

REGULAR MEETING OF THE BUCHANAN CITY COMMISSION
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2023 – 7:00 PM
CHAMBER OF BUCHANAN CITY HALL - 302 N REDBUD TRAIL, BUCHANAN MI

MINUTES

THE COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF BUCHANAN, in compliance with Michigan’s Open Meetings Act, hereby gives notice of a regular meeting of the Buchanan City Commission to be held in the Chamber of City Hall.

** Requests to be added to the agenda as a “Scheduled Matter from the Floor” should be submitted in writing to the City Clerk at least 5 business days prior to the scheduled meeting during which the speaker wishes to appear, and the approval of such requests remain within the discretion of the Mayor. If denied, the speaker may nonetheless speak during the “non-agenda items only” public comments section of the agenda.*

** Those who are unable to appear during a meeting but who still wish to share public comment may submit such comments in written form to the City Clerk at least 4 hours in advance of the meeting.*

** Individuals with disabilities may request necessary reasonable accommodations by submitting requests to the City Clerk, preferably at least 24 hours in advance.*

** Written requests and comments may be submitted to the City Clerk either in person or via mail to Buchanan City Hall, 302 N. Redbud Trail, Buchanan, MI 49107, or via email to clerk@cityofbuchanan.com*

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Denison at 7:01pm.

II. Recognition

Denison asks everyone to join in a moment of silence to honor the memory of Jason Leitz who passed away Sept 18th. Jason was the chair of our Planning Commission and had served since March of 1988. With over 25 years of service, his knowledge and contributions will be irreplaceable.

III. Pledge of Allegiance

Denison led in the pledge of allegiance.

IV. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Sean Denison Mayor Pro Temp Mark Weedon, Commissioner Dan Vigansky, Commissioner Patrick Swem.

Absent: None.

City Staff: City Manager, Benjamin Eldridge; City Clerk, Kalla Langston; Community Development Director, Rich Murphy; Assistant Community Development Director, Ashley Regal.

V. Approve Agenda

Motion made by Weedon, supported by Vigansky to approve the agenda. Roll call vote carries unanimously.

VI. Public Comment - Agenda Items Only *(3-minute limit)*

Stan: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Rich Paniagua: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Jim Evans: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Unnamed man from New Zealand: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Kyle Zelmer: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave. Horizon Realty Group has agreed to help with this real estate transaction pro bono.

Jill Bateman: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Jeanie Harris: Comments concerning Commissioner Vigansky joining BARB.

Unnamed: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Dean: In favor of Lise Gustavsen purchase of 123 Days Ave.

Denison mentions that there are 9 letters in support of Lise that are on the table at the entrance for anyone who wants to read them.

VII. Consent Agenda *(can be approved all in one motion, for general housekeeping items)*

A. Minutes- *Consider approving regular meeting minutes from September 11, 2023.*

B. B.A.R.B- *Consider appointing Commissioner Vigansky to the B.A.R.B in place of Mayor Pro Tem Weedon.*

C. Expenditures- *Consider approving the General Expenditures for September 25, 2023, in the amount of \$90,078.41.*

D. *Excuse Commissioner Dan Vigansky from the September 11, 2023, Regular Meeting.*

Motion made by Vigansky, supported by Denison to approve the consent agenda, as presented.

Yay: Vigansky, Money, Denison

Nay: Swem, Weedon

Motion carries 3-2

VIII. Scheduled Matters from the Floor *(if any)*

IX. Reports by: Departments, Committees, Boards

A. Community Development Report- *Community Development Director/ Zoning Administrator, Rich Murphy & Assistant Community Development Director/Mainstreet Manager, Ashley Regal*

1) Consider approving the sale of 123 Days Ave- *The City Commission held a public hearing on October 10, 2022, to hear public comments on the sale of 123 Days Ave. The community development department proceeded to create an RFP for 123 Days Ave., and two proposals were submitted. The RFP review committee made the recommendation to proceed with Lise Gustavsen's proposal. Community Development Department and Lisa will present to the commission the proposal for consideration of approval for the sale of 123 Days Ave.*

Murphy acknowledges the steps it took to get here. Over the summer at the commission's direction, they created and released the RFP for Days Ave. The goal was to land an exciting business development opportunity, job creator, and ultimately reinvigorate the core of Days Ave. They released the RFP and received two proposals which the review committee voted on and unanimously chose Lises. Murphy worked with Lise to craft the proposal in more detail including renderings and operations information as directed. They are here tonight to ask for approval for the sale of 123 Days Ave.

Motion made by Weedon, supported by Money to approve the sale of 123 Days Ave. to Lise Gustavsen. Roll call vote carries unanimously.

2) Consider Thrill on the Hill Investment & 2024 Thrill on the Hill Date.

Regal brings this before the Commission to decide what direction they want to go. Since they last spoke, she gathered 6-10 quotes on the higher tech solutions for the slides and got 3 responses

back. The lowest was \$170,000, taking 3 weeks to install, four guys, and was not a temporary solution. Regal says it doesn't seem like a very viable option. The highest was over \$1 million. Reinvesting in the current system with DPW makes sense. Either we build our temporary slide or postpone the event for this year. Either way the commission will have to meet with the Thrill on the Hill Committee and talk through expectations. If it's held the same way we've had it in the past, on Front St hill using the adjacent parking lot, that leaves one available date to work with the property owner.

DPW gave an estimate of \$13,500 to rebuild it and get sand. This hard quote is only good for 30 days and everything is fluctuating.

Regal says she has not begun working on fundraising since they have not decided which direction they want to go. She will say that last year they had a full-time staff member that dedicated 300 hours to sponsorship, which brought in over \$16,000 and that wouldn't be the case this year.

Weedon acknowledges how difficult this will be for the community but if we sacrifice it for a year, we can ensure we're stronger and more prepared in the future instead of pushing this because it was something we always did. It's one of the most exciting and dynamic events and the amount of effort they put in this year cannot be undermined by this decision because it was second to none. He looks forward to the next one, but it must pause for a moment.

Vigansky comments this was the first year the books were done correctly. He doesn't hate Thrill on the Hill; it has been a wonderful marketing tool for the City of Buchanan. There is no pleasure in making the motion to postpone Thrill on the Hill to 2024 but continues.

Motion made by Vigansky, supported by Weedon to postpone Thrill on the Hill 2024. Roll call vote carries unanimously.

3) Consider Resolution 2023.09/25- *A resolution to approve the MNRTF Grant Application for the Kayak Launch Project.*

Murphy presents a redo of a resolution that was approved March 27th. State grant cycles start with the application submission in April, in September, they give us a preliminary score, and then we try to those flip points into more points to get into higher echelons of funding. In this case we have several points to flip over. One we can flip is by saying 26% instead of 25% on the resolution which gives 15 points and sets the grant application for a higher score. On the matching point, he reiterates what was said in March, his goal is to fundraise the matching portion through local foundations – perhaps AEP and others. We have a year to do this. If we don't pledge these resolutions, we cannot apply for grants. This resolution is a 1% amendment to increase our grant score.

Motion made by Swem, supported by Weedon to approve Resolution 2023.09/25, a resolution to approve the MNRTF Grant Application for the Kayak Launch Project. Roll call vote carries unanimously.

X. Unfinished Business

XI. New Business

A. Schedule of Fees- *Consider approving the updated schedule of fees.*

Langston notes that the first schedule of fees in the packet had the City Center Rental fee wrong but that was corrected and updated. Vigansky comments we were going to revisit the food truck permit. Langston clarifies that is done by resolution and she usually brings it back up in February.

Motion made by Weedon, supported by Vigansky to approve the schedule of fees. Roll call vote carries unanimously.

XII. Communications *(informational only, formal board action is not necessary for these items, unless so desired)*

None.

XIII. Public Comment - Non-Agenda Items Only *(3-minute limit)*

James Busby: I want to thank Rich for all his hard work on the Victory Park Pavilion Project, I want to thank Ben for meeting and listening to their concerns and wants to thank Mr. Baker for his hard work repairing the sidewalk. Concerns about the ongoing civil rights investigation against Mr. Vigansky. Asked the other Commissioners where they stand on Commissioner Vigansky's behavior.

Jim Cronin: Concerns about the DPW overtime in fall and winter months.

Norma Ferris: introduces another project, the Friends of Oak Ridge Cemetery have received information that we might be able to get our pumper fire intendant back in Buchanan. We are working on it and have a committee. The truck will need a home along with other things.

XIV. Executive Comments

A. City Manager Comments

Eldridge readdresses Cronin's comments and explains they are trying to streamline City services. Overtime is not a right; it is a privilege. If we need 1 or 2 hours of overtime then that's a necessity, public health is a necessity.

Eldridge says he appreciates Cronin's concern, he has every faith in the employees at Buchanan. We are going to try something different and if it doesn't work out we will go back to the drawing board and do something different. To end on a positive note, Eldridge shares that tomorrow is his 3-month anniversary and looking back on it what comes to mind is the employees at Buchanan. They consistently look for positives in any situation. Mike and his DPW guys, they have a drain issue that's an ugly mess and they aren't afraid to take on that challenge. The employees have Buchanan's best interest in mind. We have great staff and great residents.

B. Commissioner Comments

Weedon: Stan, Rick, Jim, gentlemen from New Zealand, the teacher experience touched my heart. It's something that means a lot to me. The wonderful part about Lise and I, is that we ran into each other at the school and she was so excited to bring her kid to Buchanan for the many good things we talked about tonight. The people in Buchanan care and that's why everyone is here tonight. Mr. Busby you spoke about a very difficult thing and I'm not going to overshadow the importance of that and the significance it holds within this community. Do I agree with Dan and the things he has said over the years – absolutely not. But he's also well within his right to say how he feels. I don't support some of the things that are out there and there's others I do agree with. Busby, I appreciate you bringing that up tonight, it's something that needed to be said and if that's what you felt you had every right to say that just as much as he has. The DPW, Mike you have a heavy lift, but I think you have the right people around you and I believe we can come up with the best avenue to attack this with the least amount of hours, the same amount of tenacity, and save the most amount of money. You have a crew that believes in you, we have some of the best operators in the area. Norma thank you so much, I look for to your firetruck expletives. Thank you so much to everybody for showing up tonight. The diversity and beauty in this room says a lot about Buchanan.

Swem: Thank you everybody for coming out tonight. Congratulations Lise on your acquisition, we look forward to your project. Tougher conversations were had, nobody up here wanted to pass on the Thrill on the Hill for 2024 but we have a lot of tough financial decisions upcoming for the city. There are going to be more sad conversations that we have to have. Bear with us, it's not easy, we are doing it with a heavy heart. Same thing goes with staffing, it's going to be hard to get things done and I ask for some grace for the team because they are working their butt off to do it in a way that honors your tax dollars. Jeanie and Mr. Busby, I agree with you that behavior is unacceptable, and I don't support it. I'll do what I can to support you, much like those hard decisions we are making as a community. We need to work together across all neighborhoods, races, everything. Support each other and keep moving the community forward – that needs to be the mindset for everyone. And that needs to be led by the five men sitting up here. That's my expectation. So with that, thank you for coming out tonight, sorry you had to hear tough conversations and hopefully we have brighter days ahead.

Vigansky: I spent two wonderful weeks in Wyoming, it was great, it was really good to come back to Buchanan. I'd be amiss if I didn't say being called racist, sexist, and a liar you know, the only thing I can say to that is kiss my ass. And I have a right to say that, whatever. The thing about it is, I'm an equal rights advocate just as much as any of us. The thing about it is, I don't take nonsense from anybody. If you want to speak up, speak up. I'll argue with you all day long. I believe in equal rights, but I don't believe in better rights, and I don't believe in different rights. If you're white you're entitled to the same rights as if you're black. When I made the comment about being white you are a bigot automatically, watch the news, just watch the news. I don't apologize for what I do or how I do it. And these commissioners, their hands are really tied. You elected me and it costs a lot of money to recall me. And the things that are getting done I predicted this garbage 7 years ago and nobody wanted to listen because everybody wanted to pretend. With that being said, I don't have any enemies in this community. I have people that are willing to talk to me like an adult and I have people that want to run to mom and daddy and cry foul.

Money: I've had my little agenda here, everybody's pretty much taken care of that but I will reiterate a few things. I want to thank everybody whose come down here tonight and supported Lise. Congratulations Lise, it's good to see hard working people want to come into Buchanan and make something of themselves. Even if it's starting out small and working to better themselves and better the community, bringing a great product into town. Our decision for Thrill on the Hill is too bad but when we were sitting here looking at the drawbacks, I think it's the best decision. Sadly enough, we've had many great things in Buchanan go by the wayside but hopefully this is going to come back and its going to come back better. Mike Baker and his crew, I can never say enough about those guys. They are all hard working. James and Jeanie, I appreciate your concerns. We had to vote on something here but if you read the agenda it says, 'consider appointing.' That's a big word and I want to thank you guys for speaking your peace. Just know when it comes to doing things in the right way, I'm sure the people that sit on this commission will take care of that. Once again I want to thank the staff for everything, they do Ashely, Rich, Kalla, Ben. I appreciate every one of them.

C. Mayor Comments

Lise, I want to congratulate you not on your purchase tonight, but on the fact that you are so successful that you have all these people here to back you up. As far as the Thrill goes, it really is too bad. I think everybody knows how I feel about the Thrill. I think it's a great event that brings in lots of people, not a lot of revenue. Getting our budget straight is what we are trying to do. As far as the DPW workers go and overtime, I hope it's not misconstrued that we are somehow punishing them because that's not our goal. If anything, we are challenging them to be more efficient and we are trying to do that everywhere we can because we don't have a choice. As far as Mr. Vigansky goes, I mean it's pretty

well documented. How I feel about Mr. Vigansky's actions towards members of the board and the complaints we have had in the past you know, Mrs. Harris I'd really like to speak to you after the meeting, Mr. Busby same to you. I just want to thank everybody for coming, it's nice to see the chamber full for a change. I have a strange feeling there are going to be more meetings like this in the future that are tense and where we have hard decisions to make but we appreciate you coming and giving us your feedback and input. It really is helpful.

Motion made by Weedon, supported by Money to adjourn the meeting at 8:03pm. Roll call vote carries unanimously.

XV. Adjourn

Kalla Langston, City Clerk

Mayor Sean Denison