west) Memorial Drive, between Pennsylvania Avenue and Roberts Street, and primarily includes improvements to the existing roadway and stormwater collection and

management system, including replacement of existing pavement surfaces and curb and gutter systems.

This portion of the overall project is estimated at \$ 350,000.

Although several discussions have been held amongst stakeholders and other interested and affected parties, no concrete scope of work nor proposals or bids regarding specific or aggregate work activities and items have been selected or arrived at.

It would be prudent to move these initiatives forward by establishing a scope of work for desired services and repairs/improvements, and to request a solicitation for bids be issued regarding the same.

Recommendation is to direct the City Engineer to issue bid documents related to the above-referenced scope of work.

Motion by Kealy to direct the City Engineer to complete the scope of work and to solicit bids and proposals for said work from qualified vendors and service providers for the City of Buhl Memorial Drive Improvements project.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Question was raised regarding what would be the funding source(s) for this proposed project – at this time there is no clear funding source identified or available for these items –

There is some sensitivity as to moving too fast on this item, and that it may be prudent to assemble more information before acting to reach a decision –

Substantial additional funding-related work is appropriate, including re-visiting project cost components and revising the project budget –

Additionally, there is a situation that has arisen on Grant Location Road with a potentially collapsing culvert in the roadway which may take precedent over this item -

Motion failed unanimously.

- E. Consider Approving and Adopting Resolution 25-44 for the City to Certify Delinquent 2025 Unpaid Utility Charges to the 2026 St. Louis County Property Tax Rolls.

**THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING OF NOVEMBER 18, 2025 WAS
PLACED IN RECESS IN ORDER TO CONDUCT A PUBLIC HEARING
REGARDING THIS ITEM –**

The regular Buhl City Council meeting was recessed at 7:19 p.m.;

The Public Hearing regarding the status of unpaid utility charges and certifying these charges to the St. Louis County 2026 property tax rolls was called to order and opened at 7:20 p.m.;

Roll call was taken – all councilors were in attendance -

There being no testimony received at this public hearing regarding the above-referenced subject matter, the Public Hearing was closed at 7:22 p.m., and the regular Buhl City Council meeting of November 18, 2025 placed out of recess and back in session -

Buhl City Code provides for the City to place delinquent unpaid utility charges on the current year property tax rolls, payable in the succeeding year, for specified properties.

Prior to certifying delinquent utility accounts onto residents' property tax rolls, a public hearing is required.

This Public Hearing was held on November 18th, 2025.

Each account contained in "Exhibit A" of Resolution 25-44 was sent notice of this public hearing.

Specifically, these charges are identified in the "To Certify*" column contained on this "Exhibit A", attached to resolution 25-44.

Recommendation is for the City to certify those delinquent unpaid utility charges contained in "Exhibit A" to Resolution 25-44 to the St. Louis County, Minnesota, Property Tax Rolls.

Motion by Towner to execute and adopt Resolution 25-44 for the City to Certify Delinquent 2025 Unpaid Utility Charges to the 2026 St. Louis County Property Tax Rolls as contained in "Exhibit A" to Resolution 25-44.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Comment was received on considering stopping applying utility charges on residences which are unoccupied and vacant –

This is a matter of continuing to apply utility base charges while associated usage charges are discontinued –

It appears that any modification to this would require an ordinance amendment -

The City may address this issue of unoccupied vacant properties at a later date -

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

Motion carried unanimously.

F. Consider Approving and Submitting 2025 Certificate to the County Auditor Regarding Whiteside and Woodbridge Avenues Special Street Assessments.

The City compiles and maintains information on (special) assessments levied for street improvements which remain unpaid, typically as a result of a pro-rated assessment spread out over a number of years.

The City certifies these improvements assessments to the County Auditor annually prior to December 1.

This Assessment Roll for 2025 certification is the 5th installment unpaid on the assessment levied by the City Council of the City of Buhl on April 20, 2021, for the improvement of the streets on Whiteside and Woodbridge Avenues from Forest Street to Wanless Street, and on Sharon Street between Seville Avenue and Pennsylvania Avenue, which will be applied by St. Louis County for collection with 2026 property tax assessments.

This certificate/assessment roll is attached to this item.

Recommendation is to approve the certificate and distribute this information to the St. Louis County Auditor.

Motion by Kealy to approve the Certificate for (Special) Street Assessments for the Whiteside and Woodbridge Street Assessment, 5th Installment, for 2025 and to distribute this information to the St. Louis County Auditor for inclusion in affected 2026 Property Tax Statements.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

G. Consider Approving and Submitting 2025 Certificate to the County Auditor Regarding East Woodbridge Avenue Special Street Assessments.

The City compiles and maintains information on (special) assessments levied for street improvements which remain unpaid, typically as a result of a pro-rated assessment spread out over a number of years.

The City certifies these improvements assessments to the County Auditor annually prior to December 1.

This Assessment Roll for 2025 certification is the 4th installment unpaid on the assessment levied by the City Council of the City of Buhl on April 20, 2021, for the improvement of the streets on Woodbridge Avenue from Wanless Street in Buhl to the east, which will be applied by St. Louis County for collection with 2026 property tax assessments.

This certificate/assessment roll is attached to this item.

Recommendation is to approve the certificate and distribute this information to the St. Louis County Auditor.

Motion by Kealy to approve the Certificate for (Special) Street Assessments for the East Woodbridge Assessment, 4th Installment, for 2025 and to distribute this information to the St. Louis County Auditor for inclusion in affected 2026 Property Tax Statements.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

H. Update on Proposed 2026 Preliminary Budget and Levy.

The City continues to work on the preliminary 2026 city budget in order to arrive at a final budget that will establish the 2026 levy that will ultimately be certified to the St. Louis County Auditor.

The preliminary budget was approved by the City Council for consideration on September 16, 2025.

To date, four (4) dedicated budget planning working sessions have been conducted—

September 25, 2025;
October 16, 2025;

October 30; 2025; and
November 13, 2025.

A minimum of one (1) additional dedicated budget planning working session remains scheduled for December 11, 2025.

Additional dedicated budget planning working sessions will be scheduled and conducted in conjunction with other scheduled City council meeting(s), if needed.

Presently, the process has completed reviewing individual expense line items for each Department of the City, and the continued focus is to attempt to identify items which may be adjusted downward to reduce the overall financial impact of the City budget on the levy.

100% of the Departments of the City have been evaluated to date. Additionally, anticipated 2026 revenues have been evaluated.

The schedule continues to aim to have this exercise finalized by December 16, 2025, and approve a final budget for submittal to the State of Minnesota and a final levy to be certified by the St. Louis County Auditor by December 26, 2025.

Informational only.

I. Update on Progress of City Clerk/Treasurer Selection Process and Consider Extending an Offer of Employment to the Selected Candidate.

The City Clerk/Treasurer candidate selection process has continued throughout the last several weeks and months.

Interview sessions were offered to two (2) qualified candidates; these interviews were conducted on Monday, November 10, 2025 in the council chambers in City Hall.

Interview sessions were offered to:

Ryan Rivers; and
Robecca Jaeger.

Subsequent to these interview sessions, the City Council retreated into a closed session to review the sessions and other pertinent and relevant information concerning and surrounding each candidate.

Upon exiting the closed session, the City Council opted to move forward with working with Robecca Jaeger regarding the potential of assuming

the position – with a possibility of extending an offer of employment in the near future.

Informational only.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Upon discussion, this item was ultimately converted from an informational item to an action item

Motion by Matthews to authorize the Mayor to issue an offer of employment to Rebecca Jaeger at the salary recommended by the City's human resources consultant and personnel selection committee, and to approach this position offer as a standard offer of employment rather than through a potential employment agreement.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

An offer of employment will be extended to Rebecca Jaeger should this motion prevail –

A start date needs to be determined (12/8/25 was suggested and appeared to reach consensus) -

Motion carried unanimously.

J. Consider Sponsoring Mountain Iron-Buhl (MIB) High School Girls and Boys Basketball Teams for the Upcoming Season.

The Mountain Iron-Buhl Public Schools, through their MIB Rangers sports programs, provides students grades K-12 a safe place to get physically active and make connections with their peers.

The MIB Ranger Basketball Family, through the MIB Hoops Club, is seeking sponsors for both girls' and boys' teams for the upcoming basketball season to continue to support these initiatives.

Sponsorship levels are available in several categories, and any amount of financial sponsorship is appreciated.

The City has offered support to the community, including the school district and the students, for certain initiatives and activities in the past.

Recommendation is for the City to consider sponsoring a MIB team or teams.

Motion by Kealy to authorize the City to sponsor the Mountain Iron-Buhl Public Schools (Girls/Boys) basketball programs by becoming a sponsor for the 2026 basketball season, in the amount of \$100.00, and to congratulate the students of Mountain Iron-Buhl Public Schools on their achievements and accomplishments.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that although youth from Buhl may attend 6 or 7 different schools, MIB is the “official” “home” school serving the community -

Motion carried 4-1; Towner voting nay.

K. Distribution of Information Regarding the Minnesota Paid Leave Program.

Minnesota Paid Leave is a new initiative of the state of Minnesota, intended to provide payments and job protections when an employee needs time off to care for oneself or one's family.

Leave will be available for employees affected by certain qualifying events, and includes both Medical Leave as well as Family Leave.

The provisions of this program, which takes effect January 1, 2026, are outlined and explained in the information attached to a distributed memorandum.

Most workers in Minnesota are covered by Paid Leave, including City employees.

Minimum funding amounts for employers have been set by the Minnesota Paid Leave program.

Payment of 100% of all paid leave premiums is proposed to be covered by the City of Buhl for all employees.

Informational only.

Discussion.

This appears to include all employees of the City, including seasonal part-time -

This item will likely be re-visited in the near future for council action to establish city policy -

L. Acknowledge Correspondence from Michael Kearney of Colosimo, Patchin & Kearney, LTD, Regarding Representing the City of Buhl in Civil/Municipal Matters as well as Prosecuting Buhl's Criminal Cases in 2026.

Communication has been received from Mr. Michael Kearney, of Colosimo, Patchin & Kearney, LTD law firm, regarding legal representation opportunities for 2026.

Mr. Kearney is presently the City Attorney and Prosecuting Attorney for the City of Buhl for the 2025 calendar year.

Mr. Kearney, and Colosimo, Patchin & Kearney, LTD, has served in this capacity for the City of Buhl for a number of years.

Mr. Kearney has indicated a willingness to continue these services for the 2026 calendar year. The services include representing both civil and municipal matters, as well as prosecuting criminal cases.

Fees for 2026 are proposed at \$130 per hour for the above services.

Selection of a City Attorney should occur by early 2026.

Informational only.

M. Acknowledge Notice of Nominations for St. Louis County Communities Under 10,000 Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) Commission Representative.

The Arrowhead Regional Development Commission (ARDC) has, in its membership, one mayor or councilperson from a municipality of under 10,000 population in each county in its service area.

The St. Louis County representative is Laurence Cuffee, Jr., of Virginia, MN. Mr. Cuffee, Jr.'s term is expiring at the end of January, 2026.

ARDC has requested nominations for a St. Louis County representative, either a mayor or a councilperson, for consideration of this upcoming vacancy.

Please note that Laurence Cuffee, Jr. is eligible for another term on the commission.

The term for this upcoming vacancy is January 2026 through January 2029.

Nominations are due by December 12, 2025.

A Nominating form is included with this memorandum.

Informational only.

N. Reminder of Invitation to Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) Annual Dinner and Board Member Nominations for 2026.

As a reminder, the Range Association of Municipalities & Schools (RAMS), of which the City is a long-time member, has announced notice of its 2025 Annual Meeting and Dinner -

The meeting/dinner will be December 9, 2025, beginning at 5:00 p.m. at the Iron Trail Motors Event Center located in Virginia. Members, sponsors, and invited guests are welcome at this meeting/dinner.

Tony Sertich, President and CEO of the Northland Foundation, will deliver the keynote address - "What Does it Mean to Serve the Iron Range".

RSVP is required by December 2, 2025 for this event.

Additionally, certain members of the RAMS Board of Directors terms will expire, resulting in a number of Board vacancies beginning in 2026.

Elections of board member nominees will be voted on in-person at this Annual Meeting on December 9, 2025.

There are eleven (11) vacancies, each with a 2-year term (January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2027) that exist to be nominated from townships, cities, or school districts.

The City of Buhl is not eligible to forward a nomination for this board member election cycle, as it presently is represented on the RAMS Board by Councilor Renee Loeffler, and a member may only have one Board representative at any one time.

Informational only.

Discussion.

This event may be noticed by the City of Buhl as a public meeting due to the possibility of three (3) or more City Councilors planning to attend -

O. Reminder of TNT (Truth-In-Taxation) Meeting and Public Hearing – Preceding the Regular Buhl City Council Meeting - December 2, 2025 at 6:01 p.m. at the Buhl Kinney Senior Center.

The State of Minnesota statutorily requires that all organized governmental units and taxing authorities conduct a session where the public is entitled to weigh-in and comment on preliminary property tax impacts proposed for the ensuing year, including Buhl's portion of the property tax statement, the proposed budget, and the proposed (property tax) levy. This session is typically known as the "Truth in Taxation" hearing.

It is noted that these proposed assessments are based on the preliminary budget and levy numbers arrived at and approved in September 2025. The City approved a preliminary 2025 levy at \$521,000 on September 16, 2025 – this is the basis of the proposed property tax assessments -

After several working sessions, much discussion, and intensive work with all departments across the city, a final budget and associated levy will be finalized before the end of the calendar year –

It should be noted that there are very few sources of and opportunities for revenue available to the City, and even for those identified revenue streams the amount of funding received from those are generally outside of City control -

The TNT meeting and public hearing will be conducted no earlier than **6:01 p.m. on December 2, 2025, at the Buhl Kinney Senior Center**, as a portion of the regularly scheduled City Council meeting of that day.

Informational only.

P. Reminder of December 11, 2025 Budget Planning Working Session.

The preliminary budget for fiscal year 2026 continues to be reviewed and evaluated by the City Council.

This is a reminder that an additional dedicated budget planning working session is scheduled for December 11, 2025, in the City Council chambers in City Hall.

Informational only.

Q. Other Business.

None.

R. Councilors' Comments.

Councilor Kealy –

Noted that Knights of Columbus Turkey Bingo will be held on November 22, 2025 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Buhl Kinney Senior Center –

Noted that the Buhl Holiday Shoppe will be held November 29, 2025 beginning at 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. at the Buhl Kinney Senior Center –

Councilor Teska-Erickson –

Noted that the Fire Department continues to seek volunteers to join the department – the Department is in need of more personnel in the Department –

S. Mayor's Comments.

Noted that it had been an interesting past week regarding City of Buhl business – especially regarding federal funding requirements clarifications –

8. ADJOURN:

Motion by Towner to adjourn.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.



James Matthews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk