



**REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL**  
**OF THE CITY OF CONRAD, COUNTY OF PONDERA, STATE OF MONTANA**  
**HELD AT CONRAD CITY HALL ON August 20, 2024**

The City Council of the City of Conrad, County of Pondera, State of Montana, met in regular session at Conrad City Hall on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Cates, Alderman Amber Schoenrock, Alderman Karla Breeding, Alderman Carrie Doty, Public Works Director David Zimbelman (by phone), MLCT Municipal Accountant Jodi Rogers, Billing Clerk Kim Cooney

Absent: None

Guests: Cody Shaw, Donna Beninger, Darryl Burditt, Jeremy Ranger,

Teleconference Guests: Wendy Judisch

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

Action: Read and Approve Minutes of the August 13, 2024 Rescheduled Regular Meeting and August 15, 2024 Budget Meeting. (Postponed until September 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting).

Action on Claims & Payroll:

Claims #s 28334 - 28345 (refer to the claims register/claims approval list):

- Motion by Alderman Breeding, Second by Alderman Schoenrock, to approve the claims, as presented
  - Motion Carried Unanimously

Water Contracts: None

Correspondence:

Public Comment: (no action taken) Agenda Items and/or Not on Agenda Items

Mr. Burditt asked for the council's position on holding all court appointments at the courthouse, rather than at both the courthouse and City Hall, to alleviate confusion. Mayor Cates and Judge Shaw have been mulling this over. Discussion on how the current situation originated, why it's still in effect, and potential solutions.

Discussion/Action: Cops for Kids request for fee waiver for sports complex for the annual Guns and Hoses Charity Softball game.

The game will be held at 4:00 p.m. September 8, 2024. The fee is normally around \$30.



- Motion by Alderman Breeding, Second by Alderman Doty, to approve Cops for Kids' request for fee waiver for sports complex use for the annual Guns and Hoses Charity Softball game
  - Motion carried unanimously

Discussion/Action: City Judge Contract

The term would remain at 2 years with the clause stipulating that either party could terminate the contract with 30 days written notice at least 30 days prior to the end date. Termination would also occur if the JOP left office before the term ended. A new contract would need to be drawn up for a new JOP.

- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Breeding, to enter into an interlocal agreement with the sitting JOP Cody Shaw, for a term of 2 years, effective July 1, 2024 through June 30, 2026, with compensation of \$1250 per month for the current JOP, and \$600 per month for the current City Court Clerk, to be drawn up in contract form by the City Attorney, and signed by Judge Shaw and the County Commissioners
  - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion/Action: Turn over delinquent water, sewer and weed mowing charges to the county for tax assessment.

- Motion by Alderman Breeding, Second by Alderman Doty, to approve turning over the list of delinquent water, sewer and weed mowing charges to the county for tax assessment
  - Motion Carried Unanimously

Discussion/Action: 6:30 p.m. Open Public hearing on FY 2024/2025 City Budget

- Motion by Alderman Breeding, Second by Alderman Schoenrock to close the regular meeting
  - Motion Carried Unanimously.
- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Doty, to open Public Hearing on Fiscal Year 24/25 City of Conrad Budget
  - Motion Carried Unanimously

There was lengthy discussion between Council and Ms. Rogers to clarify questions on the FY 24/25 City of Conrad Budget.

Pool utilities increased due to inclusion of the Splash Park.

The Fire Hall has "set-aside" money in 940 to be used for a new fire truck down the road.

The Library Board of Directors approved the Library budget, and all improvements will come out of the 900 Fund at no cost to the City.

Discussion about purchased service versus professional services.



The contract with MT Ag LLC provides revenue each month to the Industrial Park fund. There is no interest loan money available for future Industrial Park needs.

The City pays maintenance costs to the Canal Company which provides annual water shares to the City from Lake Frances. Price per share is predicted to increase by 0.75 this year.

Both the Audit and Montana League of Cities and Towns (Ms. Rogers) are under contract.

FY24/25 mills came to 135.4 based on last year, using this year's 2.8% COLA. That's about a \$10 increase in taxes for every \$100K of home value. Of the 135.4 mills this year, 85.5 mills will go to the General Fund, 16.2 mills to comprehensive insurance, 15 mills to PERS, etc. The Permissive Levy will be about 15 mills, but is not part of the 135.4 mills since it's a voted levy.

Legal services are all for the City Attorney and are expected to continue going down.

Discussion about the former DARE program and the value of having regular police presence in the schools.

Ms. Rogers confirmed that Council may do a budget amendment as needed, as long as funds are available.

Discussion on municipal government accounting. The City has a very conservative budget. A maximum of 50% of reserves can be kept and the City has 48%. At the end of the year, there should be \$1million. This is how the mills are set, and the reserves are replenished each year. This will change with the Splash Park and the other big projects coming up.

Director Zimbelman said he's trying to stay ahead of equipment repairs and replacement. He needs a new garbage truck.

Wendy Judisch noted that Public Works' revenue and expenditures were only \$10K apart last year. She commended Director Zimbelman and others for being fiscally conservative and for saving, but expressed concern that there's no room to save now.

Director Zimbelman said the sewer project is starting August 29<sup>th</sup> and was paid directly out of CIP. The City is also getting a new sewer plant. Ms. Roger said \$15K per year goes toward paying off the sewer plant and she encouraged council to pay it off early. Ms. Judisch suggested using set-aside money toward paying it off. Ms. Rogers said without raising rates, there's not a lot of room. Water rates are good, but sewer and garbage rates need to be increased.

Mr. Burditt asked if the City was looking at a budget increase this year over last. Ms. Rogers said the maximum is 2.8% (which is the COLA) without going to a voted levy, but it didn't go up that much.

Executive Session: None

Other Business: None



Items to Appear on Next/Future Agenda:

- 1) Final Budget
  - 2) Budget Resolutions
  - 3) Appointment of new Alderman
- Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Breeding to re-open the regular meeting.
    - Motion Carried Unanimously

Meeting Adjourned

The Mayor stated that the public hearing on the FY24/25 Budget will remain open until September 3<sup>rd</sup>, and there are copies of the proposed budget available for review at City Hall and on the website. He encouraged people to look over the budget before the September meeting.

There being no further business to come before the Council, Motion by Alderman Schoenrock, Second by Alderman Doty, to adjourn the meeting at 7:44 p.m.

- Motion Carried Unanimously

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

Mayor, David Cates

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

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Council President, Amber Schoenrock