



# CITY OF ELY

501 Mill Street Ely, Nevada 89301  
City Hall (775) 289-2430  
[Cityofelynv.gov](http://Cityofelynv.gov)

## ELY CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING

**FEBRUARY 3, 2021 5:00 p.m.** – Ely Volunteer Fire Hall – 499 Mill Street – Ely, Nevada

1. Mayor Robertson called the regular meeting of the Ely City Council to order at 5:02 P.M. Mayor Robertson led in the Pledge of Allegiance and asked for Roll Call.

Members present:

- Mayor Nathan Robertson
- Councilman Kurt Carson
- Councilman Ernie Flangas
- Councilman Ed Spear
- Councilman Jim Alworth
- Councilwoman Michelle Beecher

City Officials and staff present in the building or via video conference:

- City Clerk Jennifer Lee
- City Treasurer-HR Director Janette Trask
- City Attorney Shain Manuele
- City Administrative Assistant Patti Cobb
- City Fire Chief Pat Stork
- Public Works Supervisor Mike Cracraft
- City Building Official Brad Christensen

Also, in attendance: Members of the public in attendance at the Ely Volunteer Fire Hall signed in (appears below) and the following persons attended via video conference: Geri Wopschall, Marietta Henry, and Elizabeth France.

### City Council Special Meeting **ATTENDANCE LIST**

**DATE:** February 3, 2021

<u>Print name below</u>	<u>Print name below</u>
<u>Laurie Carson</u>	_____
<u>George Chachas</u>	_____
<u>Michael Evans (CORE)</u>	_____
<u>Savannah Evans (CORE)</u>	_____
<u>Brandon Whipple (CORE)</u>	_____
<u>Dennis Hernstrom (CORE)</u>	_____
<u>Tom Beus (CORE)</u>	_____
<u>Lee Walker</u>	_____

## 2. PUBLIC COMMENT

White Pine County Commissioner Laurie Carson stated she was here to speak on behalf of the issue with building inspector services. As the owner of the project of the Justice Center/Courthouse, the County is very concerned about the negative impacts that not having a

building inspector will cause their project. The project is ahead of schedule and under budget and if there becomes an issue of having inspections on time it could throw their project off and could lead to increased costs. The City of Ely should have done due diligence to be sure we don't end up in this position. The City of Ely and White Pine County have an inter-local agreement and if it becomes an issue maybe there is be a way to look at it and tweak it to keep things right. White Pine County Commissioner Carson stated she looks forward to things moving as quick as possible. The building is in the City Limits, so a City Official is needed; otherwise White Pine County would have gone ahead with someone on the County side as this project is very important.

Core Construction Superintendent Dennis Hermstrom stated he wanted to give an update of the Justice Center/Courthouse Project and where the project is regarding needing inspections. He has spoken with City of Ely Building Official Christensen about inspections for this month and stated that he was told the City Building Official would be at the site to do inspections two or three times this month. They are still doing overhead, and all the P&G's. They still need electrical, mechanical, plumbing inspections, and the final inspection. This all cannot be completed in the next two to three weeks and we are looking at two to three months of continuous inspections as the project progresses. If I can't get the overhead and panels inspected, I will have no choice but to send workers home.

Core Construction Project Manager Brandon Whipple stated he wanted to go along with White Pine County Commissioner Carson on working with the City of Ely by being transparent of the needs for inspections and the financial impacts it can have on the project as well as the City and County. If construction halts, the cost impact is more than we care to ever see with sending crew members home and trying to get them back or having guys sitting in hotel rooms not being able to work. They have scheduled as much as they can with City Building Official Brad Christensen in the next month, but wanted to come to this City Council Meeting in the spirit of working together and being part of the solution. I hope to keep the crew members here in Ely working that have been bringing business to the City of Ely, and continue for the project to go smoothly and invite anyone that would like a tour to come by.

George Chachas stated ongoing concerns with the billing for his property at 490 High Street and the vehicles that were removed; the missing brick, proper repair, and the pathetic inspection by the City Building Official on his property at 570 Aultman; utility billing; and not being reimbursed for taking care of the sewer problem at 681 Parker. Mr. Chachas stated he was not sure what happened with the individual that was hired at the last meeting for the Building Official Position, but encouraged contact with Chris Flannery who used to be the County Inspector and could take care of things in the short term.

### **3. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION ONLY OF THE ELY CITY COUNCIL.**

1. Mayor Robertson – Discussion Only – Consideration of current options to provide City Building Inspection Services.

Mayor Robertson stated he is not sure what all the hand ringing from the County is as he has spoken to many people from the County that have reached out with questions and the City of Ely's full intention is to hire a building inspector not only for the County's job but for mining and other projects going on around the County that we service. There is a lot of construction and permitting with homeowners that we don't want to delay, as well as the Public Works Project of the Justice Center; tonight, we are going to be making efforts to do that. City Building Official Christensen did give lots of notice, but the last person that was offered the job had a hard time finding housing and declined the job. The City and County have been working on housing issues for the last year or more, but there is still a lack of houses on the market and rent is high.

City Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated she did reach out to one other applicant that was interviewed and he declined. The wages were an issue and the applicants did not put much effort in to looking into our area as far as wages. We did receive an application

that does not qualify regarding the qualifications and requirements as listed on the job advertisement and the job description.

Mayor Robertson asked City Treasurer/HR Director Trask to speak about the pay range we are offering, how the research was done, and how we compare to the rest of the State.

City Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated the research was done on Nevada Transparency looking at similar city sizes of what wages were; they were anywhere from \$50,000.00 to \$80,000.00 a year. Our current Building Official's wage is at the higher end of that.

Mayor Robertson asked City Treasurer Trask and Building Official Christensen if they thought the wages were competitive with the rest of the State, and both thought they were.

City Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated she has reissued an ad through the ICC and has not heard anything back.

Mayor Robertson stated the current applicant isn't qualified as to possessing the certifications and the experience but wanted to put it in front of the Council for the same reasons we were doing with the fire department positions. If we can hire someone here locally, that overcomes one of the big obstacles of getting someone to move out to the most remote city in the lower 48 states and find housing as they are already committed here. There is a possibility of hiring at a lower rate with a strict schedule of obtaining those certifications. In the meantime, we could contract services for some of the bigger jobs in the interim. It is ultimately the Council's decision.

Councilwoman Beecher stated it is imperative to put out a Request for Proposal (RFP) immediately for contract services regardless if we fill the full-time position as we don't have time to sit and wait.

Mayor Robertson stated the options are contracting for services in the interim, interviewing the applicant that is less qualified but a local resident and continuing to advertise for further interest. Mayor Robertson asked if the Council had any other ideas.

Councilman Carson asked if the less qualified person gave a bad permit out or did not catch something what would the ramifications to the City of Ely be?

City Attorney Manuele stated the City of Ely would be liable, so we wouldn't want the less qualified person do anything they were not qualified to do. Potentially the less qualified person would shadow the person that was hired to do contract services and was certified until they were certified to do those tasks.

Mayor Robertson asked what are the absolute qualification that we need and what would be nice to have? Mayor Robertson stated he has had a conversation with City Building Official Brad Christensen and there are differences between a building inspector and building official and the certifications required.

City Building Official Christensen stated the building official portion is more administrative and the building inspector portion speaks for itself. The inspectors are going out doing hands on inspections in the field and the City of Ely needs a Building Inspector and not necessarily a Building Official to handle the different trades. The MPE that Core Construction is talking about is the mechanical, plumbing and electrical inspections.

Mayor Robertson asked what certifications are needed for this position?

City Official Christensen stated there are numerous certifications such as Commercial Building Inspector, Residential Building Inspector, and then a Regular Building Inspector that encompasses all of it. The certifications are done through the International Code

Council (ICC) which represents the books that are used and there are CEU's required every three years to maintain accreditation.

Mayor Robertson asked if these certifications are something someone could get in a matter of months or what goes into that?

City Building Official Christensen stated there is a lot of testing and prep that is needed as they are timed exams and you must get a certain percentage to be able to get the certification. The time to complete these exams depends on the aptitude and knowledge of the testing person.

Councilman Spear stated the timeline to fill the position is four weeks. Councilman Spear stated he spoke with Core a week ago, as he felt the City was in a liable situation with not having at least a plan for inspection services and that same day spoke with City Clerk Lee and City Treasurer/HR Director Trask. A contract needs to be accepted immediately for services because if the 30-million-dollar Justice Center project gets delayed even one week with the number of employees they have the City is going to be in real trouble. We have a contract with the County to provide inspection services for the project and should look for contract services out of Elko; I've had previous experience with them on work completed on the Convention Center.

Mayor Robertson stated I highly encourage the Council to put an RFP out for contract services to have in place by the end of the month, but also fill the position with someone who is less qualified or continue to advertise. The other option on the table for the Council to decide is if they want to interview this less qualified candidate and if so, that will be during next week's meeting.

Councilman Spear asked does the current applicant hold any licenses?

Mayor Robertson stated he does not hold any licenses, but does have building experience, is local and has a desire to do this job.

Councilman Alworth stated I agree with Councilman Spear that the Council needs to act quickly. The Council should consider contracting with current City Building Official Christensen. With our obligation to the project at the Justice Center and the mines, we need to make sure we have inspection services secured. If we can have the less qualified candidate on the payroll, he could shadow a contract inspector, so he is getting on the job learning.

Councilwoman Beecher stated if we contract with Brad Christensen, is there issue with his PERS?

Treasurer/HR Director Trask recommended not talking specifically of individuals to contract with as there are things that need to be looked into further, but rather approve the decision to go with advertising contract services.

Mayor Robertson stated that we would need to put out an advertisement for RFP services whether that is Brad Christensen or another qualified candidate. As someone that works in construction, having an inspector change halfway through a project is inconvenient; I have had this happen on several projects and it is not ideal.

Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated what can be done is advertise in the newspaper and send the advertisement to individuals.

Councilman Alworth asked if an individual retires from their employment with a government agency and we are looking for professional services, can we hire them if the individual starts their own business?

Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated the question on PERS is that the retiree is limited on what they can earn, and they must wait 90 days if the person goes back into a PERS eligible position; contracting is not a PERS eligible position.

City Attorney Manuele stated he recommended advertising for proposals.

Mayor Robertson stated it would behoove us to have at least two on the list of people we contract with that we could call upon to do the inspection and have a per inspection fee.

Councilman Flangas stated we could have the contract a 30-day basis and if someone is hired full-time, we could have the contract null and void after 30 days. I recommend pursuing every option available at this time.

White Pine County Commissioner Carson commented as the Council moves forward with this decision, consider that we are very remote, and it is hard to get companies to come here and work as it is not cost effective. Core Construction has several different electrical companies, drywall, painters, HVAC workers and these companies also have other projects going on. If we must pause, that will snowball and these people may have to leave, and we may not be able to get them back and find replacements. Therefore, we are concerned about the urgency of filling this position.

Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated she believes with the decisions being made tonight and having it on the second agenda in February, it should be settled without too much problem.

Councilman Alworth asked would City Building Official Christensen would be willing to come in on his vacation time to address inspections needs?

Treasurer/HR Director Trask stated that City Building Official Christensen has scheduled those needs through the end of the month on his time at work and continued services will be needed after the end of the month.

2. Mayor Robertson – Discussion/For Possible Action – Selection from current options discussed above to provide City Building Inspection Services, to possibly include a release of a Request for Qualifications for provision of contracted Building Inspection Services.

Councilman Spear moved to instruct Treasurer/HR Director Trask to advertise the City of Ely Building Official position, put out an RFP for contract services and for the Council to interview the candidate that is not qualified at next week's City Council meeting. Councilwoman Beecher seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Councilman Alworth stated if we were to hire the person that is less qualified in training could the construction professional's knowledge be used to help on some of the inspections.

Core Construction Project Manager Brandon Whipple stated they would be willing to help in any way they can with sharing their expertise during the learning process if needed.

#### **4. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Core Construction Project Manager Brandon Whipple thanked the Ely City Council for taking their concerns seriously and to end on a positive note they are not any different than other projects in the City or County but wanted to come and inform of where they were on the project and willing to help in any way they can.

George Chachas stated he is surprised by the statement on housing shortages as he has been trying to reroof two of his properties for a couple of years. I recommend going with someone that is qualified for the building inspector position as the City Attorney stated it could be a liability situation. He stated the City of Ely needs to focus on in town building inspection needs

as OSHA and MSHA will take care of the mines. Mr. Chachas stated his ongoing concerns with curb/gutter and ADA compliance, the missing brick on his building at 745 Aultman, a permit to reroof his property at 490 High Street, curb and gutter codes not being enforced, RV Squatters and if they are billed for City sewer and water, and that he has paid for ads with the local newspaper back in April 2020 they have yet to run and asked the City to solicit a different newspaper.

**10. ADJOURNMENT: THE MEETING MAY BE ADJOURNED BY APPROPRIATE MOTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL.**

Councilman Alworth moved to adjourn the Special meeting of the Ely City Council at **5:45 p.m.** Councilman Flangas seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.



\_\_\_\_\_  
MAYOR



\_\_\_\_\_  
ATTEST