

Bronson City Council

Minutes

Regular Meeting

June 12, 2023

City Hall- 141 S. Matteson Street, Bronson MI 49028

5:00 pm

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting called to order at 5:00 PM

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present: Mayor Matt Watkins, Vice Mayor Bill Earl, Councilmember Bill Rinehart, Councilmember Larry McConn, and Councilmember Rick Johannes

Staff Present: City Manager Brandon Mersman, City Attorney Charles Lillis, Clerk/Treasurer Tricia Rzepka, Supervisor Joe Swain, Water/Wastewater Jerry Rinehart, Chief of Police Steve Johnson, Deputy Chief Frank Barker, Fellowship Patrick Bird, and Fire Chief Scot Wilbur

Public Present: John and Billie Pollack, COA Amy Duff, Mark Brinksneider, Janell Dixon, and Cassandra Kerry

3. Public Comments

Public comments shall be limited to 3 minutes for items not listed on the agenda.

Sheriff John Pollack spoke of the new jail and it is being used as an example going forward regarding how well the collaboration of efforts was implemented. Pollack stated that they are waiting on a grant to tear down the old jail and are hoping if they are able to get the grant, they will be able to get their evidence barn they are needing. Pollack addressed the incident that took place in Quincy that caused a sheriff officer to discharge their weapon, injuring a Coldwater officer, stating that it was very chaotic and they are working with Coldwater to take care of this issue. Pollack continued, going over the statistics of calls and stated that marine patrol is in full force.

4. Presentations – Commission on Aging

Amy Duff, with the Commission on Aging, explained the different programs that are offered through COA, also known as Burnside Center. Amy discussed their food program for those over 60 for \$3 per meal and those under 60 for \$7 per meal. It was also stated that home delivery is available for those who are over 60 and are home bound. COA has volunteer drivers for this delivery that only receive mileage for their efforts. Amy stated that they are looking for drivers for anyone who might be interested in volunteering their time. Other programs discussed were the medical loan closet for items such as walkers and canes. The chore project to assist with leaf/snow removal and medical transport. In home services for home making and personal care. Technology classes, exercise, wood shop, billiards, kinship care, and discounts at the aquatic center are also offered through the Commission on Aging.

5. Consent Agenda

A. Approval of Minutes- May 8, 2023 Regular Meeting Minutes; May 8, 2023 Closed Session Minutes

B. Acceptance of Monthly Reports- Police, DPW, Utilities Report, Fire Department Report

C. Approval of monthly bills in the amount of \$135,035.73

D. Affirm the prepayment of bills in the amount of \$25,862.73

E. Approval of City's Investments

F. Approve Bronson Polish Festival Requests

Mayor Watkins questioned if the extra cost of the police vehicle shown, would be the last expenses for that vehicle.

City Manager Mersman confirmed that it would be.

Motion to approve consent agenda made by Councilmember Bill Rinehart with support from

Councilmember Bill Earl
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

6. New Business

- A. Public Hearing- Resolution to Establish a Plant Rehabilitation District (Resolution #23- 6-5)
Motion to open public hearing at 5:16 PM made by Councilmember Larry McConn with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried
City Manager Mersman stated that this would be a tax incentive for up to 12 years.
Motion to close public hearing at 5:17 PM made by Councilmember Rick Johannes with support from Councilmember Bill Rinehart.
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried
- B. Approval of Resolution to Establish a Plant Rehabilitation District (Resolution #23-6-5)
Motion to approve Resolution #23-6-5 made by Councilmember Larry McConn with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried
- C. Approve 2023 Fiscal Year Amended Budget (Resolution #23-6-6)
City Manager Brandon Mersman explained to the council that a deficit of \$286,979 was anticipated, but the actual deficit will be less than \$56,000.
Motion to approve the 2023 Fiscal Year Amended Budget (Resolution #23-6-6) made by Councilmember Rick Johannes with support from Councilmember Bill Rinehart
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried
- D. Public Hearing: 2024 Fiscal Year Budget & Millage Rates
Discussion of the 2024 Fiscal Year Budget and Millage Rates took place, as Mayor Matt Watkins questioned the increase in DPW and Parks by \$82,000?
City Manager Mersman explained that the change in the amount is to more accurately reflect where the staff is spending their time and is not the increase for a new employee. There was confusion in the amount of the increase, but it was explained that although the cost to DPW and Parks shows increased, other areas were decreased dependent on the time staff was spending with those tasks. It was also discussed that part of the increase in departments would also be attributed to the increase of wages due to a raise in existing wages.
Mayor Matt Watkins questioned Motor Pool and what those funds consist of?
City Manager Mersman explained that is staff uses a truck, the hourly rate of that truck is paid to Motor Pool. In return, those funds assist to repair/replace equipment.
Motion to open public hearing at 5:35 PM made by Councilmember Rick Johannes with support from Councilmember Bill Earl.
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried
City Manager Brandon Mersman explained that the proposed 2024 fiscal year budget is being proposed with a projected deficit of \$433,036
Motion to close public hearing at 5:36 PM made by Councilmember Rick Johannes with support from Councilmember Larry McConn.
5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried
- E. Adoption of 2024 Fiscal Year Budget & Millage Rates (Resolution #23-6-7)
Motion to adopt 2024 Fiscal Year Budget & Millage Rates (Resolution #23-6-7) made by Councilmember Larry McConn with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.
4 ayes/1 nay Motion Carried
- F. Urban Chicken Discussion
City Manager Brandon Mersman discussed that it was previously discussed to see if there could be an

ordinance drafted to allow chickens and whether an entity could be found to enforce this ordinance. Both Brandon and the City Attorney Charles Lillis feel that this would be more appropriate as an animal ordinance rather than a zoning ordinance.

SAFEbuilt was contacted to see if they would be willing to do the enforcement for the ordinance, but they stated they would only be willing to do this if they were contracted for all code enforcement. Councilmember Larry McConn questioned without a third party, who would do the enforcement? Councilmember Bill Earl suggested that they continue to look for third party enforcement. He was hoping SAFEbuilt would do this.

Mayor Matt Watkins expressed his concern with being down an officer and having no idea of what the ordinance would look like. Watkins expressed his concern of additional issues that may arise with this. Both Councilmembers Bill Rinehart and Bill Earl would like to see this tabled and continue to search for a third party enforcement.

Public, Cassandra Kerry, questioned what Coldwater does to allow this?

Councilmember Bill Earl stated that Coldwater has a designated officer for enforcement.

Public Janelle Dixon thanked the council for allowing them to have a voice for this issue, as she felt the public was not previously included. Janelle also suggested checking to see how Bristol, IN was moving forward with theirs.

G. Sale of Industrial Avenue Property to Branch County Industrial Park, LLC

City Manager Brandon Mersman informed the council that this agreement has been finalized and is ready for the council's approval. The agreement does state that if there is no development after 6 years, the property would be returned to the City.

Mayor Matt Watkins questioned if this agreement was separate from existing agreements that are already in place?

City Manager Brandon Mersman did confirm that this is separate.

Motion for approve the sale of Industrial Avenue Property to Branch County Industrial Park, LLC made by Councilmember Bill Earl with support from Councilmember Bill Rinehart.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

H. Adoption of Surplus Property Policy

City Manager Brandon Mersman stated that the City of Bronson does not currently have a policy in place and feels that this would give staff direction and clarity of how the council would formally like these situations handled.

Mayor Matt Watkins questioned if there had been issues in the past?

City Manager Brandon Mersman indicated that he wanted to be proactive before there were any issues.

Motion to approve the adoption of Surplus Property Policy made by Councilmember Bill Earl with support from Councilmember Bill Rinehart.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

I. Disposition of 2016 Police Tahoe

City Manager Brandon Mersman stated that repairs have been made in the amount of \$5,695.04 and the vehicle is ready to be sold via an online auction, as the council members indicated they wanted.

Councilmember Larry McConn stated that while this vehicle does need to be out of service, the next one, he felt needed to go to Chief of Police Steve Johnson and this doesn't necessarily set a precedence.

Motion to approve the disposition of the 2016 Police Tahoe made by Councilmember Rick Johannes with support from Councilmember Bill Earl

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

J. Streetlight Resolutions

City Manager Brandon Mersman presented information to the council letting them know that

Consumers Energy is willing to relocate a street light to W. Railroad Street. The cost of this would be

\$100 to remove and \$100 to install for a total of \$200.

Councilmember Bill Earl questioned if the light would be LED?

City Manager Brandon Mersman will have to check to see.

Motion to approve Resolution 23-6-8 made by Councilmember Bill Earl with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.

5 ayes/ 0 nays Motion Carried

Motion to approve Resolution 23-6-9 made by Councilmember Bill Earl with support from Councilmember Bill Rinehart.

5 ayes/ 0 nays Motion Carried

K. Police Ammo Purchase

City Manager Brandon Mersman explained that the quote provided from Kiesler Police Supply includes pricing from the MI Deal to ensure that the City of Bronson is getting State of Michigan pricing for ammo for our police department.

Motion to approve the purchase of police ammo from Kiesler Police Supply in the amount of \$3,107.44 made by Councilmember Bill Rinehart with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

L. Approve Short Term Aid Agreement with CBPU

City Manager Brandon Mersman stated that he has received an agreement from the Coldwater Board of Public Utilities for short term aid. Both Mersman and Attorney Lillis have reviewed the contract and feel that it is fair to both parties. The agreement is for an individual to aid in day to day activities for the wastewater treatment plant for 8 hours per week.

Mayor Matt Watkins questioned how training/licensing was going?

Water/Wastewater Jerry Rinehart stated that he just received his water license, but wastewater will be more difficult.

Mayor Watkins questioned what was being paid to CBPU for the assistance?

City Manager Brandon Mersman stated that the City of Bronson would be responsible for wages to include fringe benefits.

Motion to approve the short term aid agreement with CBPU made by Councilmember Larry McConn with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

7. City Staff Comments

Police Chief Steve Johnson thanked the council and staff for their support, stating that it has been very much appreciated with the shortage of police officers. Johnson also stated that if there are any issues, to feel free to bring them to him, as he cannot work on something that he is not aware of.

Fire Chief Scot Wilbur announced that there will be a fire meeting tomorrow. Chief Wilbur informed the council that he is already receiving very good comments regarding the satellite office and that he is pleased to see how the community is willing to donate to this project.

8. City Manager Comments

City Manager Brandon Mersman introduced Patrick Bird stating that he is helping with a number of projects, including looking at cemetery rates, as they have not been updated in quite some time. Mersman also informed the council that the bond anticipation note has closed and the funds have been received from Century Bank and Trust, as they were the lowest interest rate.

9. Council Comments

Councilmember Rick Johannes stated that Joe is doing a great job, congratulated Scot on the satellite location, expressed to Steve that he is doing a great job in spite of being shorthanded, and informed Brandon that he was doing a good job.

Councilmember Larry McConn congratulated the staff on the budget, congratulated Jerry on receiving his water license, and informed Joe that the guys are doing a great job.

Councilmember Bill Rinehart informed Brandon that he has been doing a great job especially with everything going on over the last few months, thanked Steve and Scot for all of their hard work, and thanked the DPW and Water/Wastewater department for their hard work.

Councilmember Bill Earl welcomed Patrick aboard and stated that he looked forward to working with him, informed Scot that he hopes there is something planned to thank the community for the donations with the satellite location, congratulated Jerry on his water license, informed Joe he was doing a good job, and thanked Brandon for all of his hard work.

Mayor Matt Watkins thanked everyone for their hard work.

Motion to go into closed session made by Council Member Bill Rinehart with support from Council Member Rick Johannes.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

Closed Session at 6:15 PM

10. Closed Session: City Manager Annual Review (MCL 15.268(a))

11. Closed Session: Discussion of the Purchase, Sale, or Lease of Real Property (PA 267 of 1976 15.268 Sec. 8 (d))

Closed Session Ended at 7:15 PM

Motion to provide City Manager Brandon Mersman with an excellent review and a raise of 8% made by Council Member Larry McConn with support from Council Member Bill Rinehart.

3 ayes/2 nays Motion Carried

12. Adjourn

Motion to adjourn made by Council Member Larry McConn with support from Council Member Bill Rinehart.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

Adjourned at 7:17 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tricia Rzepka
Clerk/Treasurer
City of Bronson