

MINUTES
BUHL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
BUHL KINNEY SENIOR CENTER
12/2/2025

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

6:01 P.M.

1. CALL TO ORDER by Mayor Matthews at 6:01 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL:

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

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA/COUNCIL ADDITIONS TO AGENDA:

Correction made to Accounts Payable (A/P) Report – typographical error led to accounts payable being adjusted by <\$0.08> - total Accounts Payable for period corrected to \$ 27,789.64; Total Claims for period corrected to \$ 45,540.98.

Add Item 8.I. – Continue to Discuss Minnesota Paid Leave Act -

Consider adding RAMS Dinner notice for continued discussion -

Motion by Loeffler to approve the agenda as amended.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS FROM DEPARTMENT HEADS:

Public Works Foreman Trent Pink:

Responded to questioning from Councilor Kealy regarding attending to sidewalk snow removal in front of downtown area businesses – do we do it?

Yes, we do, but not right away until the roads in the city are completed first –

Suggested that cleaning up these sidewalk areas right away may be a good idea –

Public works will look into this –

Comment and question also raised regarding snow removal at the Public Library -

Engineer John Jamnick:

Noted that a videographed inspection of the condition of the existing ground storage (water) tank was conducted and completed today by Utility Service Co., Inc., with the following observations noted:

In general the structure is in fair shape, however:

- Roof structure is so-so and could use some attention;
- A lot of settlement is present on the bottom of the vessel;
- Sidewalls of the vessel appear to be in OK condition.

An observation and findings report will be forthcoming -

Noted that meetings continue regarding working with the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority (MPFA) and the United States Department of Agriculture – Rural Development (USDA – RD) for the multi-phase water and infrastructure projects being contemplated –

Final plan revisions are anticipated in the next few weeks -

5. CITIZENS FORUM:

None.

6. CONSENT AGENDA:

A. Minutes:

Regular City Council Meeting – November 18, 2025

City Council Budget Working Session – November 13, 2025

Special City Council Meeting – November 10, 2025

B. Claims:

i.	Payroll #24	\$ 15,151.34
	Payroll 11 (November 2025)	\$ 2,600.00
ii.	A/P	<u>\$ 27,789.64</u>
	TOTAL	\$ 45,540.98

Motion by Kealy to approve the Consent Agenda minutes and claims as corrected.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

7. TRUTH-IN-TAXATION PUBLIC HEARING (CONDUCT)

The regular City Council meeting was placed in recess to conduct the Truth-In-Taxation public hearing regarding property tax impacts anticipated in 2026 as a result of the fiscal year 2026 budget process.

The Truth-In-Taxation hearing to obtain input on the City budget, the City levy, and taxes payable in 2026 was convened at 6:13 p.m.

All Councilors were present and a quorum established for this hearing.

Administrator Jeffries gave a staff presentation which included an introductory background on this matter and the efforts and initiatives which have led to the 2026 preliminary proposed budget and levy –

Jeffries noted that the preliminary levy has been set at \$521,000 to cover the shortfalls between anticipated 2026 revenues and associated expenses -

Jeffries also commented that the preliminary tax numbers are based on the original preliminary 2026 budget and will almost certainly decrease or go down in the final budget and associated levy.

It was noted that, after ongoing budget related work, the current working budget levy amount stands at \$446,800 -

Following the staff presentation the City Council was invited to give comment.

It was commented that perhaps the budgeting process should begin earlier in the year, so that when the preliminary budget and levy are presented to St. Louis County (upon which the preliminary property tax burden is based) that there may be a chance to accomplish some budgetary work and potentially reduce the common “sticker shock” associated with basing these estimated property tax burdens on very preliminary budget numbers.

Following council input, public testimony was invited to be received.

No public testimony was received, and it was noted that no written comments were received on the matter as well.

There being no further discussion, the public hearing was closed at 6:21 p.m.

Motion by Kealy to close the public hearing.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously and the public hearing was closed at 6:21 p.m.

The regular City Council meeting was then placed out of recess and continued.

8. BUSINESS:

A. Consider Correspondence from Carmen Seppa Regarding Construction Timelines at Stubler Pit Addition.

Carmen Seppa is a land owner of a property (106 Stubler Drive) at Stubler Beach composed of two (2) parcels of land, who has not, to date, complied with the construction covenants associated with Stubler Beach properties, and is in jeopardy of being required to relinquish that property back to the City.

Ms. Seppa has composed a letter to the City requesting reimbursement of the purchase price (\$ 1,000,000) for the two (2) parcels of land comprising this property.

Ms. Seppa also indicated that she does not have the ability to construct (a) dwelling(s) on this property.

No recommendation is forwarded to the City Council regarding this request.

Motion by Towner to refund the purchase price of parcels 115-0045-00050 and 115-0045-00060 (known as 106 Stubler Drive) to Carmen Seppa in the amount of \$1,000.00 and to begin the process of returning these parcels to the City.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that there is no mention of refunds of any type being available for property purchases in any of the materials, covenants, or restrictions identified as associated with the Stubler Pit zoning district.

Mayor Matthews presented an argument as to the property tax impact on the City from developed, single family dwellings in that district, and suggested that not having these properties developed creates a considerable hardship on the City in the form of lost (ongoing) property tax revenues.

Motion failed unanimously.

B. Consider Authorizing Modifications to Account Names Attached to City of Buhl Credit Card(s) to Reflect Personnel Changes.

The new City Clerk/Treasurer will be onboarding during December 2025.

The City typically authorizes certain individuals to affix their signature(s) to all disbursements of public funds for the City on an annual basis.

Customarily, the City typically authorizes the City Clerk/Treasurer as an account holder of a City of Buhl Business VISA account at Park State Bank, and allows that individual to possess and utilize a City of Buhl VISA credit card in their name.

Associated with that is a requirement for the Clerk/Treasurer to be authorized for the disbursement of public funds.

This latter authorization will be acted on by resolution during the following agenda item.

Recommendation is for the City to authorize the City Clerk/Treasurer as an account holder of the City of Buhl Business VISA account with Park State Bank and receive a VISA card in her name.

Motion by Towner authorizing City Clerk/Treasurer Robecca Jaeger to be an eligible account agent and credit card holder of the City of Buhl Business VISA account with Park State Bank effective December 8, 2025, to issue Robecca Jaeger a VISA card from the same account in her name, to remove Anthony Jeffries from the same effective January 1, 2026, and to authorize Finance Manager Dianna Thronson to make any name changes and/or cancellations to the city credit cards as deemed appropriate.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that this action does not nor will not give any authority to spend or expend monies to the incoming Clerk/Treasurer at this time.

Motion carried unanimously.

C. Consider Resolution 25-45 Authorizing the Signatures for Disbursement of Public Funds.

The City typically authorizes certain individuals to affix their signature(s) to all disbursements of public funds for the City on an annual basis.

Resolution 25-45 has been prepared authorizing the City Clerk/Treasurer to sign disbursements of public funds on behalf of the City for the remainder of 2025 (for all City of Buhl financial holdings and affiliated accounts).

A similar action will be taken for calendar year 2026 in January of that year.

Additionally, this resolution authorizes the Finance Manager to request modifications, changes, or alterations in the identity of authorized signers on City of Buhl financial accounts to include the incoming Clerk/Treasurer on all City financial accounts.

Recommendation is for the City to adopt Resolution 25-45.

Motion by Towner authorizing the Finance Manager to add Robecca Jaeger as eligible to sign disbursements of public funds on behalf of the City for the remainder of calendar year 2025, to amend any required financial institution signature cards to include Ms. Jaeger regarding the same, and to and to execute Resolution 25-45 concerning the same.

Supported by Teska-Erickson.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that (bank) signatory cards need to be changed, that minutes of this action are required in order to effect those signatory changes, and that the minutes supporting this needs to be clear -

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

Motion carried unanimously.

D. Update on Proposed 2026 Preliminary Budget.

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 budgeting process has resulted in a proposed tax levy required of \$446,800, or an increase of 4.27% over the fiscal year 2025 levy.

This amount is subject to change depending upon the outcome of additional budget planning working sessions.

This exercise is scheduled to be finalized by December 16, 2025, with a final levy to be certified by the St. Louis County Auditor by December 26, 2025.

Informational only.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Mayor Matthews reverted back to and discussed a property tax (statement) example - for a Buhl property with an assessed property tax of \$3,462.00 TOTAL on the tax statement, that the City of Buhl's portion of that is \$1,655.00 –

E. Update on Progress of City Clerk/Treasurer Selection Process and Consider Employment Agreement with Incoming City Clerk/Treasurer.

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.

Subsequent to these interview sessions and further deliberation, the City Council decided to extend an offer of employment to Robecca Jaeger.

Ms. Jaeger has accepted the offer of employment, and a tentative start date of December 8, 2025 has been established.

There may be specific areas of the employment arrangement that the City Council may wish to discuss further.

Informational only.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Although this item was included and introduced as an information item, it was commented that these discussions could not take place at an open meeting –

However, it was noted that an offer was made, and the discussion of an employment agreement (contract) was still open and needed to be further discussed –

Determining whether or not an employment agreement would be entertained or utilized is a City Council matter, and appropriately managed under the auspices of a closed meeting session –

The City Council will go into a closed session at the end of the regular order of business of this meeting, and this item will be continued under Other Business –

F. Update on Community Center/Curling Club Door Replacement and Heating System Projects.

The City requested some improvements and repairs for the Community Center/Curling Club recently.

Specifically, a request was made to replace the door separating the lobby area and the arena.

Additionally, it was requested that the heaters on the arena floor and the furnace in the basement be checked out and tuned up.

Mesabi Glass has been contracted to provide the door at an estimated cost of \$2,829.00.

The door is being fabricated at this time and is anticipated to be installed during the month of December.

The heating tune-up project has been sourced to (Troy) Johnson's Heating and Cooling.

No further details regarding the heating project are available at this time, but are anticipated to be attended to in the second week of December 2025.

Informational only.

G. Reminder of Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) Annual Dinner for 2025.

A reminder was issued that 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".

This item, which is voluntary but available for city councilors to attend, has been included on the last several City Council agendas, which appears to serve as adequate public notice of this gathering, of which a number of City Councilors may be present at -

No official business of any kind will be conducted related to the City of Buhl at this event whatsoever.

Motion by Towner to notice that there may likely be a number of City of Buhl City Councilors attending the Range Association of Municipalities and Schools (RAMS) Annual Dinner and Meeting that may normally constitute a quorum of this public body, however that no business of any type regarding or involving the City of Buhl will be considered, undertaken, or discussed at this public function.

Supported by Loeffler.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

It was noted that there will also be no pay associated with any individual's attendance at this function -

Motion carried unanimously.

H. 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.

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

Informational only.

Discussion.

This session will commence at 6:00 p.m. on December 11 in the City Council chambers at Buhl City Hall.

I. Other Business.

1. Family Leave Act.

The Minnesota Paid Leave (Act) 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, and takes effect January 1, 2026.

The costs associated with funding the participation in this program is 0.66% of employee wages, of which a minimum of 0.22% must be covered by the employer, however the employer may elect to cover additional amounts up to 100.0% of the plan premium burden.

Staff has previously recommended that 100% of all paid leave premiums be covered by the City of Buhl for all employees. This was primarily based on the provision being included in the City's collective bargaining agreement (AFSCME Union contract for the Street Department).

It was noted that all city employees, including the City Council, Fire Department, and all seasonal labor engaged by the City are to be eligible and covered.

Staff indicated that the total aggregate premium cost burden for all eligible employees affiliated with the City is estimated at \$2,715.00 for the coming year.

Motion by Kealy directing the City to cover 100.0% of the premium cost burden of the Minnesota Family Leave Act for its eligible employees and agents.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

2. Conduct Closed Session to Discuss City Clerk/Treasurer Employment Agreement Details.

The regular City Council meeting was placed into recess at 6:58 p.m. in order to conduct the above closed session –

The closed session was called to order at 6:50 p.m; all Councilors were present and a quorum was established to conduct business –

The Closed Session was closed at 7:40 p.m. and the regular City Council meeting placed out of recess at that time –

At the end of the closed session the Mayor highlighted that employment terms were discussed but not finalized, and called for a Special City Council Meeting to discuss the specifics of what likely will end up as an employment agreement for the City Clerk/Treasurer –

That Special City Council meeting was proposed to be held at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 11, 2025 in the City Council Chambers in City Hall –

Motion by Kealy to conduct a Special City Council Meeting at 5:30 p.m. on Thursday, December 11, 2025, in the City Council chambers in City Hall, to discuss the specifics of

and approve an Employment Agreement with incoming City Clerk/Treasurer Rebecca Jaeger.

Supported by Towner.

Discussion. Approve/Reject/Table.

Motion carried unanimously.

3. Consider Approving Draft Sewer Lateral Ordinance.

A redline version of the above was distributed to the city council for assimilation and consideration -

It was determined that this item will be placed on the December 16, 2025 City Council agenda for potential action and approval.

J. Councilors' Comments.

Councilor Kealy –

Indicated that it should be a fairly manageable exercise to address the definition of abandoned properties considered and discussed earlier in this meeting -

And indicated that it should be placed on the December 16, 2025 City Council meeting agenda -

Councilor Towner –

Suggested that there should be further discussion regarding the above matter –

Noted that the (annual) Christmas Party will be a collaboration of the City of Buhl Recreational Board and the City of Kinney and Great Scott Township and will be held on Saturday, December 13, 2025 from 1:00 – 3:00 p.m. at the Buhl Kinney Senior Center –

Games, prizes, snacks, beverages, etc. will be available -

Highlighted that carriage rides by Strawberry Fields at the party will be sponsored by The Hydeaway -

Also noted that the Holiday Lighting Tour is also partnering with the City of Kinney, Great Scott Township, and the City of Mt. Iron this year, and will occur on Friday & Saturday, December 12 & 13, from 5:00 – 9:00 p.m. –

Announced that a bus tour is being arranged for this event also -

Councilor Teska-Erickson –

Noted that Fire Department will offer a Drive-By Santa at the Buhl Fire Hall on Thursday, December 18 from 5:30 – 7:00 p.m. and invite all to come and visit Santa and get a Christmas bag of goodies!

K. Mayor's Comments.

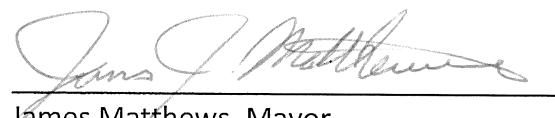
None.

9. ADJOURN:

Motion by Teska-Erickson to adjourn.

Supported by Towner.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.



James Matthews, Mayor

ATTEST:



Tony Jeffries, City Clerk