

MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY
COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO,
HELD AT THE LIBRARY COMMUNITY ROOM

March 4, 2025

The Mayor and Council of the City of Coeur d'Alene met in a regular session of said Council at the Coeur d'Alene City Library Community Room on March 4, 2025, at 6:00 p.m., there being present the following members:

Woody McEvers, Mayor

Christie Wood) Members of Council Present
Dan Gookin)
Kiki Miller)
Amy Evans)
Kenny Gabriel)

Dan English) Member of Council Absent

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor McEvers called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION: Amanda Nicol of the Community United Methodist Church of Coeur d'Alene led the invocation.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Councilmember Gabriel led the pledge of allegiance.

SENIOR NUTRITION MONTH: Councilmember Gookin read the Proclamation declaring the month of March 2025 as Senior Nutrition Month. Sage Stoddard, Director of Area Agency on Aging of North Idaho (AAANI), accepted the Proclamation. In her presentation, she stated that AAANI is one of six Area Agencies in Idaho and part of a nationwide aging network created through the Older Americans Act with the focus to help people stay independent and contributing members of their community. Their mission is to work in partnership with older adults, families and the community to provide information and services that maximize independence and quality of life for seniors. They serve the citizens of Benewah, Bonner, Boundary, Kootenai, and Shoshone counties. Basic programs include home delivered meals; congregate meals; light housekeeping services for seniors; caregiver respite; adult protective services for suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of vulnerable adults; and long-term care Ombudsmen advocating for residents' rights in assisted living and skilled nursing facilities. This March, AAANI is celebrating the anniversary of the National Senior Nutrition Program. The main services under this program are home delivered meals and congregate meals. She stated that in FY2024, Lake City Center served 43,177 home delivered meals to 343 participants and 3,313 congregate meals. In the same year, AAANI helped fund 73,413 home delivered meals and 54,658 congregate meals with the 13 Senior Centers in the five Northern Counties.

Mayor McEvers asked about the congregate meals, and Ms. Stoddard explained that these meals are served at the 13 Senior Centers in North Idaho. Typically, they are lunch meals where seniors can eat together and socialize. Councilmember Wood inquired if the paused federal grants were affecting AAANI. Ms. Stoddard mentioned that they had a meeting in Boise last week and had not heard any news about the federal funding being paused at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Russ McLain expressed his gratitude for AAANI's efforts in helping people remain at home and independent. Regarding the recent town hall incident, he praised Police Chief Lee White and the City staff for their exemplary conduct. He also mentioned a wonderfully written letter or article in the newspaper about the incident and shared his pride in the job they have done.

Gabe Eckert, Coeur d'Alene, stated that he is the President of the Coeur d'Alene Firefighters Local 710 and urged Council to support the \$16.4 million bond to replace aging emergency response equipment and upgrade Fire Station 2. He highlighted the increased call volume from 7,813 in 2014 to 10,589 last year, stressing the strain on their current fleet. He mentioned the retirement of their reserve ladder truck and mechanical issues with their frontline ladder, which left them unable to assist in emergencies. He emphasized the need to upgrade Station 2, the busiest station, and urged the Council to vote yes to ensure that the Fire Department can continue providing high-quality service to the community.

Joshua Hoston, Coeur d'Alene, highlighted the long-standing service to the community by the Fire Department, which has been ongoing for 136 years. He shared a news story published on February 20, 1939, emphasizing that the date may be historical; however, the critical nature of their work, particularly the importance of timely oxygen administration in emergencies hasn't changed. Mr. Hoston stressed the need for support to ensure the Fire Department can continue providing essential services. He urged the Council to support the bond to help them maintain and improve their operations.

Suzanne Knutson, Coeur d'Alene, shared that March is Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month, a time to raise awareness and celebrate the achievements of individuals with developmental disabilities. Established by Ronald Reagan in 1987, this year's theme emphasizes that community, accessibility, and opportunity should be recognized year-round. Developmental disabilities include intellectual disabilities, autism, and cerebral palsy. Ms. Knutson stressed the importance of full participation in education, employment, recreation, and civic engagement for individuals with developmental disabilities. She stated that there are several non-profit organizations in town that support these individuals. She encouraged Council to continue to seek their input and support for guidance regarding individuals with disabilities in Coeur d'Alene.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Councilmember Miller shared that the Housing Solutions Partnership (HSP) launched the Additional Dwelling Units (ADU) plan last week. The Coeur d'Alene Press and Krem 2 Boomtown project both featured great articles on it. HSP introduced four free to the public plans for small

houses that can be built in backyards, aiming to create more housing options for aging parents or young adults in an affordable way. She stated that more information can be found at the website www.housingni.org, with multiple cities hosting those websites, as well as the North Idaho Building Contractors Association website.

Councilmember Gookin reminded everyone about the Idaho Transportation Department's I-90/US-95 Interchange Improvement Project meeting being held tomorrow, March 5, at 4:00 p.m. at the Best Western Coeur d'Alene Inn. He encouraged community members to attend, especially if they have any concerns.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. Approval of Council Minutes for the February 18, 2025, Council Meeting.
2. Setting of the General Services/Public Works Committee Meeting at Noon on March 10, 2025.
3. Approval of Bills as Submitted.
4. Approval of a transfer of a cemetery lot, from Laurretta McDaniel to Hershel Bartlett, Jr.; Section OP, Block 2, Lot 11, Forest Cemetery (\$40.00)

MOTION: Motion by Evans, seconded by Gabriel to approve the Consent Calendar as presented.

ROLL CALL: Gabriel Aye; Gookin Aye; Wood Aye; Evans Aye; Miller Aye. **Motion carried**

WASTEWATER OUTFALL INVESTIGATION AND CONDITIONAL ASSESSMENT PROJECT

STAFF REPORT: Capital Programs Manager Mike Becker noted that his staff report is for informational purposes regarding the evaluation and conditional assessment of the wastewater outfall. He explained that the outfall is that after treating wastewater from the plant, the clean water is discharged into the Spokane River through a 30-inch diameter pipe with ten diffusers, constructed in 1985. Originally, the outfall was designed to have a discharge capacity of 11.9 to 15.7 million gallons a day, assuming that all ten diffusers are operational. Over time, corrosion and sedimentation have affected the outfall's functionality, with some diffusers completely buried and not operational, and one diffuser missing. Mr. Becker explained that sedimentation is a natural process that occurs within the river, suspended sediments and dirt logs settle to the bottom of the river. In 2022, HDR Engineers, Inc. was hired to conduct a more thorough investigation, and it was realized that more information is needed on what is happening inside the pipe and how much sediment is actually deposited on the riverbed. Last month, the Wastewater Department sent out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for professional diving firms to do the rest of the investigation. They received only one proposal from a firm in Spokane. The next step is to negotiate a contract with this diving firm to complete the necessary tasks, estimated to cost between \$53,030 and \$75,530, with additional tasks potentially bringing the total to under \$100,000. This project is budgeted, and no immediate action is needed from the Council. Mr. Becker stated that he will present the contract at the next Council meeting under the Consent Calendar if possible.

DISCUSSION: Councilmember Gookin asked if a hydraulic engineer had evaluated future sedimentation and the impact of running jets underwater. Mr. Becker explained that HDR Engineers, Inc., was initially hired for this evaluation, but more information was needed, leading to the decision to hire a diving firm for further underwater investigation. Councilmember Gookin then inquired if the firm could also develop a future maintenance schedule to prevent similar issues. Mr. Becker noted that sedimentation occurs during slack water periods when the river's flow slows down and added that the diving firm and engineer would need to discuss compliance with the Army Corps. Councilmember Gabriel asked about the need for permits for any repair work and whether it would be difficult to obtain. Mr. Becker explained that currently, no permits are required for the investigation process. For maintenance projects, no permits are needed from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ). However, extensive dredging out of the river would require permits and involve the Army Corps, as it could be considered hazardous material. The investigative process will help determine what actions can be taken. Mayor McEvers asked if the 40-year-old outfall system is now considered outdated and if other cities like Post Falls and Spokane use similar systems. Mr. Becker explained that the current outfall, constructed in 1985, replaced an even older system from 1906. All dischargers to the Spokane River use similar methods to ensure uniform distribution of treated water. Mayor McEvers expressed pride in the city's proactive approach to wastewater treatment, noting that the treated water is cleaner than the river water. Mr. Becker highlighted the City's excellent job in staying ahead of treatment criteria and maintaining clean wastewater.

COUNCIL BILL 25-1005

AN ORDINANCE CALLING A GENERAL OBLIGATION BOND ELECTION TO BE HELD FOR THE PURPOSE OF SUBMITTING TO THE QUALIFIED ELECTORS OF THE CITY OF COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO, A PROPOSITION FOR THE ISSUANCE OF NEGOTIABLE GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS OF THE CITY OF COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO, AND IN PROVIDING FOR THE ISSUANCE OF SUCH BONDS, THE LEVY OF A TAX TO PAY SUCH BONDS.

STAFF REPORT: Fire Chief Tom Greif requested Council to approve an Ordinance calling an election for May 20, 2025, for a Fire Department General Obligation Bond for \$16,400,000.00. He noted that this is the Fire Department's third public safety bond, following those in 2005 for \$7 million and 2015 for \$6 million. Last July, the Fire Department sought Council's support to hire a municipal advisory firm, resulting in the selection of Zions Public Finance and Portman Square Group. A community-based survey was conducted by Portman Square Group, which yielded favorable results. Chief Greif stated that since the last Council meeting, he and Michael Keith of Zions Public Finance have been working with bond counsels, Danielle Quade and Brandon Helgeson of Hawley Troxell, to draft the ordinance and language for the ballot. Chief Greif explained that their goal was to make sure that the language in the ballot would be flexible enough to allow them to do all the projects specifically for the facilities included in the bond. The bond is divided into two major areas: fire apparatus fleet replacement in the amount of \$10,036,161.00 and facility upgrades in the amount of \$6,300,000.00. Chief Greif emphasized that their priorities with these projects are always to be good stewards of tax dollars and plan for future needs. He added that the challenge that they have is going out to bond on an estimate of the projects and so they don't need to come back for more funds; however, he believes that the estimates from contractors and

architects are accurate. Chief Greif highlighted the significant cost increases since the last bond. For example, the cost of a pumper engine has more than doubled from \$585,000 in 2015 to \$1,240,000 now. Similarly, a ladder truck that cost \$1.4 million in 2015 now costs over \$2 million. Construction costs have also risen significantly, with Station 4 built in 2017 for \$1.5 million, equating to less than \$200 per square foot, whereas current facility upgrades are estimated at nearly \$400 per square foot. Chief Greif stated that the bond aims to replace various apparatus in the fleet and noted that ordering new engines today would take 36 to 48 months to build.

Captain Jeff Fletcher, the longest-serving firefighter at Station 2, discussed the station's history and current needs. Built in 1992 as a two-man house, Station 2 has become the busiest station due to the city's growth. Despite previous bonds funding some remodeling and the addition of Station 4, Station 2's call volume has still increased by over 16% in the last decade. The station now needs to accommodate 6 to 8 personnel, including the Battalion Chief, but lacks adequate space, gender-specific dormitories, restrooms, and proper office facilities. Additionally, Station 2 serves as the rescue dog station and hosts new hire academies and cadet activities. New standards for decontamination and apparatus bays require further upgrades. Captain Fletcher explained that the proposed bond includes a 15% contingency with a \$400.00 square foot cost would cover these needs without requesting additional funds. Other stations also require improvements, such as housing specialized rescue units at Station 3 and enhancing PPE storage and decontamination spaces at Station 1. A specialty training prop will also be added to their campus to replace current outdated and weather roof prop for roof scenarios.

Chief Greif stated that Captain Fletcher will lead the community education efforts for the bond, focusing on educating rather than advocating. He explained the bond's impact on property taxes where a house in the city valued at approximately \$550,000, minus the homeowner's exemption of \$120,000, results in a taxable value of around \$425,000. Currently, this property pays about \$31 annually or \$2.60 per month on the 2015 bond, which will sunset in August. With the new \$16.4 million bond, the same property would pay an estimated \$69 annually or \$5.75 per month, roughly doubling the current amount. Chief Greif stated that this increase reflects the doubled costs of apparatus and construction.

DISCUSSION: Councilmember Gabriel thanked the firefighter staff, acknowledging the extensive work involved. He highlighted that Captain Fletcher, who has an MBA from the University of Idaho sponsored by the city, provided the roadmap for 2015 and is highly knowledgeable in this area. Councilmember Gabriel noted that Station 2, built quickly and cheaply in 1992 after the old station was condemned due to methane gas, has been in use for a long time. He recalled that the remodel didn't allow for much expansion due to space and budget constraints, emphasizing the importance of building for the future as these buildings are long-term assets. He expressed strong support for the bond and commended everyone for their excellent work, adding that he would prefer a complete rebuild. Councilmember Gookin agreed with Councilmember Gabriel and mentioned that he had a discussion with Chief Greif and Mr. Hoston about moving forward to build a new station, especially considering what Mr. Eckert mentioned earlier about the potential of new firefighters in the future. He stated the need to plan properly and do it right. Councilmember Wood asked Captain Fletcher to share a scenario on how they utilize the space at Station 2 with 5-6 people. Captain Fletcher stated that they utilize every single square inch of the station, and made it work; however, there are sacrifices in accommodations, like not having an

office. He added that firefighters share a small office doing reports and while the addition of the new dorms, a classroom, and another bathroom has helped, the station is still not functional for future needs. They can barely get in and out of the bay, and it's not suitable for long-term use. Councilmember Wood asked how Captain Fletcher manages private conversations with employees without an office. Captain Fletcher responded that they conduct these conversations in his dorm room. Councilmember Wood asked Chief Greif about the future of apparatus replacements, noting that while some vehicles won't last another 10 years, others have relatively low mileage. Chief Greif confirmed that staff vehicles with remaining value or life could be made available to other city departments or surplus to smaller rural agencies. He explained that older vehicles, like the 2006 rescue truck with low mileage, pose challenges in repairs and parts availability. Despite its low mileage, the truck needs replacement due to increased use and cross-staffing.

Councilmember Miller inquired about the impact of the \$6.3 million budget request on the current bond for building a new station 2 facility. Chief Greif explained that the challenge lies in estimating needs, with the current station at 5,600 square feet and plans to model a new one at around 9,500 square feet. This would provide room to grow and accommodate additional personnel, emphasizing the need for private spaces. The estimate includes a high watermark to account for potential bid fluctuations, tariffs, and material supply issues. Councilmember Miller asked if the priority would be to build the new Station 2 and use the remaining funds for other remodels. Chief Greif agreed, noting the \$400 per square foot estimate with a 15% contingency. Mayor McEvers asked how much a day it would cost for a property owner with \$425,000 house with Chief Greif responding that for the new bond, it would be \$5.75 a month. Councilmember Gabriel inquired if they would be ready to proceed with everything immediately if the project goes ahead in May. Chief Greif mentioned that they did not have a finalized design for the construction, but they are ready to move forward with the apparatus.

MOTION: Motion by Evans, seconded by Gookin, to dispense with the rule and read **Council Bill No. 25-1005** once by title only.

ROLL CALL: Wood Aye; Evans Aye; Miller Aye; Gabriel Aye; Gookin Aye. **Motion carried.**

MOTION: Motion by Evans, seconded by Gabriel, to adopt **Council Bill No. 25-1005**.

DISCUSSION: Councilmember Miller expressed her hope that the priority remains with the facilities remodel budget as discussed in the meeting. Councilmember Gookin added that although Councilmember English is absent, he asked that it was noted he would have voted yes if he were present.

ROLL CALL: Wood Aye; Evans Aye; Miller Aye; Gabriel Aye; Gookin Aye. **Motion carried.**

ADJOURNMENT: Motion by Gookin, seconded by Evans, that there being no other business, this meeting be adjourned. **Motion carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 7:10 p.m.