

MONTROSE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

May 20, 2025

CALL TO ORDER: Mayor Tom Banks called the regular Council meeting to order at 8:31 p.m. The meeting was held at the City Offices located at 139 S. Saginaw Street, Montrose, MI.

ROLL CALL: Present council members were Mayor Tom Banks, Mayor Pro-Tem Mark Richard, Robert Arnold, Ryan Heslop, Todd Pangle, Lori Machuk, and Melissa Wallace-Hoose. Also present was City Attorney from Foster & Swift, Mallory Reader, City Manager Barbara Valentine, City Clerk Tina Rush, and numerous citizens.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG: Mayor Tom Banks led The Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: City of Montrose Assessor Robert Naumann read aloud a letter on behalf of City Manager Barbara Valentine and City treasurer Nicole Moore after both were hired unanimously 7-0. Citizen Dalton Atwell expressed his appreciation for the City Assessor and for City Manager Barbara Valentine. Montrose Township resident Sadie Leonard complained about FOIA requests and receiving code enforcement letters for her rentals. Montrose Township resident Larry Leonard complained about receiving ordinance violation letters for his rentals. Montrose Township resident Harry Powell spoke on behalf of City Treasurer, Nicole Moore. City Clerk Tina Rush asked the council to excuse herself from the council table, so that she could speak as a resident. Rush spoke on the disarray within the community and how it is affecting work at the city offices. Rush also heeded council asking them not to make decisions based on here-say, Facebook posts and inuendo's. Sadie Leonard complained about getting a receipt for her water bill that has an old employee's name on it. Representative Deanna from RetroFoam thanked Valentine for following through on the insulation grant that was not completed by the previous city manager and asked the current council to continue following up with the MiHOPE insulation grant. City Secretary Christine Schultz spoke on the difficulties regarding B S & A and the reason for not having her name on the receipts instead of an old employee's name due to a setting issue within the B S & A program. Clint Diffin complained about FOIA requests, outstanding issues with his insulation grant and receiving code enforcement letters.

SPECIAL BUSINESS:

1. TO DISCUSS AND DECIDE WHETHER TO INITIATE THE PROCESS OF TERMINATING THE CITY'S EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT WITH THE CITY MANAGER, BARBARA VALENTINE: Mayor Banks read aloud a prepared letter explaining the process for terminating the city manager and asked the city attorney to read aloud the resolution to remove for No Cause, (on file at the City Offices). Mayor Pro-Tem Richard Council member mentioned that he has been a part of human resources for the State of MI and knows the process of whether an employee should be fired and/or reprimanded. Ryan Heslop read aloud a letter giving an overview of the organizational structure of the City of Montrose, outlining the hierarchy and the order of procedure within the local government. Heslop detailed roles such as the mayor, city manager, council members, and other officials, clarifying how the council operates and the relationships between different positions within the community's governance. Heslop continued by asking for a workshop to enhance and foster a collaborative environment to reduce existing animosity, but ensuring that all members are well-informed so that the council and staff can improve communication to move forward with positive goals. Mayor Banks commented when we first hired the city manager we knew

MONTROSE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

May 20, 2025

there were issues with another municipality, we hired the best candidate, however, when he would meet with Barbara, she would talk about another council member, then when she would meet with another council member, and she would speak about someone else, possibly himself and said that he couldn't trust someone to carry on civilly and professionally as a member of the city management team, then how am I supposed to work with them except to fight a losing battle. Mayor Pro-Tem reminded the council this is a strong manager/mayor council, that each individual communicates through the city manager and not directly to staff. Council member Arnold said he feels that he has only received ½ information and ½ truth's but didn't clarify what it was regarding. Council member Hoose said she has received emails from Barbara that are totally inappropriate and has listened to conversations regarding a business owner's actions within the community. Hoose also commented that she was upset that Valentine questioned her mental continuity with another council member and she felt that if reprimanding would solve the problem instead of firing, she would. Machuk commented that she had no issues with Valentine's history with another municipality, but she does not want to air dirty laundry and is not basing her decision on Facebook.

- **MOTION** by Banks **SECOND** by Pangle to move to adopt the preliminary resolution to initiate removal of the City Manager, Barbara Valentine without cause. Roll Call Vote: Arnold – Aye, Hoose - Aye, Heslop – Nay, Pangle – Aye, Mayor Pro-Tem Richard – Nay, Machuk – Aye, and Mayor Banks – Aye. Five (5) Ayes. Two (2) Nays. Motion Carried.

2. *TO DISCUSS AND DECIDE WHETHER TO TERMINATE THE CITY'S EMPLOYMENT CONTRACT WITH THE CITY TREASURER, NICOLE MOORE:* Mayor Banks read aloud a prepared letter explaining the process for terminating the city treasurer and opened the floor for council members to speak. Council member Arnold said that there was a lot of information that he wishes he could have given to the council prior to hiring Mrs. Moore. Pangle said he would have liked more information as well. Hoose said they feel they do not have enough information, and that this is going too fast. ~~Machuk commented that she likes to research things and prior to researching on Facebook, she was contacted by outside people.~~ Amended at the 07/22/25 City Council meeting. Machuk commented, "I like to research things, and I knew about this before it was all over Facebook". Machuk then read aloud the email from Valentine regarding the hiring of Nicole Smith. Machuk said she requested more information on who had applied, who was on the hiring panel and how this decision was made but was denied when she came into the city offices. Mayor Banks said that Valentine directed them to have the city attorney contact her directly and she would give the attorney that information. Machuk also said she contacted a previous employer of Ms. Moore and spoke to their clerk and heard some things. Arnold clarified that it's different having an elected official versus an employee and heeded council on a decision based on politics. Mayor Banks expressed frustration on being rushed to approve a contract with the treasurer.

- **MOTION** by Arnold **SECOND** by Richard, that we give Nicole a chance to defend herself against the accusations and a chance to answer the questions, I think that she should continue her job in the meantime and that we prepare questions for the next council session which is less than a week away now, and provide them to her so she can answer set questions, and we can hash out what's going on, I think that's the fair thing

MONTROSE CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES

May 20, 2025

to do to Nicole and a fair thing to do to council, until then she continues on as she is right now as the treasurer of the City of Montrose and continues doing the work that she is on. Roll Call Vote: Pangle – Aye, Machuk – Nay, Arnold – Aye, Hoose – Aye, Mayor Pro-Tem Richard – Aye, Heslop – Aye, and Mayor Banks – Nay. Five, (5) Ayes. Two (2) Nays. Motion Carried.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL COMMENTS: Arnold said he was disappointed at the way this ended. Mayor Pro-Tem Richard reiterated that based on the documents he saw and his training with the State of MI, it would most likely be discipline, written reprimand, or corrective action, which protects the State from lawsuits. Heslop expressed concern that although he's happy we are give Moore the opportunity to defend herself, he did not hear any assertions that we should be doing the same for Valentine and hopes she asserts her right to request a hearing on the matter so that she can defend herself in public as well.

ADJOURNMENT:

MOTION by Richard **SECOND** by Pangle to adjourn. All Ayes. Motion Carried.

Mayor Banks adjourned the meeting at 9:32 p.m.

Prepared by City Clerk, Tina Rush