

## **CITY OF BEULAH**

**September 27, 2023, 6:00 pm**

**Beulah City Hall Council Chambers**

### **CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

The regular meeting of the Beulah City Council was called to order at 6:00 pm by Mayor Sean Cheatley with Council Members Eric Hoffer, David Czywczynski, Jason Isaak and Auston Biles present. Gary Miller, Amanda Mohl and Ben Lenzen absent.

Also Present: City Attorney Scott Solem, Economic Dev. Dir. Beaver Brinkman, Water Supt. Gary Bovkoon, City Engineer Charlie Hankins, Police Chief Frank Senn, City Assessor/Planner Heidi Hamelton, City Auditor Heather Ferebee, Chris Renner, Rod Schaper, Bruce Neuberger, Roger Gazur, Joe Fouhy, Cynthia Zahn, Beulah Residents.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Cheatley stated the city has a meeting agenda policy in process and went over some guidelines that will be included. Some items are: Public statements will not be read during the meeting. Statements can be provided ahead of time. Residents can call City Hall to be added to the agenda as long as the topic pertains to city business. Those who speak during public comment will have a time limit.

### **FINAL BUDGET HEARING**

The final budget hearing was opened.

Ferebee stated the expense and revenue budgets for 2024 were provided to the council along with the mill levy and state aid allocations that were approved in the preliminary budget. Changes from the preliminary budget include increases to health insurance, West River Transit, emergency, dilapidated buildings and a decrease to equipment. The General fund is the operating fund. Expenses exceed the revenue in this fund by \$635,000. There is cash in the fund to cover this, but the city is not receiving more revenue so this cash reserve amount will keep decreasing. There is \$200,000 budgeted as a match for the bike path grant that the council should discuss removing from the General fund expenses. Discussion followed on possible cuts.

Hearing was tabled. Hoffer arrived. Hearing was re-opened.

It was questioned if the Rural Fire Department requested a mill levy. Biles recommended removing \$200,000 from the budget for bike paths. City property consulting could be lowered by \$15,000. Discussion followed on the need for a grant match on a comprehensive plan. It was decided to leave the \$15,000 in the budget. Confirmation was received that the Fire Department mill levy does go through the county.

Adam Baker commented that he disagrees that Beulah needs a sixth officer as this is a large expense. He stated that calls for service can be misleading as it doesn't necessarily reflect crime in the area. He stated that current officers can complete their own cases without the city needing an investigator. Baker compared the salary and duties of the Police Chief and the County Sheriff. Baker questioned revenue for the concealed weapon's classes. Senn commented that the concealed weapons classes were done off duty in the past and revenue went to the instructor. He stated the Police Chief testified at the state legislature and Baker questioned if the council approved him testifying. Isaak questioned if other cities approve this. Biles commented if the previous police commissioner sent him there, the council would not have known. Baker suggested in the future the city should find out what the proposed laws are and make the decision.

Bruce Neuberger commented on input from the public being allowed on the agenda. He addressed the increase in property taxes and that the city does not have a balanced budget. He commented that the swimming pool and Police Department are large expenses. He recommended being conscious of the taxpayers as there are people on fixed incomes. He requested the council not approve the budget.

Joe Fouhy commented on the chief wages in other cities and that the Police Chief was always paid more than the county. The county can address the sheriff's wages. He just returned from a conference and there are .3 applicants available for every position in ND now. It is difficult to retain quality employees. The city should not be reactive. Response time takes longer from Mercer County than the Beulah PD. Expecting the county to cover city property is unrealistic, but as a backup to the existing police force works.

Isaak commented on the sixth officer. There have been officers on medical leave. The sixth officer allows the city not to run short on employees. It was requested that the fleet vehicle be removed from the budget as that is a \$30,000 expense.

The expenses would be reduced by \$230,000 for the bike path and fleet vehicle. The library allocation was discussed. The mill levy is budgeted but the \$20,000 allocation was removed. It was questioned if it could be added back in. It was commented that the city is short money, and the library has money in savings. Discussion followed on the possibility of a new library.

Roger Gazur commented that the budget is determined by how the city did business in 2023. The budget should be passed. The city should take a hard look at it next year. Discussion followed on the amount over budget. It was stated that the funds have money in them that can be used. Brinkman commented on the plan to have a capital expenditure plan as a budget tool.

Hoffer moved to approve the 2024 budget with the removal of the \$200,000 for the bike paths and the \$30,000 for the fleet vehicle. Isaak seconded. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Isaak, Biles and Czywczynski in favor.

Cheatley closed the final budget hearing.

## REGULAR MEETING

Czywczynski moved to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the last regular meeting on September 6 and approve as furnished to the Council by email. Biles seconded. Roll call vote found Czywczynski, Biles, Isaak and Hoffer in favor.

## PUBLIC INPUT

Cynthia Zahn – WARC site authorization change for the Nite Owl Bar. The Sports Pool is being added. Hoffer moved to approve the WARC site authorization change for the Nite Owl Bar. Isaak seconded. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Isaak, Biles and Czywczynski in favor.

## COUNCIL PORTFOLIOS

### Council Member Hoffer

AE2S will have the results of the sewer collection study tomorrow and will attend a future council meeting.

### Council Member Biles

Employee Relations: Hoffer moved to approve the addition of the City Department Heads to the Employee Relations Committee as voting members. Isaak seconded. Isaak questioned what brought it up. It was stated that the Department Heads can bring items from employees to the meetings to be discussed. It offers employees more input. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Isaak, Biles and Czywczynski in favor.

## CITY PERSONNEL

### City Auditor

Hoffer moved to approve the August Financial Reports. Biles seconded. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Isaak, Biles and Czywczynski in favor.

Hoffer moved to approve the site authorization for chili bingo for the Beulah CVB at the Beulah Civic Center on November 17, 2023 and the site authorization for the Big Buck Contest for Beulah CVB at the Beulah Civic Center on February 10, 2024. Biles seconded. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Biles, Isaak and Czywczynski in favor.

Hoffer moved to approve the local permit for a calendar raffle for Knife River Pheasants Forever at MAP with drawings to be held the first Monday of each month from January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2024. Biles seconded. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Biles, Isaak and Czywczynski in favor.

Hoffer moved to approve the local permit for a raffle for Operation 11 Memorial Scholarship at the Campbell residence on November 30, 2023. It is a Tyler Schafer fundraiser for scholarships. Biles seconded. Roll call vote found Hoffer, Biles, Isaak and Czywczynski in favor.

City Engineer

Mobile mapping was addressed as a possibility to keep track of street information. It can be included in the current GIS system.

Police Chief

It was suggested that cameras be looked into for security in City Hall and city buildings. An estimate will be obtained.

City Attorney

Isaak moved to have the Second Reading of Ordinance No. 457 to change the council meeting times to the first and third Monday of each month at 6:30 p.m. Biles seconded. Roll call vote found Isaak, Biles, Hoffer and Czywczynski in favor.

Water/Wastewater Superintendent

Two more service line breaks occurred. A dividing tarp was installed at the mine building to prevent freeze-up on the pump truck.

Economic Development Director

Beulah's 2023 membership for Coal County Conversion is due in the amount of \$2,654. CCC provides support and protection for coal mining and power plants by lobbying in Washington DC.

City Assessor/Planner

The Abandoned Auto Program is still working on whether the city can be licensed as a contractor to dispose of a mobile home. The Parkway Drive apartment has two proposals for asbestos removal.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.



Sean Cheatley, Mayor



Heather Ferebee, City Auditor