

CUT BANK CITY COUNCIL
SEPTEMBER 5, 2023
6:30 P.M. – CITY HALL & ZOOM

THIS MEETING WAS HELD VIA ZOOM & AT CITY HALL

PUBLIC HEARING FOR BUDGET 2023-2024

Mayor Winchell addressed the Council and the public before the meeting was called to order. She explained that there were errors in the way the budget was presented at the last meeting so she would be presenting the preliminary budget again at this meeting. The final budget will be approved at a special meeting to be held on Thursday, September 7, 2023, at 6:30 PM. She explained the changes that were made between the original presentation and tonight's presentation. Changes made were in the legislative and legal accounts.

City Attorney Smith called the public meeting to order at 6:41 PM. He explained that the purpose of the public hearing was to hear the public's comments and questions about the preliminary budget. City Clerk Linda Burley was sworn in. She stated that she had advertised the public hearing in two consecutive weeks in the Pioneer Press and she had received an affidavit of publication as proof. She also stated that she had not received any comment, either in person or in writing, on the budget.

Public comment was called for by City Attorney Smith.

Tom Shock, 22 2nd Street SW, stated that the City has less taxable income now than when he sat on the Council for 12 years. When he ran for Mayor, he was willing to take \$1,000 less for the position. He urged the Council to not give the raise to the Mayor. He said that we are a small community, and we do not need more than a 20 hour a month Mayor. Mr. Shock also feels that if we hired a paralegal secretary, he/she could help the Mayor, Attorney, City Clerk and Superintendent. Mr. Shock stated that with the high water and sewer bills we already pay, we

cannot afford to give the Mayor a raise. He believes that money should go into the water and sewer but not the Mayor's salary and with the lower amount of money coming into Cut Bank we need to spend wisely.

Mayor Winchell pointed out that funds from the enterprise funds, water and sewer, are not the funds that pay for the Mayor's salary. And in twenty hours a week a Mayor has time to check emails, sign checks, return emails, and phone calls. It leaves no time for department head support, personnel issues or other issues that take more time.

Michael Schultz, 301 3rd Street SW, stated that Cut Bank's best commodity is our people. It is important to value our people. They are well worth the money spent. Even though these offices are public service, he would not do it for the 1999 wage. It is due to Council failure in the past that the Council and Mayor have not had a raise in 23 years. Getting a decent wage for doing the job does not undermine the public service. He also stated that we are quibbling over a mere \$5500.

Tim Curtiss stated that they worked through to a compromise at the last meeting and he is happy with that. He recalled that Tom Shock, while on the City Council, was the only member voting against a wage decrease.

Vernon Thomas, 40 4th Street SW, stated that he has talked to several people who were on the Council long before the current members and they told him that the Mayor job was a twenty hour a week job. He does not know where the twenty hours a month came from, but it is wrong.

Gary Quenzer, 48 4th Avenue NW, asked where the surplus is coming from that we can add these items to the budget. It was explained that we have a budgeted cash reserve each year. This is the cash it takes to run the City from the time the budget is approved until the first tax check is received from the County. This reserve is lessened by the amount we added to the budget for these items.

Justin Perry, 408 Mountain View Blvd, asked if with the new property valuations, we would be getting more in tax money. It was explained that the valuations went up and because of that, the mill value went up as well. The City is allowed to get a slight increase for cost of living, but

because the value of the mill increased, the number of mills we are allowed to levy went way down. We will be receiving about \$25,000 additional dollars this year over last year.

After asking for further public comment and receiving none, City Attorney Smith adjourned the public hearing at 7:06 PM.

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Kim Winchell called the meeting of the Cut Bank City Council to order at 6:30 PM, Monday, September 5, 2023. The following persons answered roll call: Mayor Winchell, Councilpersons Tim Curtiss, Kacie Fey, and John Reynolds. Also present were City Superintendent James Suta, Building Inspector Jim Yeagley, City Attorney Smith, Police Chief Schultz, and Clerk Treasurer Burley. All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

VISITORS: Vernon Thomas, Tom Shock, Lee Shock, and Gary Quenzer

ABSENT: Doug Vermulm

PUBLIC COMMENT: None

CLAIMS: Councilperson Fey moved to approve the claims through August 31, 2023, for \$71,136.79 warrants 61469-61479. Councilperson Curtiss seconded the motion. A vote was called, and motion carried 3-0.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Councilperson Curtiss moved to approve the August 21, 2023, minutes, the payroll from August 31, 2023, for \$96,455.14. Councilperson Fey seconded the motion. Motion carried 3-0.

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORTS:

Superintendent Suta Councilperson Reynolds moved to accept the City Superintendent's report and Councilperson Fey seconded the motion. Superintendent Suta commended his crew for doing a good job taking care of business while he was on vacation. They are doing chip sealing this week. Vernon Thomas, 40 4th Street SW, asked why 4th Street was covered up but not chip sealed. Superintendent Suta told him they ran out of oil. He also stated that he has a lot of experience in chip sealing and paving and has never seen such a thick layer of chips as we have. He asked why we use so many chips. Superintendent Suta told him that MC oil and MC requires a thicker chip than does emulsified oil. A thick layer of chips also helps keep the oil from getting on cars and feet. Councilperson Curtiss inquired as to whether the new street sweeper is being used to pick up the chips after chip sealing. Superintendent Suta explained that it is being used. We do not have another way to pick the chips up. We could pile them in small piles with other equipment, but they would still need to be picked up. When asked if there is another alternative, Superintendent Suta replied that this was the only option. Gary Quenzer asked if we could not keep the old street sweepers once a new one is purchased, with the plan to use it for this purpose. Superintendent Suta stated that is the plan, but the last sweep was purchased in 2007 and did not have much left in it. **Motion carried 3-0.**

Councilperson Fey moved to accept the City Attorney's report and Councilperson Curtiss seconded the motion. City Attorney Smith reported that there was a problem with the plumbing at the Police Station over the weekend and they spent two days cleaning it up. He commended Jim for sending two crew members down to fix the problem. **Motion carried 3-0.**

OLD BUSINESS: **None**

NEW BUSINESS:

Councilperson Curtiss moved to approved Resolution 23-09, the Preliminary 2023-2024 budget. Councilperson Fey seconded the motion. Public comment was called for and Tom Shock, 22 2nd Street SW, restated his opposition to giving the Mayor a raise. A vote with intention was called and the following were the votes:

- Councilperson Reynolds voted in favor of the Resolution stating that he agrees with Chief Schultz's statement that \$5,500 is not unreasonable.
- Councilperson Curtiss voted in favor stating he was happy with the budget that was hashed out already.
- Councilperson Fey voted in favor saying that \$5,500 will not break the City and she believes that the Mayor puts in countless hours and energy into her work. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Councilperson Curtiss moved to approved Resolution 23-10, the Intent to Levy Mills for Street Lighting District - 2023-2024 budget. Councilperson Reynolds seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

Councilperson Curtiss moved to approved Resolution 23-11, the Intent to Levy Mills for Street Maintenance Districts 1-4 - 2023-2024 budget. Councilperson Fey seconded the motion. Public Comment was opened. Tom Shock, 22 2nd Street SW, asked why there is no increase in the Streets Assessments this year with the prices of oil going up so much. Superintendent Suta explained that due to no equipment being available from Tri-City Interlocal, there were 3 years where no chip sealing was done. For this reason, they are catching up and it was not necessary to raise rates yet. **Motion passed 3-0.**

Councilperson Fey moved to approved Resolution 23-12, the Intent to Levy Mills for Voted Law Enforcement Levy - 2023-2024 budget. Councilperson Reynolds seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

Councilperson Fey moved to approved Resolution 23-13, the Intent to Levy Mills for Permissive Health Levy - 2023-2024 budget. Councilperson Curtiss seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-0.

Councilperson Fey moved to approved Resolution 23-19, the Intent to Levy Mills for Park Maintenance District - 2023-2024 budget. Councilperson Reynolds seconded the motion. Public comment was called for. Gary Quenzer, 48 4th Avenue NW, asked if this was for improvements to our City Parks? He asked if the drainage problem at Bud Park has even been addressed. Superintendent Suta told him that due to it being on Burlington Northern property, there is nothing that can be done. **Motion passed 3-0.**

CORRESPONDENCE: None

WORK SESSION: None

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Mayor Winchell reported that today's Chamber of Commerce meeting was cancelled.

City Superintendent Suta reported that he attended the Northern Montana Regional Water Authority meeting via phone. It was business as usual.

Reminder to the Council of the special meeting this Thursday, September 7, 2023, at 6:30 PM at City Hall. We will be approving the final budgets only.

EXECUTIVE REPORT: Mayor Winchell met with Senator Testor's Aide. They discussed the RAISE grant. This may be a funding option for sidewalks along Railway. We should include the need for sidewalks in the growth policy.

Tom Shock, 22 2nd Street SW, stated that there are bad sidewalks all over town.

Superintendent Suta believes that the engineering for the sidewalks along Railway has already been done. The State of Montana partnered with us for a TIGER grant and the engineering was already completed. The work is scheduled to be done in 2027.

Mayor Winchell is working with a County Commissioner on a memorandum of understanding for the County Island. She will continue to work on it and expects to go in front of the Commissioners making a formal request soon.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to come before the Council, **Mayor Winchell adjourned the meeting at 7:09 PM.** The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 7, 2023, at 6:30 PM.

Attest:

Approve:

Linda Burley, Clerk-Treasurer

Kim Winchell, Mayor