

CUT BANK CITY COUNCIL  
March 18, 2024  
6:30 P.M. – CITY HALL & ZOOM

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM & AT CITY HALL

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Winchell called the meeting of the Cut Bank City Council to order at 6:30 PM, Monday, March 18, 2024. The following persons answered roll call: Mayor Winchell, Councilpersons, Maynard Nygaard, Doug Vermulm, Kacie Fey, and John Reynolds. Also present were City Superintendent James Suta, Deputy City Attorney Whitney Bugni, Building Inspector Yeagley, Police Chief Schultz, Payroll Clerk Schultz, and Clerk-Treasurer Burley. All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

VISITORS:

Vern Thomas, Patty Thomas, Justin Perry, Sherry Yeagley

ABSENT: None

Mayor Winchell addressed the Council concerning some questions that were raised at the end of the last meeting. She researched the answers to assure the Council that procedure had been followed. There are no resolutions on the policy of hiring department heads. The Charter states that the Council shall approve all department heads appointed by the Mayor. She also stated that in the time of Robert Smith's resignation, there was never a time when the City was not covered by legal representation. Deputy Attorney Bugni was in service the entire time.

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

**CONSENT AGENDA: Councilperson Fey moved to approve the claims through March 15, 2024, for \$44,109.74, including warrants 61994-62031, the minutes from the March 4, 2024, meeting, payroll from March 14, 2024, for \$98,538.96. Councilperson Nygaard seconded the motion. A vote was called, and motion carried 4-0.**

## DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS:

Police Chief Schultz reported that the animal shelter adopted three dogs the previous week, just leaving one dog at the shelter. The Marketplace on Main has agreed to let the animal control bring dogs to the building during events. Since December, Animal Control has adopted 15 dogs out.

Building Inspector Yeagley presented his report. Inspector Yeagley had nothing to add to his written report.

Clerk-Treasurer Burley reported that the Council Packets were on the City's website. Councilperson Fey liked this idea. Burley stated that if any of council members had anything they would like on the website to let her know. Clerk-Treasurer Burley also stated that she put recent water pipe breaks on the website and the public saw it.

OLD BUSINESS: None

NEW BUSINESS:

**Councilperson Fey moved to approve Draws #7 for \$12,671.50 and draw #5, for \$4,195.00, for the water tank project. Councilperson Nygaard seconded.**

There was some discussion about when the Draws would be finished. Clerk-Treasurer Burley stated that they were almost done. The discussion also included what we were going to do with the old water tower. Next year we can apply for funding if the City would like to tear it down. There is no reason that we must take it down. We can use it as a reserve source of water. There is no certification to keep water in there. The Verizon antennas are changed over to the new water tower.

**A vote was called, and the Motion carried with all in favor.**

**Councilperson Reynolds made a motion to approve promoting Whitney Bugni to City Attorney. Councilperson Vermulm seconded. All were in favor.**

**Councilperson Fey made a motion to approve Donni Schultz to Clerk-Treasurer. Councilperson Nygaard seconded it.** The issue was then opened to discussion. Councilperson Fey stated that the position should be opened to the public. The Mayor stated that the policy is that the mayor appoints, and the city council approves. Department heads have been promoted from within the department in the past. The Mayor also stated that we do not have the luxury of time because Clerk-Treasurer Burley is retiring at the end of April. She also stated that the council is not involved in the hiring process. Mayor Winchell stated if the council wanted to change the way things are done, then the council must propose a resolution and vote on it so it can become policy.

Councilperson Vermulm stated that they have a responsibility to the citizens to make sure the candidate for a department head is qualified for the position. The council also questioned why this appointment happened so late. They stated that the current City Clerk Treasurer knew for a long time she was retiring. The council stated that they knew nothing of the current candidate's qualifications.

Payroll Clerk Schultz then took the floor and told everyone what her qualifications are. Some of the qualifications she stated are listed below.

- Double Major in Psychology and Social Work.
- Was a Job coach trainer that helped people gain job skills to get quality jobs. While doing this she had to make sure the store ran correctly. She knew every job in the store.
- Was the youngest person to be promoted to Assistant Manager. She was promoted in 3 years where it usually takes ten years plus to get the promotion. Donni brought the store to the company's standards.
- stayed home for 12 years to raise her children. Budgeted personal finances so that her family could live on a single income.
- Was hired at the school. Had 2 weeks training but learned the computer system well so people that had been there a lot longer were asking her how to do stuff.
- Has done an excellent job at payroll for the City. There have not been mistakes with the employees' paychecks. She has also learned many of the clerk/treasurer's responsibilities. She can learn quickly and accurately. Donni has great customer service skills, and work ethic.

**Public Comment:**

Patty Thomas of 20<sup>th</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> St SW stated that at the beginning of the meeting that the Mayor wanted to rubber stamp with no knowledge. The Council should have been given the information to begin with.

Justin Perry of 408 Mountain View Blvd. voiced his concern about the rumor that there is a conflict of interest and suggested that the Council should try to squash the rumor.

**A call to vote on the approval of the appointment of Donni Schultz to City Clerk Treasurer was brought before the Council. Motion passed 4-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE: Cory Sandon will have a contract to be the next Building Inspector. Jim Yeagley is retiring soon. Cory Sandon has a residential certification.

WORK SESSION: Councilperson Fey asked if there was any other issue that would be on the ballot with the Local Government Review question. Councilperson Fey was concerned that the City would be spending a lot of money on only that one issue. She stated that it would be nice if could put a few issues on the ballot to save the City money. City Attorney Bugni will investigate whether we can delay the election to wait for another issue.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Mayor Winchell reported that the Chamber of Commerce is setting aside money for business assistance. The Chamber's annual banquet is coming up.

Police Chief Schultz told the Council that the Port Authority approved the grant proposal Brian Simons. He wants to rebrand his business and is looking for a new logo.

City Superintendent Suta attended the Sports Complex Board meeting. The sports complex committee has decided that every team that plays at the sports complex must pay \$2,000. Previously, teams all paid different amounts to play.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Council, **Mayor Winchell adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM.** The next regular meeting is scheduled for April 1, 2024, at 6:30 PM.

Attest:

Approve:

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Linda Burley, Clerk-Treasurer

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Kimberly Winchell, Mayor