**BINGEN CITY COUNCIL MINUTES**

**December 19, 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, Izzy Schroder, Brittany Spratt and Michael Stahl. Staff present: City Attorney Chris Lanz, City Administrator Krista Loney. Audience present: Ashley Emery, Dan McDonald, Craig Trummel.

**Public Comment**

None.

**Meeting Minutes – 12/5/2023**

Councilor Jones made a motion to approve the December 5, 2023 meeting minutes as presented. Councilor O’Connor provided the second and the motion carried.

**Water and Sewer Rate Study Presentation**

Ashley Emery from Peninsula Financial Consulting attended the meeting to present the results of the Water and Sewer Rate Study. Emery’s suggested changes include:

* Reducing the gallons of flow for one ERU from 8,500 to 5,000
* Raise water rates 10% for 2024, 10% for 2025, and drop to 3% for 2026.
* Increase sewer ERUs from $15.50 to $16.40 per ERU.
* Maintain sewer rates at $59.00 per month
* Revise the agreement with White Salmon specific to treatment plant improvements/acquiring debt to represent projected capacity, not current capacity

Emery has a bit more work to do with the model and will convene with the Water and Sewer Committee after the new year.

**Public Hearing – Ordinance 2023-16-749 Amending BMC 13.24.030**

Mayor Kiewit opened the public hearing at 7:50 p.m. Administrator Loney provided a memo to Council explaining that Ordinance 2020-02-707 set an automatic increase to sewer rates at 5%, rounded to the nearest dollar. Ordinance 2023-16-749 would stop this increase and maintain sewer base rates at $59 per month for 2024. There was no public comment.

Mayor Kiewit closed the public hearing at 7:53 p.m. Councilor Schroder made a motion to adopt Ordinance 2023-16-749 Amending BMC 13.24.030. Councilor Spratt provided the second and the motion carried.

**City of White Salmon Interlocal Agreement for Treatment Plant ERUs**

Administrator Loney provided a memo to Council explaining that this Interlocal Agreement is completed every year with the update ERU rate, that the rate of $16.40 per ERU from Ashley Emery’s presentation was included here, and that the historical increase of $0.25 per ERU per year did not keep up with cost of living.

Councilor Jones made a motion to approve the Interlocal Agreement between Bingen and White Salmon for Treatment Plant ERUs. Councilor Spratt provided the second and the motion carried.

**Gray and Osborne Contract for East Steuben Waterline Section 1 Engineering**

Administrator Loney provided a memo to Council explaining that this scope of work is one contract with two projects. The two projects are design and engineering only for Section 1 of the East Steuben waterline (funded by Bingen’s Public Works Board loan/grant) and design and engineering only of a crossing under SR-14 (funded by WSDOT).

Councilor Jones made a motion to authorize Mayor Kiewit to sign the contract with Gray and Osborne for the East Steuben Waterline Section 1 project. Councilor Schroder provided the second and the motion carried.

**City Attorney Compensation**

Administrator Loney requested that Council add this item to review compensation for City Attorney Chris Lanz. The most recent contract with Lanz is from 2019 and the associated rates are $110 per hour for criminal matters and $132 per hour for civil matters. Administrator Loney suggested an increase to $165 per hour and that criminal and civil matters do not need to be billed separately. Loney conducted an informal survey of local municipalities and the compensation provided to their respective attorneys and found that rate increase is absolutely necessary to retain Chris Lanz.

Councilor Schroder made a motion to approve the new rate of $165 per hour for Chris Lanz’s work as Bingen’s City Attorney. Councilor Stahl provided the second and the motion carried.

**November 2023 Treasurers Report**

Administrator Loney provided the Treasurers Report coversheet and explained that there was a transaction in October that cleared for $3.03 less than was in Bingen’s books. This was corrected in November with a credit from the bank. Loney was aware of this and should have separated the transaction into two transactions to align with the bank statements. She will do so in the future.

The November 2023 Treasurers report looks as it should. Councilor Jones made a motion to approve the November 2023 Treasurers Report. Councilor Spratt provided the second and the motion carried.

**Staff Updates**

Administrator Loney reviewed the project status reports for the month.

**Mayor’s Update and Council Comments**

Mayor Kiewit shared that she and Administrator Loney met with the leadership of McKenzie River. The Hood River-White Salmon Bridge Authority is nearing a final decision on awarding the bridge contract. The bridge construction will require housing for approximately 150 people for several months at a time during construction. Doug Gibson is Bingen’s representative on the Bridge Authority and Mayor Kiewit hopes to get him to give an update at a January 2024 Council meeting.

Councilor Schroder shared that the most recent Centennial Committee meeting was December 15 and progress is being made. A social media campaign has begun, the banners have arrived and will be installed in January, and there will be Centennial event advertisements in Gorge Magazine and on PDX pipeline.

As this was Councilor Schroder’s last meeting, the group shared kind words about her work. Councilor Schroder stated that attending meetings has been very fun and that her one wish is to have the councilor who takes her seat change the meetings to 6 p.m. to benefit themselves and their families. Mayor Kiewit shared that she has known Izzy for a long time and that Izzy has been a great asset to Council. Kiewit stated that she is honored to work with Izzy and that she is very professional, that she has always been impressed with Izzy’s poise, and that she is glad Izzy was on Council. Mayor Kiewit presented Councilor Schroder with a certificate of recognition and a tree will be planted in her honor. Schroder stated that she believes that everyone needs a chance to sit on council, contribute to the community, and have a voice. It’s too important for one person to have too much power and that change comes with new perspective.

Councilor Spratt shared that the 15-minute parking and handicapped parking signage that was installed in front of the WAGAP building was installed in reverse and needs to be changed. Administrator Loney will ask Bingen Public Works to fix this immediately.

Councilor Stahl shared that crosswalk lights on SR-141 are barely flashing. Administrator Loney will ask Bingen Public Works to fix this right away.

Councilor O’Connor shared that he has really appreciated Bell Design’s process on the West Steuben Waterline project and he looks forward to continued progress.

**Voucher Approval**

Payroll Checks (Dated 12/15/2023) and Payroll EFT (Dated 12/15/2023) totaling $31,583; General Fund - $10,056.33, Street Fund - $4,471.22, Water Fund - $2,657.74, Sewer Fund - $806.68, and Treatment Plant Fund - $13,591.03.

Councilor Schroder made a motion to approve the Payroll dated December 15, 2023. Councilor O’Connor seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Claims Checks (Dated 12/19/2023) totaling $76,662.95; General Fund - $45,946.27, Street Fund - $256.36, Water Fund - $8,409.91, Sewer Fund - $6,971.95, Treatment Plant Fund - $3,225.91, and Water Capital Reserve Fund - $11,852.55

Councilor Spratt made a motion to approve the Claims dated December 19, 2023. Councilor Jones seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

**Adjournment**

Mayor Kiewit adjourned the meeting at 8:45 p.m.