

# City Council Minutes

## Tuesday, February 22, 2022

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### Call to Order

Mayor Chase called the meeting to order promptly at 6:00 PM. City Clerk Jessica Hylton called the roll. Because of the social distancing regulations for COVID-19 the meeting was held at the Sadie Johnston Building instead of City Hall.

### Attendees

Council members Clarissa Pace, Cedric Leonard, Michael James, Al Peer, Craig McRae, Mark Tiner, Mike Wigley, and Claudia Hartness were present.

### Approval of Minutes

Mike Wigley moved to approve the December minutes, Craig McRae seconded, an yay nay vote was called for, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

### Reports and Presentations

- a. Planning Commission—Dan Boice  
They remain focused on gathering public input. On March 7<sup>th</sup> there will be a workshop lead by the community development committee. It begins at 9:00 AM. He would like to see council members come. Chefs will provide the catering. There will also be shorter workshops on March 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>—while there will not be lunch on those days, there will be donuts. The committee has been in discussion with Jim von Tungeln regarding the armory. He has recommended an RFP to solicit proposals. Public input is key. For \$1800 he will assist the Planning Commission with this process.
- b. Senior Citizen Center—Cindy Villarreal  
Meals were down, but home delivery was up 66 meals. They served 2035 meals despite being closed 3-4 days due to weather and holidays. UAM brought students with the hospitality department to come and help with the seniors, which was a lot of fun. They have also started taking donations and have gotten about \$700 so far. They have contacted Pepsi, which will donate some water, sodas, and snacks.
- c. Public Works—Charlie Hammock  
He started by reminding everyone that flushable wipes are not actually flushable and that they are not biodegradable. Teams worked on the pipes for six to eight hours trying to get them clear. He also showed pictures that showed pants, shirts, etc. that had been flushed into the lines. He stated that the most recent problem was likely caused by the detention center. The eight-inch pipes were entirely clogged. Mike Wigley asked if there was a way to put pressure on the companies who are marketing products that are this problematic for city systems. City Attorney Whit Barton agreed that our issues seem to be part of a broader problem. Clarissa Pace asked if she saw blankets and shirts in the photos. She did. The residents of the detention center have been flushing whatever they can down the pipes to flood their cells. Cedric Leonard asked if there have been other areas that had trouble with people flushing things they shouldn't. Yes there has. There were difficulties with an apartment complex before.

d. City Inspector—Brian Rodgers

Turtle Creek Complex on Slemons is gone and they are likely going to tear down another building soon. There were 2 new ordinance 630 cases and 12 ordinance 756 violations this month.

e. MEDC—Nita McDaniel

They had three recruitments taken off the active list. 1202 visited last week and is pending on a site now. This business will create 5-10 jobs, all between \$40,000-100,000. They will be information technology jobs. 0110 is still looking at the intermodal site but they will need another six months for their process. The specifics of the building they require are very intentional. A retail business has signed a contract, but everything has slowed down due to staffing difficulties. They will go into the former Stage building. There are three new developers coming to town. The Scogin Drive project has been officially extended and there will be a site visit next week. Intermodal is able to move forward with the railroad crossing but the Board is still grappling with a new location at the road. HDR is reaching out for prospect analysis. Swift connect, a broadband company, is looking at further optics in Monticello. AT&T is also looking to expand, and the MEDC has found a new manager for Ridgeway, who is doing great.

f. Police—Jason Akers

K9 unit was called to assist Ashley Co. and located the suspect. This month they've logged over 12,000 miles and had 700 calls for service. The 1<sup>st</sup> senior security course was held at First Baptist Church, and all went well. The department has been awarded \$27,490 for Project Safe Neighborhood grant that will go to Thermal Fisher Dynamics for a handheld spectrometer that shoots lasers at drugs and helps identify them without touching them. It will also help get two mobile fingerprint units that will help with difficult suspects and unknown bodies. When the council approved money for vehicles in 2021 they got \$50,000 that needs to be moved into a USDA account so that the grant can be in compliance. Chief Akers wanted to thank the council for the Durangos, as they are incredible.

g. Fire—Eric Chisom

There were 29 calls, 15 of which were grass fires. Of the 15 grass fire calls, 10 have been outside the city. The burn ban helped keep the fires down. Mike Wigley asked about compensation for working outside limits? Structure fires are covered by insurance while grass fires are not. They can bill for grass fires and if compensation has not been received within 90 days, a bill is sent to the county who can pay up to \$200. To respond to a grass fire, it costs \$30 per person and \$550 per brush truck. For an hour on a grass fire is \$500-600. Mike Wigley stated we need to make it a value to be in the city. We can't afford to be taking care of those outside the city limits. Cedric Leonard asked if the burn ban has been lifted? Yes. Lifted today.

h. Parks Commission—Gerald Shepard

A contract has been signed with Entergy to start work on the lights at City Park. Poured all the pads for the bleachers. Trying to order all they need so when the time comes, he has what he needs to install. Need to refurbish fields 2 and 4 at the complex. Mike Wigley asked if the fields needed dirt work. Yes. Mark Tiner asked what age group uses those fields? Little league boys. Done it before about 10 years ago. Mike Wigley wanted to know how much does it cost to repair the field? About \$12,000. Mike Wigley followed up by asking could this help hosting tournaments? Yes. Mayor Chase stated this is why we need representation for the parks at the meeting. Cedric Leonard wanted to know who refurbishes fields? Only one company in the state that does it.

- i. A&P Commission – Michael Hudson  
Easter is April 16<sup>th</sup>. There are 5,000 candy filled eggs, and we are looking for people to help hide them. We're also looking for an Easter Bunny. Mike Wigley volunteered Michael James. There will be an Inter-commission after the March 7<sup>th</sup> CDI. Food trucks have been very successful at the previous A&P Commission events.

## Unfinished Business

### Discussion on Tourism Attraction Feasibility Study/The Armory

Mayor Chase brought up having a certified city planner to handle the request for a request for proposals. Takes the burden off of us to find the right people to do what we want done with that building. Clarissa Pace stated this will help with suggestions as to whether we sell or keep the armory. Yes, we cannot find a sensible study that will focus on the building instead of the city as a whole. But if we could it will give us options. Mike Wigley asked if the RFP would bring buyers or tenants? Mayor Chase stated it could be either. The RFP simply will bring possibilities for the building. Clarissa Pace asked about a previous offer. The offer was never actually made; it was just an idea. The hospital has also expressed interest but has not made an offer. The RFP should be seen as an advertisement for what can be done with the building. The council expressed support of moving forward with this plan of action.

## New Business

- A. Discussion with Craig Kamanicki from Richard Maxwell and Associates, PLLC on 2020 Water Study  
They have finished the audit, and it has come back clean with a \$630,000 increase in cash. The current year has improved a little. Not flat but only a slight increase. The cost of the system was down, and the profit of the system was about break-even which is an improvement over the deficit of last year. The water study looks like there is a good cash flow which suggests a positive report. Mark Tiner asked if we have enough cash to debt service anything? Yes, that is what the 630k is for.
- B. Discussion with James Hartshorn with EFS on proposed maps for redistricting  
There are three options for the redistricting process. Every 10 years all political subdivisions go through redistricting. This follows the Census. They are trying to make sure everyone gets represented equally. With 8,000 people, 2111 is the magic number for each district. The Census cuts the whole United States into census blocks that tell you how many people live in that block. They have done over 140 of these redistricting projects before and can get within 5% of their target goal. The three options they have come up with are not written in stone. Option 1 has the least amount of change. Option 3 gets the closest to the magic number, but it gets a little crazy. All three plans keep Ward 4 the same. A decision regarding this process does need to be made within 30 days.
- C. Amendment to Resolution 21-74 to include shipping  
Craig McRae introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Michael James seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Michael James asked if this was tax exempt, it was not. Mark Tiner moved to approve, Craig McRae seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed unanimously.
- D. Proposed CAO Amendment No. 002 for the East Plant  
Craig McRae introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Clarissa Pace seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Mark Tiner moved to approve, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed unanimously.

- E. Proposed CAO Amendment No. 003 for the West Plant  
Mark Tiner introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Craig McRae seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Clarissa Pace moved to approve, Craig McRae seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed unanimously.
- F. Resolution Authorizing Agreement with City of Wilmar Regarding Water  
Craig McRae introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Al Peer seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Mayor Chase stated that Wilmar had a bad water tank in bad shape that needs repaired and wanted to buy water from the city. Mark Tiner asked who would put in the lines connecting Wilmar to the city water. City Attorney Whit Barton stated it would be paid for by the City of Wilmar. Mayor Chase confirmed we have the excess to make this feasible. Mark Tiner moved to accept the resolution, Michael James seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed.
- G. Resolution regarding 509 E Gaines Ordinance 630 Certifying Balance Owed  
Cedrick Leonard asked why there were two resolutions regarding the same property. Mayor Chase stated there are two resolutions on 509 E Gaines Street because there were two separate service calls. Chapman came to demolish the property and was on location from 8-10:30 when the demolition was called off. His original bill was over \$6,000 so this price has already been discounted. Clarissa Pace asked if Chapman had anything in his contract that would have stopped us from being billed twice for the same day. Mayor Chase stated that it was not a bill for the same day. Mark Tiner pointed out we were charged a service call. City Attorney Whit Barton spoke up and asked if we thought \$3,000 was a fair price for a service call. Cedric Leonard asked if Chapman's business is in town. It is. Mark Tiner introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Michael James seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Mark Tiner moved to approve, Michael James seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed with Clarissa Pace, Cedric Leonard, and Al Peer in opposition.
- H. Resolution regarding 509 E Gaines Ordinance 630 Certifying Balance Owed  
Michael James introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Craig McRae seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Clarissa Pace stated that we need to explain this kind of lien and expressed concern that we are about to present a \$9,000 bill to someone who couldn't afford to repair his home in the first place. City Attorney Whit Barton explained that it is a lien against the property, not a personal one. It will be due when taxes are due. If it is not paid by then, the property will be forfeited. It is not something they will be sued for. Craig McRae moved to approve, Claudia Hartness seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed with Clarissa Pace, Cedric Leonard, and Al Peer in opposition.
- I. Discussion with Jason Akers on Police Department Equipment Purchases  
Most of this was covered in his earlier report. Mrs. Vickie wanted to make sure everyone understands that funds will be temporarily moved to the USDA until the grant funds come in—then the money will be moved back to 1 cent sales tax.
- J. Discussion Regarding Arkansas Natural Resources Division regarding Main Street  
Mayor Chase stated that Debbie Dickson suggested that while the city is likely to get a loan to help with the costs of repairs, it is unlikely that the city will get free money. She also stated if the city wanted to work with her, she could probably get interest rates lower than Stephens, but the process is a very long process. It can take up to two years. Claudia Hartness expressed interest in going ahead with the bond issue. Mark Tiner asked if a representative could come back. Mayor Chase said she would ask and asked

the council if they wanted to table this discussion until next month, but that she would move forward with the process in the meantime.

Mayor Chase asked to amend the agenda to include conversations about three items—improvements to the sports complex, the railroad spur repair, and the total cost to the codebooks. Mark Tiner moved to approve the motion, Claudia Hartness seconded, and Aye/Nay vote was called, and the Ayes had it. Clarissa Pace left the meeting.

To Approve an invoice for the dirt for the ball fields

The dirt would cost \$3180.75 for the ball fields. The dirt had already been delivered. Al Peer moved to increase the Mayor's spending limit; Craig McRae seconded.

A Resolution to Repair the Railroad Spur at the Industrial park

Al Peer introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Michael James seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Mark Tiner expressed his opinion that this should be covered by the MEDC's budget. Michael James moved to approve, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed with Mark Tiner in opposition.

A Resolution to Amend the Budget to pay for Railroad Spur Repairs

Michael James introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Craig McRae seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. Michael James moved to approve, Al Peer seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed with Mark Tiner in opposition.

An Updated Cost on the Codebooks

The cost of the code books increased by \$548 due to tax.

Total Cost of Repair to the Ballfields

Mark Tiner introduced the motion and that it be read by title only, Michael James seconded, and City Attorney Whit Barton read. The original cost to fully fix the two ballfields was initially the \$26,000. That figure included the previously approved \$3180.75 for dirt work. So, to fully fix the fields it would cost \$22,819.25. Mark Tiner asked if the Parks budget could afford the repairs. It can. Michael James moved to approve with the total adjusted for the previously approved dirt work, Mark Tiner seconded, City Clerk Jessica Hylton called roll, and the motion passed unanimously.

## Adjournment

Cedric Leonard moved to adjourn the meeting, Al Peer seconded, and the meeting adjourned at 8:13 PM.

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City Clerk

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Date of Approval