**BINGEN CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

**January 3, 2023**

**Meeting Via Teleconference and In-Person**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Catherine Kiewit at 7:00 p.m.

Council members present: Phil Jones, Ryan O’Connor, Joe O’Sullivan, Izzy Schroder, and Brittany Spratt.

Staff present: City Administrator Krista Loney, City Attorney Christopher R Lanz., Fire Chief Carl Spratt, Police Chief Mike Hepner

Audience Present: Eric Schroder, Jacob Bertram

**Public Comment**

Eric Schroder was unable to attend the community planning event in October of 2022 and wanted to share his thoughts about zoning in Bingen. He stated that Bingen is a mix of heavy industrial, small business, railways and highways. He stated that the density in Bingen is between low and medium and that the City Planner should come up with a figure. He stated that he sees governments making big, bold decisions – such as Canada ruling that non-Canadians are not allowed to buy homes in Canada – and that these decisions aren’t good or bad. He suggests that Council review the Bingen Municipal Code line-by-line to lower the cost of housing. His suggestions include allowing small businesses to add apartments above them and to look for inconsistencies in the current building code.

**Meeting Minutes – 12/20/22**

There were four corrections under the Vision paragraph on the first page:

1. Remove the 0 typo in Houseless
2. Change regional to region
3. Change disproportionately to disproportionate
4. Correct achievne to achieve.

Councilor O’Connor made a motion to approve the December 20, 2022 meeting minutes with corrections. Councilor Jones provided the second and the motion carried.

**Bingen Fire Update**

Fire Chief Carl Spratt provided the December 2022 fire report as well as a 10 year summary of the increase in calls. The Bingen Fire Department (BFD) responded to 285 calls in 2022. This is a straight line increase from 2021 and Chief Spratt stated that this upward trend is being observed in every local jurisdiction.

Councilor O’Connor asked if the high response rate is due to an increased number of fire fighters. Chief Spratt stated that the number of fire fighters fluctuates.

Councilor O’Sullivan asked if the increased calls are in one service category. Chief Spratt stated that the increased calls are across all categories.

Mayor Kiewit asked if the BFD is currently 18 members. Chief Spratt stated that the number will be 21 once Fire Board meets next week and that there are a few members “on the edges” that might not continue. Mayor Kiewit followed up with a question about fire fighter enrollment, which Chief answered has not escalated.

Mayor Kiewit asked about finding balance and avoiding burnout and how the BFD handles these issues. Chief Spratt stated that the BFD team self-regulates and that they always have the option to not answer a call. He stated that they enjoy coming to training and using their training on calls.

Mayor Kiewit asked about future needs for the BFD. Chief Spratt stated that the BFD did not get the grant from FEMA for self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), and that those and radios are a high need. In the next 5-10 years BFD will need a new fire truck. Chief Spratt stated that he hopes to be more proactive with getting grant funding.

Chief Spratt stated that five members of the BFD begin EMT training on January 4, 2023. This will supplement the local ambulance service.

Mayor Kiewit asked if the BFD monthly report is provided to other local jurisdictions and was told that it is not. She followed up by asking about mutual aid to Bingen from other jurisdictions and was told that Bingen does receive mutual aid.

**Police Update**

Bingen-White Salmon Police Chief Mike Hepner stated that there was only one fireworks call on New Years Eve and that it was a quiet night. 39 of the 121 December calls were from Bingen. There was 1 warrant arrest and one motor vehicle crash. The total number of calls from Bingen and White Salmon for 2022 was 1297, up from 1289 in 2021.

**Resolution 2023-001**

Administrator Loney provided a memo explaining Resolution 2023-001 and the resolution itself. Per the terms of the Collective Bargaining Agreement in place between the City of Bingen and Local 701 of the International Union of Operating Engineers, City of Bingen employees are due a 5% increase on January 1, 2023. Council noticed that the resolution draft states “non-union represented employees.” It was clarified that the language in this resolution has been the same for years. The resolution was corrected to read “A resolution of the City of Bingen Establishing 2023 Salary Schedule for Employees.” Councilor Jones made a motion to approve the resolution with identified changes. Councilor O’Connor provided the second and the motion carried.

**Salary Survey Report and Recommendations**

Administrator Loney provided a salary survey report for City of Bingen employees that provides context for Bingen salaries, salaries in similarly-sized cities, salaries in the Columbia River Gorge on the Washington side, and salaries for Hood River and The Dalles. Loney recommends that the salary steps remain the same and the step ranges are expanded. She asked council to give this report a thorough read and some thought and to revisit in February, stating that a change of this type will need to be approved by the Union. Mayor Kiewit suggested working with Gray and Osborne to pull salary information for treatment plant employees in similarly-sized cities to Bingen/White Salmon. She also suggested reviewing the lower end of the pay steps.

**2023 Committees**

Mayor Kiewit presented the 2023 committee appointments to Council. These are the same as 2022. Councilor Schroder asked to be removed from the Huckleberry Festival Committee and added to the Centennial committee. Councilor Jones stepped down from the Centennial committee to allow for the change. Councilor Spratt was added as the Representative to the Huckleberry Festival Committee. Administrator Loney will make the changes to the appointment sheet and update the City of Bingen website with the new committees.

**Staff Reports**

Administrator Loney presented the following updates:

* City Hall had the annual fire inspection today and is due for UL testing.
* Animal license renewals went out last week and Animal Officer Solomon will continue to attend council meetings quarterly for an update.
* Public Works noticed some grease in the sewers lately so we are going to reach out to all restaurants in Bingen about grease traps. This will be a joint effort with Skamania County Building.
* We are still working to get the Everybody’s Brewing agreement finalized. Hopefully it will be presented at the next Council meeting.
* Bingen is sending in two requests on behalf of the BFD: $100,000 to DNR for operations and a letter of inquiry to the Hicks Family Foundation, a private foundation out of Goldendale.
* Bingen should hear by the end of January whether we got the Parks and Recreation planning grant from Washington State Recreation and Conservation District.
* Packets with the three lodging tax grant applications will be handed out at the end of the meeting, please review and plan to vote at the next meeting.

**Mayor’s Update**

Mayor Kiewit presented the following updates:

* She will be attending a meeting next week with FEMA about floodplain mapping. FEMA made a lot of changes to what is in the floodplain and she has quite a few questions.
* Bridge replacement meetings are happening. Things have been quiet because of the holidays.
* The lights that were repaired on Maple now don’t turn off at all.

**Council Comments**

Councilor Schroder stated that the banners look fantastic. She asked Council if they had seen the article in Gorge News about The Society Hotel’s variance application being denied. She had the following statement for the record: “I was quoted and..um… it is implied that I believed Mr. Cohen’s congregate housing was the only true design to offer solutions for our housing shortage. In fact, I do not agree that his design is the solution. I thought his architectural plan was really pretty…um. and his house was nice and that was pretty much about it. So I just wanted to go on the record to say that I don’t believe he provided a good plan for the city and our problem with…um…housing shortages.”

**Voucher Approval**

Payroll Checks 23492-43494 (Dated 12/30/2022) and Payroll EFT (Dated 12/30/2022) totaling $32,361.47; General Fund - $12,898.42, Street Fund - $5,243.70, Water Fund - $3,633.83, Sewer Fund - $673.23, and Treatment Plant Fund - $9,912.29.

Councilor O’Connor made a motion to approve the Payroll dated December 30, 2022. Councilor O’Sullivan provided the second and it passed unanimously.

Claims Checks 23495-23514 (Dated 12/30/2022) totaling $40,914.78; General Fund - $11,830.52, Street Fund - $1,651.31, Hotel/Motel Tax Fund - $4,079.52, Water Fund - $18,370.07, Sewer Fund - $3,310.75, and Treatment Plant Fund - $1,672.61.

Councilor Schroder made a motion to approve the Claims dated December 30, 2022. Councilor Jones seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Claims Checks 23515-23518 (Dated 1/3/2023) totaling $21,916.06; General Fund - $21,916.06.

Councilor Jones made a motion to approve the Claims dated January 3, 2023. Councilor O’Connor provided the second and it passed unanimously.

**Adjournment**

Mayor Kiewit closed the meeting at 8:21 p.m.