

THE REGULAR BAKER CITY COUNCIL MEETING WAS HELD WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16, 2023 AT 7:00 P.M. IN THE FALLON COUNTY COURTROOM.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Steve Zachmann, Councilors; Pat Ehret, Tracey Goerndt, Mike Loutzenhiser, Chief of Police; Justin LaCroix, City Attorney; Rich Batterman, Clerk Treasurer; Kevin Dukart.

ABSENT: City Councilor, Brittany Hoversland

GUESTS: Jason Griffith, Brenda Dietz, Rylan Limesand and Josh Stuchl

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Jason Griffith inquired about the Resolution of Intention to cancel the 2023 general Municipal Election. Why was this necessary and he was not aware of which positions are open?

Mayor Zachmann asked for permission to respond which was agreed to. Ward I and Ward II council positions; only 1 person has filed in Ward I so there is no need for an election as the filing deadline to be on the ballot has passed. If no write in candidate comes forward, the city will appoint by acclamation the one candidate and make an appointment from the public for the other open position.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Pat Ehret to approve the Consent Agenda Minutes of the Regular Meeting of August 2, 2023 and the Minutes of the Special Meeting of August 9, 2023 with one correction in the August 2nd minutes referring to the upcoming meeting date. Motion Carried. All Aye.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

Mayor Zachmann as a point of information asked that motions be made in the affirmative as per Roberts Rule of Order.

Motion by Mike Loutzenhiser, second by Pat Ehret to approve Resolution #749, a Resolution of Intention of the City of Baker, Montana to cancel the 2023 General Election for Municipal Offices if no contested election exists. Loutzenhiser, Ehret, Goerndt voted aye. Motion Carried.

Motion by Mike Loutzenhiser, second by Tracey Goerndt to approve the Event and Facilities Use Agreement for Baker Chamber of Commerce to close 1st ST NW on September 30th, lift open container in that area as in the past and street closure from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. Motion Carried. All Aye.

Motion by Mike Loutzenhiser, second by Tracey Goerndt to approve the Event and Facilities Use Agreement for Baker Chamber of Commerce to use Coldwell Field, September 5th through October 14th, 2023 for youth soccer. Motion Carried. All Aye.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Mike Loutzenhiser to allow a 3% increase on the city employee wage scale and to include the City Attorney wage for cost of living for Fiscal Year 2023-2024. Motion Carried. All Aye.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Mike Loutzenhiser to consider the allowance of comp-time for the Director of Public Works position.

Attorney Batterman stated that this generally is not included as this is an exempt salaried position.

Councilor Goerndt asked if the duties are still in the exempt classification?

Mayor Zachmann stated that in the last evaluation of 2022, the duties appear to be in line with administrative and would be exempt. There has been no evaluation completed this year.

Goerndt, Loutzenhiser voted nay, Ehret voted aye. Motion Failed.

Chief of Police LaCroix addressed the council on a request to be awarded an increase to Step 5 in the 17E pay grade. He believes that his past years of service as Sergeant and the definition of years of service warrant this move based on policy, and that other Police Department employees move vertically to those steps upon promotions.

Motion by Mike Loutzenhiser, second by Tracey Goerndt to approve the request to move to Step 5 pay grade 17E for Chief of Police LaCroix.

Mayor Zachmann stated that the Police Policy on promotions in place does not align with the two position's promotions, Senior Patrol and Sergeant. It states and was addressed as all other department promotions which is a negotiation. For the step and the pay scale at this time, Chief LaCroix also lost no longevity as the bonus is still in place and he moves up the steps every two years as all employees do when promoted.

Councilor Goerndt asked if this could be a negotiation for this position?

Clerk Dukart noted that if they allow a negotiation rather than a policy change then that will open negotiations for several other employees who have been promoted in the recent past, which will affect this year's salary budget substantially. All Nay, Motion Failed.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt second by Pat Ehret to approve wage increase for promotions to move to the same step as was achieved in the previous pay grade for current employees.

Councilor Goerndt requested that employees should be made aware of the reason for pay scale and how step and grades are assigned. All Nay, Motion Failed.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Mike Loutzenhiser to add 1 hour per week to Deputy Court Clerk and 2 hours per week for the Court Clerk work schedule.

In discussion with City Judge Straub, it was noted that there could be an hour lunch break included if more hours were allowed. Mayor Zachmann stated that during last year's budget, City Judge salary was increased, there was no recent indication that there was an increase in work load. However, noted there was an increase in work on the Justice Court. The county did approve an increase in hours for that court. All Nay, Motion Failed.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Mike Loutzenhiser to increase the wage for the City Judge position.

Mayor Zachmann stated that the city approved an increase to the City Judge salary until the end of the term. No further increase in office hours were approved. All Nay, Motion Failed.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Mike Loutzenhiser to approve the Preliminary Budget for Fiscal year 2023-2024 as presented.

Motion by Tracey Goerndt, second by Pat Ehret to amend the Preliminary Budget to increase the Parks Department contact labor by \$7,000. All Aye, Amendment Passed. All Aye main motion as amended Motion Carried.

ENGINEER REPORT:

Josh Stuchl of Brosz Engineering gave an update on the Schedule III Project. Diamond J and Century Paving are working on dig outs and paving in areas around the city. They will begin to dig out on 6th Street West this week.

Schedule I, Hard drives, will begin crack sealing on Monday the 21st the scrub and chip seal to follow. Josh stated that they have submitted the Public Notices and the people need to be aware there will be disruptions to access to their streets intermittently during this project.

POLICE DEPT. INPUT:

Justin reported that they are preparing for the fair with extra patrols. Thanked the council for considering his request for a wage increase.

CITY CLERK INPUT:

The July 2023 Financial Reports was available for review.

CITY ATTORNEY INPUT:

Rich thanked the City Council for the cost-of-living increase, his first since he was appointed in 2015.

COUNCIL INPUT:

Ehret – Enjoy the fair and be careful.

Goerndt – Informed Justin that he is very well liked by the public and appreciates the job he does.

Loutzenhiser – Announced he will be out of town next week. Thank you to Chief Justin LaCroix for his service to the community.

The following payroll was approved for payment:

PERD vendor liability \$2,431.55, MPERA vendor liability \$3,782.37, Nationwide Retirement emp w/h \$600.00, Dept. of Treasury IRS emp w/h \$7,681.21, MT Dept. of Revenue emp w/h \$1,453.07, MT State Fund vendor liability \$3,743.45, Direct Deposits: Brenda Dietz \$1,545.73, Larry Donnelly \$1,448.32, Kevin Dukart \$1,700.96, Blayne Higgins \$1,534.39, Justin LaCroix \$2,060.20, Jaramie McLean \$1,437.45, Rodney Morris \$1,919.69, Bryan Nevers \$1,854.81, Kyle Rogge \$2,468.23, Ashley Rost \$826.06, Cody Strandbakke \$1,639.38, Tyler Travis \$1,701.25, Sheena Veazey \$2,038.20.

Total payroll: \$41,866.32

There having been no further business to come before the Baker City Council at this time, Motion by Mike Loutzenhiser, second by Pat Ehret to adjourn at 8:10 p.m. Motion Carried. All Aye.

_____ Mayor _____ Clerk Treasurer