

Mayor:
David Cates

City Council:
Amber Schoenrock
Carrie Doty
Karla Breeding
Darryl Burditt



City of Conrad
413 S. Main St.
Conrad, MT 59425
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MINUTES OF THE REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF CONRAD, COUNTY OF PONDERA, STATE OF MONTANA
HELD AT CONRAD CITY HALL ON FEBRUARY 3rd, 2026

The City Council of the City of Conrad, County of Pondera, State of Montana, met in regular session at Conrad City Hall on Tuesday, February 3rd, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Cates, Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Alderman Darryl Burditt, Alderman Carrie Doty, Alderman Karla Breeding, Interim Police Chief Andy Lund, Public Works Director Dave Zimbelman, Library Director Tiffany Christensen, City Attorney Daniel Jones, City Clerk Jerad Walston.

Absent: n/a

Guests: Makenzie Kujava, Ella Stokes, Lahren Fowler, Brad Koon, Johnny Hodge, Cindy Hodge, Bryson Hodge, Keaton Hodge, Robert Bender

Teleconference Guests: Administrative Clerk Julie Orcutt

The meeting was called to order by Mayor David Cates at 6:00 p.m.

1. Action: Read and approve minutes of January 20th, 2026, regular council meeting.
 - Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Karla Breeding, to approve the minutes of the January 20th, 2026, regular meeting, as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously
2. Action on any Claims and Payroll:
Claims: 29515-29555
Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Carrie Doty, to approve the claims as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously
3. Action on Water Contracts: None
4. Correspondence: None
5. Public Comment (no action taken): None
6. Department Reports:

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- Police Department
 - Interim Police Chief Andy Lund reported on police activity for January, comparing current activity with numbers from last year (see attached document).
 - Public Works-
 - Public Works Director Dave Zimbelman reported on city crews providing upkeep to city infrastructure and facility maintenance, including sign replacement, street sweeping, refurbishing dumpsters and installing a new sand pump in the water plant (see attached document).
 - Dave further discussed meeting with the North Central Regional Water Authority, stating that they are still evaluating future water needs and contractual obligations. He also provided clarification on the required quantity, reporting the average amount to be 4 million gallons, with the gross amount being 51 million gallons annually.
 - Dave shared highlights from the recent Pondera Canal Company meeting, including water share prices, snowpack and water gains in Lake Francis.
 - In closing, Dave stated that baseline water testing for perfluoro octane sulfonate (PFOS) is due by June 30th to comply with state requirements. Officials are currently reviewing the necessary procedures and costs for these samples, which will be tested by Energy Labs in Helena.
 - Public Library-
 - Library Director Tiffany Christensen provided updates on the library's spring programming, featuring a new novel class for children, a bi-monthly Pokémon Club, and a popular adult yoga workshop that has already generated significant interest.
 - Additionally, the library will hold a special one-time Saturday opening on February 7 from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM in celebration of *Take Your Child to the Library Day*.
 - In closing, Tiffany mentioned that author Chris Latrey will be visiting the Orpheum Theatre on February 11th at 6:00 pm and welcomed all to attend.
7. Discussion/Action: 4-H request to Replace the "Welcome to Conrad" signs at both ends of town.
- Members of the Sand Rockets 4-H Club presented a proposal to replace the existing "Welcome to Conrad" signs with new 4'x8' metal signs featuring local agricultural and organizational emblems, including a changeable section for the Whoop-Up Rodeo.
 - The club plans to fund the project through donations and grants, with an estimated cost between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and secured initial funding of \$500.
 - The group requested the assistance of the Public Works Department in installing and maintaining the new metal signs, since the youth members may not be qualified to do some of the heavier work, which Public Works Director Dave Zimbelman is happy to provide.

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- Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Karla Breeding, to approve the Sand Rockets 4-H Club to Replace the “Welcome to Conrad” signs at both ends of town.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

8. Discussion/Action: Task order to perform 2026 Water System Preliminary Engineering Report (PER).

- Brad Koon proposed a task order to perform a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER) to address issues within the city’s water system, including leaks at the treatment plant and aging transmission lines. The PER would evaluate the entire water system, provide cost estimates for repairs, and analyze the option of connecting to the North Central Regional Water system.
- Brad further discussed the estimated cost for the PER to be \$58,000, which could be partially funded by a \$30,000 grant the city has applied for, in which an award decision is expected within a few weeks. Moving forward with the PER soon is necessary to meet grant application deadlines in May.
- The PER would provide data on water rates and connection costs from North Central, enabling an informed decision between upgrading the current system and connecting it to the regional source. Currently, one filter is down due to leaks, highlighting the urgent need to address the aging infrastructure, some of which date to 1968.
- Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Karla Breeding to approve a Task order to perform 2026 Water System Preliminary Engineering Report (PER), adding that working numbers should also be included in the report.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously
- Brad further discussed the proposed task order for the wastewater system, with the full project estimated at \$2.5 million, aimed at infrastructure improvements such as upgrading gravity mains to eliminate the central lift station.
- Funding is expected to come from a \$125,000 grant combined with a \$1.6 million SRF loan package featuring \$750,000 in loan forgiveness. Working with sub-consultant Morrison-Maierle, the project team has proposed a task order of \$491,700 to cover survey, design, bidding, and construction engineering. This work will be billed on a time and materials basis, ensuring the city is only charged for actual hours and expenses incurred.
- ***(Paused for Open Public Hearing)***
- In closing, Brad reiterated the total project cost of \$2.5 million, which includes \$491,000 for survey, design, and onsite engineering oversight. The team will provide updated construction estimates as the project progresses, offering the flexibility to adjust priorities and remove non-essential items to meet the final budget.

6:30 pm OPEN PUBLIC HEARING-----

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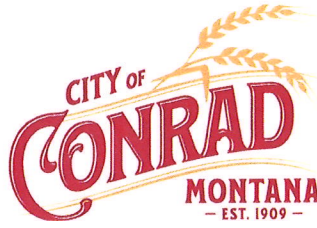
- Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Karla Breeding, to close Regular Meeting.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously
- Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Carrie Doty, to open Public Hearing.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously
- 9. Discussion: Resolution 26-1331 Budgetary Amendment, re: Fireman's Retirement fund.
 - Mayor David Cates explained the budgetary amendment, which aims to correct underfunding of the Fireman's Retirement Fund by transferring \$16,519 to the fund to prevent a repeat finding in the upcoming financial audit.
 - Motion by Alderman Karla Breeding, Second by Alderman Amber Schoenrock to Close Public Hearing and Open Regular Meeting.
 - Motion passed Unanimously

CLOSE PUBLIC HEARING-----

- 9. Discussion/Action: Resolution 26-1331 Budgetary Amendment, re: Fireman's Retirement fund.
 - Motion by Alderman Karla Breeding, Second by Alderman Amber Schoenrock to approve Resolution 26-1331 Budgetary Amendment, re: Fireman's Retirement fund, as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously
- 10. Discussion/Action: Pondera Rec Association's request to use the City Sports Complex for the 2026 baseball/softball and youth soccer season.
 - Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Carrie Doty to approve the Pondera Rec Association's request to use the City Sports Complex for the 2026 baseball/softball and youth soccer season, as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.
- 11. Discussion/Action: Pay increase for Boyd Matheson, for getting his CDL.
 - Public Works Director Dave Zimbelman commented on Boyd Matheson's recent completion of CDL training, resulting in him earning a Class A license and further proving his value as an excellent municipal employee.
 - Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Darryl Burditt, to increase pay for Boyd Matheson to a new wage of \$28.94 effective January 1st.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.
- 12. Discussion/Action: Resolution 26-1332 Sale of Surplus Property: 2016 Police Interceptor.

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- Motion by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Karla Breeding, to approve Resolution 26-1332 Sale of Surplus Property: 2016 Police Interceptor, as presented.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously.

13. Discussion/Action: Hire police officer, John Hodge.

- Mayor David Cates introduced John Hodge as a new police officer who successfully passed his recent Police Commission review and requested a formal motion for his hiring.
- Motion by Alderman Carrie Doty, Second by Alderman Darryl Burditt, to Hire police officer, John Hodge.
 - Motion Carried Unanimously

14. Executive Session (not needed):

- City Attorney Daniel Jones advised that because the potential litigation involves two public bodies, the city cannot enter a closed executive session and must discuss the matter in an open meeting.

15. Discussion: Cascade County Bill

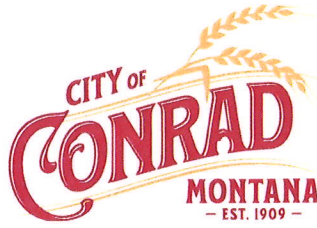
- City Attorney Daniel Jones explained that the dispute stems from a claim by the Cascade County Attorney's office, which alleges a contract exists based on the conduct of the former Chief of Police. However, the city's legal counsel and external advisors from the Montana League of Cities and Towns suggest there is no legal obligation to pay the invoice and that the claim itself may potentially be illegal.
- The council discussed the possibility of a "nuisance payment" to avoid litigation but ultimately decided against immediate action. Members expressed concern that paying would set a risky precedent for other agencies and noted that city manpower likely saved the county money during the incident in question.
- Attorney Jones will contact the Cascade County Attorney to gauge their next steps, and the council plans to table the issue for further discussion at the next meeting once more information is available.

16. Other Business:

- The city has received their portion of the Combined Fund, \$1208 for the pool and \$925 for the Splash Park.
- The mayor commented on inquiries regarding the Genevieve Rieken Trust, stating that applications could be sent to him directly via email until the end of the month.
- Mayor David Cates reported that he is coordinating with PCI, Stockman, and the Leavitt Group to secure worker's compensation insurance for June, noting that quotes will be finalized in April once rates are set.

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- Mayor David Cates reported that the city received a quote for the necessary recodification of the City Code and recommended budgeting the \$9,000-\$12,000 expense for July.

17. Items to Appear on the Next Agenda:

- Further discussion regarding Operation Landfill Claim.

There being no further business to come before the Council,

18. Motion by Alderman Carrie Doty, Second by Alderman Amber Schoenrock, to adjourn the meeting at 7:12 pm.

- Motion Carried Unanimously

A blue ink signature of David Cates, consisting of a stylized 'D' and 'C'.

Mayor, David Cates

A black ink signature of Amber Schoenrock, written in a cursive style.

Attest: _____
Council President, Amber Schoenrock

