

**CITY OF JOHN DAY
SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
JOHN DAY, OREGON**

July 31st, 2023

COUCILORS PRESENT:

Heather Rookstool, Mayor
David Holland, Council President
Katrina Randleas, Councilor
Chris Labhart, Councilor
Ron Phillips, Councilor
Sherrie Rininger, Councilor

COUNCILORS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT:

Casey Myers, Public Works Director
Don Gabbard, Fire Chief
Savannah Lovell
Steph Allen
Oren Wyss

GUESTS PRESENT:

Shannon Adair	Gregg Haberly
Rich Lallatin	Jim Spell
Adam Hofpar	Beth Spell
Lisa Weigum	Kathy Smith
Judy Schuette	Lisa Holland
Steve Schuette	Elliot Sky
Chris Cronin	Morgan Green
Nick Green	Ron Lundbom
Jim Bay	

Agenda Item No. 1—Call Meeting to Order

Mayor Rookstool called the city council meeting to order at 8:11 pm.

Agenda Item No. 2—Roll Call and Attendance

Mayor Rookstool noted that all councilors were present.

Agenda Item No. 3—Amend or Accept Regular Agenda

Councilor Holland would like to add a discussion about the potential Interim City Manager position.

Councilor Rininger made a motion to accept the amended agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilor Randleas and passed unanimously.

Agenda Item No. 4—Public Comments

Mayor Rookstool welcomed the public and asked if there was anyone present for something not on the agenda.

No one came forward to comment.

Agenda Item No. 5—Interim City Manager

Council had an interview with a gentleman before the special meeting, he is willing to be an interim but not take on a permanent position. This gentleman interviewed very well but isn't sure how much on time he would be able to spend. He would be a contract employee not a City employee.

Councilor Labhart made a motion that the administrative committee enters negotiations with this gentleman along with legal counsel and the consulting firm for an Interim City Manager contract. The motion was seconded by Councilor Randleas and passed unanimously.

Judy Schuette said this sounds like the exact same position that we were in with the previous Interim City Manager with somebody who may or may not be here very often and would like to know how it's going to be different this time around. Mayor Rookstool responded that if Council were to offer him a deal he would be dedicating some time in building every single week.

Elliot Sky asked Council if there has been discussion about how this short-term Interim is going to prioritize and spend their time project wise and wants to know how it will look different this time. Mayor Rookstool thinks between the administrative committee and Councils direction they would put together a priority list for this person.

Agenda Item No. 5—Council excepting Resolution No. 23-904-04

A Resolution of City of John Day authorizing the Mayor (and his or her designee(s)) to perform certain manager duties and responsibilities.

Councilor Rininger thinks this Resolution is a necessity. Councilor Randleas is concerned that the title of the resolution says his or her designees but on exhibit A provides those responsibilities only to the Mayor. Mayor Rookstool said this was only a rough draft that the City Attorney put together and isn't locked in stone. Councilor Holland said he didn't know if he wanted to be involved in managing, hiring/firing or disciplining employees. He said he is not comfortable with some of the items on exhibit A because nobody on the council has the experience or qualifications to manage most of those items and doesn't believe this will resolve things. Councilor Randleas said any Council members directing City staff is against the City charter.

Chris Cronin asked if there was a department head that could serve as an acting City Manager right now. Councilor Holland said they have not looked into that, with only two department heads left he believes they already have an abundant of other things to worry about.

Shannon Adair thinks it is really important for somebody to be involved in HR that has managed people and also has that background. She does not feel like there are people on the Council that could potentially handle HR. She believes if you put someone in there that doesn't have that background or experience not only could there be a lawsuit but they could lose all of their staff.

Judy Schuette said she does not want to see a continuation of what has been going on. It doesn't work, it's been harmful, its not good for the City and she doesn't want the people who have been in that position to continue doing it nor should they be doing it.

Gregg Haberly asked Council if they run off all of their help what are they going to do. Mayor Rookstool said that is not their goal and not what they're trying to do.

Ron Lundbom concern is when he left office there were a bunch of projects ready to go with a lot of grant money on the line. With everything that has happened in the last 8 months he's wondering if the City is in jeopardy of losing that grant money. Mayor Rookstool said as of yesterday Nick Decote submitted their last one and they are still caught up in all of their grants.

Beth Spell wants to address the clause that talks about hiring and firing. She already knows the City employees are under a lot of stress because things have been handled pretty abruptly and sometimes rudely. She thinks Council needs to be very careful with how they set up managing the employees.

Elliot Sky brought up how crucial it is to fill the open seat on Council and how harmful these split decisions can be. He wants to see Council prioritizing filling that open seat and really try to come together for the sake of the community.

Jim Bay has had 3 businesses all successful because he pulled the staff in and because he wasn't the only voice.

Savannah Lovell as a member of staff, she has no faith that Council can vote in unison to have our best interest. She doesn't believe we should give any one on Council authority to control staff. She agrees that staff needs direction and stability, we would love that. Staff needs Council to vote together and find somebody to give us direction and somebody who can give us direction without discrimination and persecution. She said the City has the best group of staff right now in the time she's been here and Council is hanging by a thread for every single person. She believes Council should be careful on the people who actually keep the doors open.

Casey Myers, Public Works Director said everything Savannah said is everything that he feels. This split is not working and everyone knows it. He has worked here for a long time and loves his job but he is to a point now that he doesn't love his job as much. He said they need to think about their actions before they do them.

Judy Schuette asked so from what Council has heard what is their next step with this resolution, it sounds to her like they should just start all over again. Mayor Rookstool said Council wants to move forward with negotiations for an Interim City Manager.

Councilor Holland stood up and presented Anna Bass' resignation. Anna gave him all of the paperwork she had in her possession at her work place. In her resignation letter she stated she has been involved with the City of John Day for approximately 22 years and with this letter she is resigning her position as contract City Recorder effective immediately. She feels the future of the City is going in a direction that she as a contractor will not be able to provide the support that the City is wanting or needing.

Councilor Labhart was asked to do some investigation concerning a missing piece of property off of public land. He contacted the County judge who indicated he gave no one permission to remove anything off of public land. When somebody in this community asked Councilor Phillips why he voted against a person that applied for City Council he said it was because of ethics. Councilor Labhart stated Councilor Phillips admitted to stealing something which he believes is an ethics violation and he is asking tonight for Councilor Phillips to resign and he will pursue an ethics violation report to the state. Councilor Phillips doesn't feel like he stole the sign and thought he was doing the right thing because it was false advertisement. Councilor Phillips stated he didn't do it maliciously.

Judy Schuette asked Councilor Phillips if at any time before he took the sign speak to Mayor Rookstool about taking the sign. Councilor Phillips responded with “dually noted” and refused to answer the question. Councilor Labhart stated when this goes to the ethics commission they will ask him under oath. Councilor Phillips still refused to answer the question.

Jim Spell took another angle on that question and asked Mayor Rookstool prior to the sign being removed did she have a conversation with Councilor Phillips. She said about a month prior Councilor Phillips came to her asking about the sign and if she knew anything about it. Mayor Rookstool claimed she had no information about Councilor Phillips removing the sign until after he had done it.

Casey Myers asked why this issue wasn’t brought to the Public Works Director (him) so he could investigate before the sign was removed with no authorization. He stated the Council doesn’t work for Count Clerk they work for the citizens of this community and it should have come to him before anywhere.

Councilor Holland stated the sign wasn’t false advertising. The current County Court may not be willing to move the library it is a strategic long-range project. This wasn’t an issue that Councilor Phillips should have taken upon himself to deal with.

Councilor Randleas came forward and read her immediate resignation letter. She said in the letter the actions of the Mayor and some Council members are in violation of our City Charter and go against her personal values and ethics. She said, “I am not resigning because I don’t want to represent you anymore; I am resigning because I believe that in continuing on this Council, I am sending a message that I approve of the lack of respect, transparency and integrity that is occurring.”

Morgan Green would like to know where the three locations the public notice was posted besides online. Mayor Rookstool claimed they were posted online, at the front desk of the City Hall and on the Blue Mountain Eagle website. Morgan Green said that’s why people are concerned with giving Mayor Rookstool authority because there are so many issues with her truthfulness.

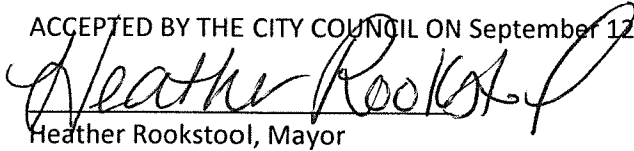
Agenda Item No. 6—Adjourn Council Special Meeting

There being no further business before the council, Councilor Holland moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:24 PM. The motion was seconded by Councilor Rininger and passed unanimously.

Respectfully Submitted:

Heather Rookstool
Mayor

ACCEPTED BY THE CITY COUNCIL ON September 12th, 2023

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Heather Rookstool", written over a horizontal line. The signature is fluid and cursive.

Heather Rookstool, Mayor