

CITY OF MONTAGUE CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

March 6, 2025

6:30 P.M.

Council Chambers, 230 S. 13th Street, Montague, CA 96064

- I. **CALL TO ORDER: @ 6:30 PM**
- II. **ROLL CALL: Vela, Murakami, Dooley, and Jackson present.**
- III. **PLEDGE OF ALLIGIANCE:**
- IV. **PUBLIC COMMENTS:** “This time is set aside for the public to address the City Council on matters listed on the Consent Agenda as well as other items not included on the Regular Agenda within the authority of the City Council. If your comments concern an item noted under New Business or Old Business on the Regular Agenda, please address the City Council when that item is open for public comment.” (The Brown Act requires the public be given the opportunity to address the City Council before action is taken. If there is a Consent Agenda, there is no other opportunity for public comment on items on the Consent Agenda.) The City Council has the right to reasonably limit the duration of each speaker to three minutes. Speakers may not cede their time. The City Council may ask questions but may take no action during the Public Comments portion of the meeting, except to direct staff to prepare a report, or to place an item on a future agenda.

Gary Watson wants to know why we are selling all our equipment. He feels like the grater needs to be working. He said that the town flooded because the ditches were full. He wants to know how the equipment is going to be replaced. He said that the dump truck was given to us by the county and it has a plow on it and he doesn’t understand why it was not being used. He then went on to complain about his garbage can that was left in the road on a rainy day and how the city employees did not get out of their vehicles and move it out of the road for him, stating that was their job. He was also concerned about selling the crack sealer, he is worried as to how the cracks will be filled now. He also would like the name of the person that the bus stop was given to that he asked about last year.

Rose Smith wanted to ask Pat in regards to his son, and you voting on matters regarding him, in my opinion is unethical. Everyone knows that the mayor found large amounts of money missing and reported it. In return, when it was found out who reported it he was slandered. She feels that Pat is protecting his son at all costs and that he is in the middle of all the chaos and division. She feels that the person that is causing all the division is the fire chief Jasen Vela and not the mayor.

Diane Torpin of Rotary of Montague had some corrections or updates that need to be made to the job descriptions and handbook after going over them. She pointed out that the bereavement policy, drug free policy, and medical leave policies all need to be updated. She also wanted to know who was in charge of updating this information because it is in none of the job descriptions and she feels it needs to be someone’s responsibility to keep this kind of information updated.

Tara Pipkin of 228 Ridgeview Drive wanted to let everyone know that Jennifer Dooley and Takeshi Murakami were served tonight with their potential recall. She said that the reason that they were served was because the way that they are conducting city business is unethical and they are not doing what is in the best interests of the city which they swore to do when they took office.
- V. **AGENDA APPROVAL:** Move up bid for 12th and 14th street approval to the engineer’s report. Motion to approve agenda made by Dooley, seconded by Jackson. All Ayes.
- VI. **CONSENT CALENDAR:** Discussion/possible action - All matters listed under the consent calendar are considered routine and will be enacted by **one motion** unless any member of the Council wishes to remove an item for discussion. The City Clerk recommends approval of the following consent calendar items:
 1. Approval of City Council Meeting minutes for 11/7, 12/5, 1/2 AND 2/3
Consent calendar approved. Motion made by Jackson, seconded by Vela. All Ayes.
- VII. **DEPARTMENT REPORTS:**
 1. Sheriff’s update for February 2025-Sargent Yates reporting. Written report included.
 2. City Engineer’s update for February 2025-Engineer reporting. Bid for 12th and 14th street rehab. J.F. Shea had lowest bid at \$292,139.00 and they have a contract and license is clear. It is recommended that the project be awarded to J.F. Shea. Dave concurred. Motion to approve Vela, seconded by Dooley. All Ayes.
 3. Planning Commission’s update for February 2025-There was no Planning Commission meeting in February.

VIII. NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discussion only of amending Resolution 17-36 section 7.1.1 to a simple majority vote. There are some corrections that need to be made to the verbiage to the Resolution. Andrew Jared is recommending this be held over until this issue has been addressed. The request had to do with not having an all three council affirmative vote for all council actions. This would mean that for items that aren't a resolution, aren't an ordinance, things that are just a minute action item then a simple majority of those appearing that night at the council could win the day. Three people could show up and two could vote and pass an item that is not an ordinance or a resolution. The proper documentation was not provided so this will be tabled until next months agenda.
2. Discussion/possible action nominate Mayor and Mayor Pro Tempore. The general consensus was to table this item.
3. Resolution 25-02 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF MONTAGUE CITY COUNCIL ACCEPTING THE 2024 GENERAL PLAN ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT AND APPROVING THE TRANSMITTAL OF THE REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF LAND USE AND CLIMATE INITIATIVE AND THE CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT. City Planner Tinsman presenting. Motion to accept the report and authorize staff to submit to the state as required by state law. Motion made by Jackson, seconded by Vela. All Ayes.
4. Consideration/approval of Community Development Block Grant MOU. Tabled until next month.
5. Discussion/possible action Cal Ore to use community hall. Presented by Cal Ore representative. Would like to do a quarterly meeting where they can meet with the residents so they can come and ask questions. It is not a sales pitch, they so not need to have their service. The residents could have Vyve, Att, or Starlink and come. Cal Ore will provide food and drink that would be done at Cal Ores expense, and they would make sure and leave the hall in the same or better condition than we found it. Murakami is in favor of allowing them to use the hall at no expense to them since it benefits the community. Motion made by Vela, seconded by Jackson. All Ayes.
6. Consideration/approval of Diggle Field contract for Yreka Little league for 2025 season. Representative was not in the building. Moved to item 12.
7. Discussion of March 2025 Water Rate Increase: Presented by City Administrator Dunn.
8. Introduction and First Reading of an Ordinance Amending Title 2 Administration And Personnel to Clarify Duties of the City Administrator, City Clerk, City Attorney and Director Of Public Works, and Amendment of Section 2.32 Personnel System; and Discussion of Amendment to City of Montague Personnel Policy and Procedures and Employee Handbook. Vela found some discrepancies in the handbook. Resolution 22.2.1 about COVID quarantines needs to be stricken or updated to match other comments that are there. Page 131 of the packet has that there are only three days for bereavement when it has been updated to five days of bereavement. The city attorney Jared states that the intent of the items before them was to clarify the roles initially between the city administrator and the city clerk. In going through the process we noticed that there were issues the job descriptions of those and the fact that the city code does not have a section addressing the duties of the city attorney, the duties of the public works director, etcetera. The direction that was provide to us was to find the way to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the city administrator and the city clerk. We addressed also these other roles. This was not to be and we did not take it as a wholesale revision and analysis of the entire handbook. Jared acknowledges that these things need to be updated, however, that was not the what the exercise was for up unto this point. If the council would like to do that we can still move forward with that. As he recalls that the handbook does not require adoption by ordinance so we could make those changes for next council meeting or at one after that. Vela points out that 2.09 F under the job description needs to reflect that the city administrator is preparing the agenda and the city clerk will be gathering the documents for the agenda. Council agrees to approve agenda item with some changes. Public comment is allowed. A female from the audience said she is confused as to why we have an administrator. We have always had a city clerk, we never wanted a city administrator. We don't need both and our town cannot afford this. Vela addresses this question. He said reviewing the city and how it operates, having the city administrator takes some of this workload off the office and have the city administrator as overseeing the city employees. Which would create a department like Parks and Recs, and that supervisor would be directed by Dave. After reviewing all this information it is what the city should do to better itself for the future. To be able to expand itself, and to be able to control each employee. It is designed to make things run better. A female from the audience asks who's responsible for employment

law. Murakami explains that we have to follow the law whether it has been updated in the handbook. We cannot break the law regardless of what the handbook says. Another female from the audience wanted to voice her concern that we get the information from Diane about the items that needed to be changed in the handbook. Murakami advised her to bring the information to the clerk's office so it can be provided to the city attorney when we are reviewing this. Mindy Vela said that she whole heartedly agreed that we need a city administrator, very few cities these days just have a city clerk. She said that having a city administrator are entirely necessary and so beneficial for the employees to have that person as that one supervisor and not a changing commissioner or changing council member. It is a lot healthier, and we need it. Andrew responded to a public comment about who is responsible for employment law. Andrew states that this is something that is missing right now under our current scenario. It has been inserted into section 2.03.030 M Personal Director. Under Personal Director until a separate position is created and an appointment made, the city administrator shall perform all duties of the personal director or chief personal director. Andrew goes on to clarify the changes made to the job descriptions of the city administrator and the city clerk. Motion for amended changes to 2.10.1040 and 2.03.030 F without a second reading for the job descriptions of the city administrator, city clerk, city attorney and the director of public works under section 2.32. Motion made by Murakami, seconded by Jackson. All Ayes.

9. Consideration/approval of contract with AGT in the amount of \$28,000 for pre-audit services. There was a change to this. Dunn states that the city auditor found Dave Wallace that will do the services for \$100.00 per hour. He will do all our pre-audit stuff and bank records. He can start April 1, 2025. He is very good. Vela asks if he is coming aboard permanently. Dunn said yes, for now. Vela said we need to know if he's just going to do the audit and then we are going to have to get AGT to be our pre-auditor down the road. Dunn doesn't know how long Dave will do the pre-auditing for us, but he will contact him and find out. AGT is twice the money, so it is suggested to go with Dave Wallace for now. Dave Wallace was approved to be the pre-auditor for \$100.00 per hour for the time being. Motion made by Jackson, seconded by Dooley. All Ayes.
10. Consideration/approval of the purchase of 2 trucks for public works for the amount of \$65,000. Presented by the City Administrator Dunn. Public Works has 3 vehicles right now that are old and at end of life. We would like to purchase 2 new vehicles. The quotes are in the packet that the dealerships are requesting. We would like to use thirds of the cost from the water and sewer cap account and the public works money left over from renting out the field for the fires. Vela is asking about an auction scheduled for March 18, 2025, and was wondering if the proceeds will go towards the cost of these vehicles. Dunn said the money would go back into the general fund. Dooley asked how much money you normally get for an auction like that. Dunn said it varies. Murakami asks if there is any public comment. Gary Watson wants to know why we are selling our equipment. He said that just because Dave doesn't know how to run it doesn't mean it is bad equipment. He goes on to say that we just flooded, and the grater would fix our ditches instead of running a weed eater all summer. He goes on about the grater and how it just needs to have some maintenance done to it. Murakami interjects and points out that the topic we are discussing is about purchasing new vehicles. Not selling equipment. Gary said we do not need 2 new trucks. Gary wants to know why he can't get any answers. Vela asked Dunn to respond to Gary about the equipment we are selling, the 3 trucks. Dunn said that the old Ford was given to us by the Fire Department years ago, a flatbed. We purchased the black Ranger we are auctioning for our code enforcement years ago and it is leaking oil, and the other one was purchased new in 1995. They are all older vehicles. Gary Watson interrupts and yells that we are an old town and cannot afford new vehicles. Dunn continues, we are just asking to update our equipment. Vela then states that the 2 new trucks would be utilized for day-to-day business and be reliable to answer Gary Watson's question as to why we need new vehicles. Vela also explains that the vehicles are old. An older gentleman from the public said that the grater was older than him and that he had driven it and it is no good. He told Gary Watson that the grater was useless. Gary Watson disagrees, saying that it can still dig ditches. The other man said that you cannot get parts for it anymore and that he sides with the city on this matter. A female then interrupts and states that people are calling in and not getting through on Webex. Vela asked if the meeting was unlocked. City clerk Smith states that it is unlocked and that she has been letting people in. Murakami then says that we seem to be having a low band with issue, so unfortunately those people will probably not be able to get in. Vela says that considering that we had 14 inches of snow last week, I think we need to buy a snowplow that mounts on one of these new trucks 4x4's that we can actually plow these roads when it snows. I know it is not going to be utilized a lot, but it can be taken off and put on within a half an hour and I think it is a smart thing to do for the city. It will help the public; it will help everybody. Murakami asks Vela to add that into his

commissioner report for future agenda items. Vela said okay, I'll do that. Vela then makes a motion to approve 2 new trucks for public works in the amount of \$65,000.00. Seconded by Jackson. All Ayes.

11. Approval of Alternate Work Schedule. City Administrator Dunn presenting. Back in December and January we discussed the staff wanting four 10-hour days. We did it as a trial period and they love it and want to make it permanent. Dooley says that is good to hear. Gary Watson interrupts with now we will get even less work done. Then Jackson replies that it is not a deduction in hours it is a deduction in the amount days. Another female citizen is upset because 2 hours of that time in the morning is in the dark and 2 hours in the afternoon is in the dark and is wanting to know what the public work staff would be doing during those hours. Dunn responds that there are things that they can do in the dark. Public Works does the garbage and clean the inside of the buildings and take care of the water and sewer plant. These are all the things we can do in the dark so that does not matter. Dunn says as far as what they have been doing every day, that there is stuff to do and they stay busy and that he does not have every minute written down. Gary Watson yells you should. Dunn continues The woman then says that she has had jobs where she was required to keep up with what she did every hour, she feels like he should be able to do the same thing. Murakami says that this is not an agenda discussion, it is about our alternate work schedule that we already approved for an interim period. The female citizen claims that the schedule should only be during the summer months like another city does. She also points out that they can plow in the dark. Jackson states that it looks like we are getting a snowplow. Jackson says that this is the third meeting that this topic has been discussed and no one has a problem with it until tonight. Ricky Elvan of West Webb St. he recalls this topic however feels that no one expected it to be year round. He said that the county does 4-10's in the summer but not during the winter. His problem is that the city is already closed 2 days a week that you can't get anything done. Now there is going to be 3 days without getting anything done because there is nobody working. So if there is a necessity you would have to pay someone overtime to come and work. This just creates extra cost for the city. He worked for the county and they wanted to work 4-10's too, but there were other departments that had to work 5 days and the vehicles had to be taken care of so there are times when it is appropriate and times when it is not. Leaving the city 3 days a week with no one available except for emergencies where you have to pay overtime, it does not necessarily make sense. Jackson asked if there was a way that the staff could be staggered to accommodate being open a 5th day. Dunn said that the city tried it years ago and it did not work because you only had half a staff and if something happened we would not have enough people there. Motion made by Dooley to approve the alternate work schedule. Seconded by Vela. All Ayes.
12. Consideration/approval of Diggle Field contract for Yreka Little league for 2025 season. Representative appeared at last minute. He would like to use the field for practice for little league. They would be willing to work around what is already scheduled at the field. Motion to approve by Vela. Seconded by Jackson. All Ayes.

IX. COUNCIL AND STAFF REPORTS for January 2025

1. Fire Department: Murakami presents. Report attached. Public comment on report allowed from female citizen. She wanted to know if Murakami as acting fire chief received the information from the State Fire Marshal. Murakami says that he has. She then asks is that going to be put on the agenda for 30 days for comments. Murakami replies our city did not go up, it is listed as moderate and that our cities fire danger remains the same. The City of Yreka had some changes and that is why they are talking about it. Otherwise he would like to add that we take delivery on our new Type 6, they are outfitting it and getting it ready for service. There will be a push in ceremony which everyone will be invited to once it is ready to go. Otherwise the insurance meeting with the ISO coming up mid month is expected to have no changes, so no one should lose their fire insure and unless there is something happening at a greater level than the City of Montague.
2. Public Works/City Administrator: Dunn presents. Report attached.
3. Animal Control/ Code Enforcement: No report. Scheduling interviews for the positions of Animal Control/Code Enforcement and Pool Coordinator. Decision made to have interviews on March 18, 2025 at 6:30 PM.
4. City Clerk: Smith reporting. Report attached.
5. Treasurer: No presenter. Report attached.
6. Library: Clark reporting. Report attached.

7. Commissioner/ Council Statements and Requests: Members of the council may now make brief announcements, reports, or request staff to report to the council on any matter at a subsequent meeting. Vela has some things to discuss. He said that he has been contacted by Tri County Bank. The bank that the City does business with to discuss one of the programs for the office to take funds via credit card right into the bank account directly without a third party. Vela has forwarded this email to Dunn. Also that as soon as Smith gets appointed to clerk that the paperwork gets completed for signers. The other thing was what was talked about with Andrew on item number 1 on agenda about the simple majority vote. Need to make sure we have the right verbiage and right documents from Andrew on the packet. Everyone agrees with this. Vela asks to add a discussion about the Easter Egg Hunt to the special meeting. Murakami felt that it was not an item that needed to be on the agenda. Murakami said since it is something that is recurring every year all we have to do is go around and get donations for candy. Vela wants to know who is putting it on since the city put it on last year. Murakami said that the way things are currently set up the responsibility falls on him. Vela also would like to add the approval of a snowplow to next agenda and asked Dunn to get some quotes for approval. Murakami wanted to say that Dave Peterson was asking about possibly putting together more donations for us and let us know he would like to get more donations on the city's behalf for the Freedom Festival. Moving forward he knows that we already have a sponsor program that was designed to be recurring, so he will contact those people. Murakami told Dunn that if Dave Peterson comes with his own money that would be fine, but it could potentially offset potentially what the city is able to raise and then we would have more money to use elsewhere, for example with the entertainment or something of that nature for the Freedom Festival if we can manage to do that again. He said that he would start making phone calls to the sponsors that we have in the program already and make sure they are going to still donate, if not because we have to have a fireworks order in by the end of this month. If not, maybe Dave Peterson can come up with something for us. Murakami will be in discussions with Dave Peterson, Dave Dunn, and the firework companies. Jackson asked if the fireworks need to be ordered by the end of this month does this topic need to be on the special meeting agenda. Murakami as far as an approval possibly for signing the contract. We are aiming for \$25,000.00 worth of fireworks. Dooley said that she attended the Montague Fire Protection District meeting on January 15, 2025. This was not long after some inactive members of the Montague Fire Department had been removed from the roster. One audience member asked would anyone show up if my house catches fire. The answer is yes, Montague Fire Department will respond first and then Cal Fire will be called in. An inactive fire fighter means that there have been no mandatory meetings or mandatory trainings attended for at least a year. Currently the Montague Fire Department has 16 members which Tak has already discussed. Seven of those are active there is an average of 5 to 7 members responding to calls which is the same number of responders that has historically responded to fires. Since some of the members have been removed morale has increased and there is more attendance at the Fire House. There is one sleeper at the fire station with one more potential sleeper coming aboard soon. To the Facebook community watch moderators, I say shame on you. You should be held accountable for what you tell your followers. This community trusts you and you have responsibility to report accurate information. Not spreading rumors and scaring people. You reported that local changes in our Fire Department could have an impact on homeowners fire insurance. If you have a question about your homeowners insurance please don't go to Facebook. Please contact your agent. This is not a city issue and it should not be presented as such. New fire maps have been released this week. I encourage you to reach out, watch the videos ask your own questions. In the last couple of months we have had a lot of turmoil in this city. It has not settled down. I have some community questions that I am going to pose here. Why didn't we send strike teams to the Palisades? The answer to that is the Office of Emergency Services, OES did not invite Montague. Why is there a recall petition? It is a deflection tactic brought on by the recall committee. This group is determined to get the community to focus on anything except the investigation of the Fire Chief. How much will this recall election cost? If enough signatures are collected it will cost the city \$30,000.00, We do not have that kind of money. The notice of intention to circulate, Ms. Pipkin has already mitigated that tonight by serving us again. Anyone who respects government policies has to respect the process and this includes the right to recall an elected official. The items listed on the notice

were full council complaints which included not having enough packets available online. None of the complaints listed were about one individual. One of the verbal tactics in getting people to sign the petition including refusal to vote for a 5th council member. Shortley before the interviews, information was given to us by members of your group which relay the following information; your group has been meeting since September in an attempt to remove 1 and now 2 of us from council because we do not agree with you about reinstating Chief Vela. Everyone from your group that applied for the open seat had already pledged a Mayoral vote to Vela who agreed to fire the City Attorney, the City Manager and reinstate Fire Chief Vela. With all of this coming from your own group, it is not hard to believe that you were involved in this collusion. We must have a fifth unbiased person apply for our City Council seat. This is like searching for a juror. We have not have not had anyone unbiased. The fourth question I have from the community is why has Council Member Vela not recusing himself from voting on fire department issues or stepping down all together? Why has he let the recall committee bully council members and continue their harassing behavior? The goal of the recall committee seems to have Chief Vela reinstated to the Montague Fire Department no matter how that happens. If the concern is whether or not Chief Vela is still serving the community you can see the public records that show that he was voted on to the Grenada Fire Department Protection District as Chief as of September of 2022. In conclusion there is no evidence that council has violated the brown act despite what the recall committee would have you believe. Other than wanting to know details of personal issues there have been no questions about regular city business. We are here serving the community month after month with zero gratitude. If anyone would like to step up to the plate and offer unbiased assistance it would be welcomed. Thank you. Vela would like to know where the information came from about him. Vela says it is bogus. Murakami says it is not up for discussion.

X. ADJOURN: @ 8:15 PM

Motion made by Jackson, seconded by Vela. All Ayes.