

Bronson City Council Minutes

Regular Meeting

April 8, 2024

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

5:00 pm

1. Call to Order & Pledge of Allegiance

Meeting called to order at 5:00PM

2. Roll Call

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

Council Members Absent: None

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

Public Present: Michael Roth, Fred Blankenship, Robin Schwartz, Karen Bell

2. Public Comments

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

Robin Schwartz introduced herself stating that she was running for Branch County Sheriff. She has over 37 years of experience 29 years of which was with the sheriff's office. Robin retired as Sergeant, has field training experience, and also worked as an EMT and dispatch operator. Robin feels this qualifies her for the position of sheriff and would appreciate your vote for her.

Fred Blankenship is also running for Sheriff of Branch County. Fred grew up in the area and has been a Captain for 29 years. Fred received his bachelors degree and overseas a \$3.1 million dollar jail budget. He is endorsed by the current and previous sheriff and believes in training and transparency. Fred too, would appreciate your vote for him.

Karen Bell thanked City Manager Brandon Mersman for the Facebook posts that were made to inform residents of when the cleanup would be. She feels what is on the gravestone should be left alone.

Mayor Matt Watkins stated they would have a conversation to reevaluate if it is on the stone if it should be left alone, as well as what is on the ground.

Karen stated families don't always live close and can't get back to retrieve those items

Council member Larry McConn stated not everyone is as responsible as Karen.

Karen then stated that she would be willing to help and be on a committee.

Michael Roth spoke at public comment stating that he wanted to alert the council regarding predators, moving into the area, particularly from one house to another and on Ruggles Street stating that two of the five living there are child predators.

Mayor Matt Watkins suggested following up with the chief of police and allowing him to look into the situation.

3. Consent Agenda

- A. Approval of Minutes- Regular Meeting Minutes March 11, 2024; Special Meeting Minutes March 25, 2024,
- B. Acceptance of Monthly Reports- Police, DPW, Utilities Report
- C. Approval of monthly bills in the amount of \$64,065.18
- D. Affirm the prepayment of bills in the amount of \$114,497.18
- E. Approval of City's Investments

Motion to approve consent agenda made by Councilmember Bill Rinehart with support by Vice Mayor Bill Earl.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

4. New Business

- A. Approve FY-24-25 Council Goals

City Manager Brandon Mersman presented to the council the approval of the fiscal year 24–25 council goals as part of the annual budget process. Staff updates the council goals for the coming fiscal year. Some items have been adjusted to reflect recent work on the trail, grants, and updating the master plan and zoning code. It has also been changed to reflect the city moving forward with the state revolving loan fund for fiscal year 2024 to address inflow and infiltration.

Motion to approve made by Councilmember Larry McConn with support from Council member Bill Earl.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

- B. Approve Amendment to Purchase Agreement- Cronkhite Vault

City manager, Brandon Mersman presented to approve the amendment to per purchase agreement for Cronkite vault. The purchase agreement with Cronkite vault needs to be amended to provide the additional land for them to be completely out of the Consumers Energy easement the survey and legals were updated to include roughly 40 feet of additional width and 150 feet of depth. This needs to be approved before the project can go to the planning commission later this month.

Motion to approve made by Councilmember Bill Rinehart with support from Councilmember Rick Johannes.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

- C. Marijuana Ordinance Discussion

City Manager Brandon Mersman presented the marijuana ordinance discussion stating that during the previous meeting the topic of allowing marijuana was briefly discussed as it is related to increasing revenue for the city. Brandon has been asked to add this to the agenda for a more in-depth discussion and to discuss holding another public hearing on the matter.

Mayor Matt Watkins question whether additional employees would be needed to help with background checks and what the additional funds would be utilized for?

City Manager Mersman reached out to Coldwater, Quincy, and Union City and found that in general their annual fees went toward their general fund, special purchases sidewalk and additional police coverage.

Mayor Matt Watkins suggested learning more and to get a proper info out to the community.

Discussion took place regarding if/the number of locations that would fall within 200 feet from the church and whether or not some locations would be available in town.

Councilmember Rick Johannes stated that he was interested in learning more about it.

Mayor Matt Watkins suggested to look and see what locations would allow for this.

Vice mayor Bill Earl questioned if the zoning commission could help this.

Councilmember Rick Johannes asked Robin Schwartz for her opinion on this in the community.

Robin Schwartz stated that Coldwater was running pretty smoothly. Indiana is also looking to legalize and Ohio recently passed it. She questioned whether or not the multiple stores that were located in Branch County would continue to thrive.

General consensus was to continue to look into this and get additional information that could be reviewed by the council.

D. Approve Farm Land Lease

City Manager Brandon Mersman presented to the council the approval of farmland lease bids that were received. They were open on April 5, 2024 for bids on an agricultural lease for the farmland commonly referred to as the cemetery farmland. This parcel had been set aside for future cemetery expansion with the community voting to sell the land. Five acres is planned for development of an assisted living facility with remaining 16 1/2 acres free to lease. The city received two bids, one bid from Joe Swain at the price per acre of \$115 per acre for a total of \$1897.50 , a second bid was received from Darren Wolf at \$125 per acre for a total of \$2062.50. Discussion took place as to why the additional 5 acres were not being leased? City Manager Brandon Mersman stated that plans are coming soon for what those 5 acres would be used for.

Motion to approve the bid received from Darren Wolf made by Vice Mayor Bill Earl with support from Councilmember Larry McConn.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

5. City Staff Comments

Police Chief Steve Johnson stated that we made it through the eclipse. The weather is starting to warm up and school has approximately six weeks remaining.

DPW Manager Joe Swain stated that we are now under 50 meters to be replaced. He has been met with some aggression being told to get off some properties, but they are moving forward. Summer help will include four individuals to assist with the park and painting.

Water and Wastewater Supervisor Jerry Rinehart stated that they are running off of well five. Well number four is shut off and will be having the bacteria test on Friday and Saturday.

6. City Manager Comments

City Manager Brandon Mersman stated that the SRLF is progressing and construction would begin in 2025. Brandon also informed the council that Joe chose to keep the old bucket truck for summer help so it frees up the new truck to be utilized by full-time staff.

7. Council Comments

Vice Mayor Bill Earl questioned if that truck could be locked out for safety purposes for the seasonal help?

Joe Swain felt that he could have it locked out for their safety.

City Manager Brandon Mersman also brought up to the council that because of Fourth of July being on a Thursday he questioned if it would be too inconvenient to allow staff to utilize personal time and also have July 5 off ?

Consensus from the council would be that that would work for staff to use vacation/personal time for this.

Council member Rick Johannes thanked Robin and wished her luck, stated to Patrick that he has done a great job on grants. Jerry and Adam are making a lot of progress and Steve has done a great job with the police department.

Council member Larry McConn stated there was a nice article in the paper regarding Steve and the new building and it did not receive any negative comments. Larry wished Robin Schwartz. good luck. Kudos were given to Joe Swain with the meters and the bucket truck. He also thanked Brandon to do his due diligence on providing the council with the necessary information to make good decisions, he thanked Patrick for his help with grants and Tricia for her assistance behind the scenes.

Councilmember Bill Rinehart thanked Robin and Mr. Blankenship for attending the meeting and thanked staff for their hard work.

Vice Mayor Bill Earl also thanked Mr. Blankenship and Robin Schwartz for attending. He appreciated the assistance from Patrick and Brandon for all they do, and from Steve for the open house and all the additional work. Bill also thanked Tricia for her work behind the scenes.

Mayor Matt Watkins expressed his thanks to all staff members for everything they do.

8. Adjourn

Motion made by Vice Mayor Bill Earl to adjourn the meeting with support from council member Bill Rinehart.

5 ayes/0 nays Motion Carried

Meeting adjourned at 5:57 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Tricia Rzepka
City of Bronson
Clerk/Treasurer