

City Council Minutes
August 23, 2021

The Revenue Neutral Rate Hearing was called to order in the Council meeting room at 7:00 p.m. by Mayor J.D. Hegwood. Present were Mitch Brenner, Lance DeLissa, Roberto Holguin, Brian Kroth and George Lucas. Also present were City Administrator Dean Cordes and City Clerk Janet Gleason. Visitors were Bobbi Allison, Tom Kuhns, Randi Vanderpool, Jamie Boese and Doug Ritter.

There was no public comment regarding the RNR hearing.

The 2022 Budget Hearing was called to order with the same personnel present in the council room. There was no public comment regarding the 2022 budget.

The regular council meeting was called to order with the same personnel present. Attorney Clay Kuhns arrived at the meeting at 8:20p.m.

There were no extension requests.

Sheriff Ritter reported to the council that he had reviewed the draft copy of the proposed law enforcement agreement. He noted the attorney revision did not have the 3-mile radius and the term had been changed. The county insurance would require a “hold harmless” clause the county would have no liability prior to the contract date. Cordes suggested changing the payment agreement back to the end of 2025 and the 1.5% cost of living increase would be effective at the beginning of 2023. Consensus of Council was for the payments to be billed at the beginning of the quarter, prior to the services being provided rather than in arrears. Ritter said there are 2 deputies in the day and 2 at night, one would patrol the city, and one would patrol the County. If the city paid for 3 officers, it would be an odd number for a shift so they would be rotated in. DeLissa asked if there would be two officers assigned in Meade at certain times, but Ritter said there would only be one. If the city paid for 3 officers, it would just make it more likely an officer wouldn’t get called beyond the 3-mile radius. Kroth stated that city officers would respond out of the city so coverage by the county wouldn’t really be any different than in the past by the city police. Brenner asked if the city could start with two officers and add a third if necessary. Ritter felt it would be possible and that there would likely be continuing conversations regarding the agreement. Cordes will make the corrections and send the draft to Sheriff Ritter for review.

DeLissa asked Council to review two possible resident surveys. Kroth was concerned that even if surveys indicated some residents wanted a city police department, there haven’t been any applications. If wages had to be increased to get applications, then all city wages would need to be increased. Kroth stated that “we are elected and expected to make decisions and must consider the budget”. Brenner asked if the city had received any applications and Cordes said not yet. Council asked where it was advertised and Cordes stated it has been posted on the Kansas Peace Officers Association website.

DeLissa stated he would like to know the opinion of the citizens and if the city can’t afford a police department, then the council would make that decision. The options of a non-binding post office box survey were discussed at length. The survey would have to be signed, with an address, to discourage someone from completing multiple surveys and the estimated cost of printing and distributing a survey was \$1000.00. Holguin asked if we had any calls and neither Gleason nor Boese have had any inquiries. Cordes had one person who had attended the last council meeting come to his office to discuss further questions they had. Council meetings are public and council members all felt people are aware of the issue because it has been reported in the paper after every council meeting. Vanderpool stated that she has not had any calls to the Police Department, but people have talked to her at the grocery store. Council asked if she was referring them to the council and she said, “I tell them what is going on and if they have questions they can come to a meeting”. Kroth asked if those she talked to were for or against and she said most she had talked to were for keeping the department. She said the public doesn’t understand they can come to a meeting without being on the agenda. Gleason stated that if they called the office to inquire, they would be informed there is a time for public comment for anyone attending the meeting. Vanderpool said people should have a way to voice their opinions because council was elected by the citizens. Several council members stated that the doors are

always open. Gleason noted that council members are all listed on the website and there is also a form for people to send a comment or question to the city. Also discussed at length was the responsibility to control the budget. Kroth said “even if we want to keep the department—can we afford to keep it”? DeLissa felt even those who want to keep it don’t realize it is almost a third of the city budget. Kroth does not want to raise taxes and the city would not be stepping down from law enforcement. The city would be providing for county officers to be assigned to the city and pay less for the coverage. Kroth said it IS important to do what the citizens want BUT we can only do what we can afford to do. Hegwood said fiscally it makes more sense to consolidate but they also need to look at safety. Kroth asked what he meant, and Hegwood said he felt the coverage would be there but wanted to be sure. Cordes felt the coverage would be better because the county is offering 24-hour coverage. Kroth said if there were any issues, citizens would need to inform council and Sheriff Ritter would be asked to attend council meetings to address those issues. Cordes stated the council knows Ritter, he has been a city police officer. Cordes will make the requested changes to the contract and give it to Ritter for review. Brenner stated the council needs to decide at the next meeting and Kroth agreed.

There was a motion by Kroth, seconded by Brenner not to do a survey. Kroth and Brenner voted for, Holguin, Lucas, DeLissa against. Motion did not carry. Holguin requested more discussion. Brenner asked council what they were going to do if most of the survey’s returned were in favor of keeping the department because there are no applications. Will we raise the pay and wait for an applicant? Holguin said the survey wouldn’t be binding and if you had 100 surveys one way, does that mean there are 100 the other way? Not everyone would return a survey either. Brenner asked again- “what do you want with the survey”. DeLissa said if they all came back for keeping the department that would indicate that they were in favor of raising taxes to pay for it. Brenner felt people have had time to let the city know what they want, and a survey isn’t really going to make any difference. Kroth felt it was just going to drag out deciding. Lucas asked Kroth if he wanted to decide tonight and Kroth said he was fine with waiting until the next meeting, but a decision needed to be made. DeLissa and Lucas stated they want to know what the public wants, and the rest of the council agreed with them but weren’t sure that a mailed survey was the best way.

Lucas asked why funds that are in Certificates of Deposits couldn’t be used to fund the police department. Brenner commented that if money in those funds was spent for yearly expenses what would the city have for unexpected expenses? Cordes explained there is no “extra money”. The funds held in CD’s are part of the city budget and distributed among multiple funds.

All council members commented that community residents have expressed their opinions, and most were for consolidation. Those that were against it were in favor once they understood that the consolidation agreement would provide an officer within the city. Consensus of the council was not to do a survey. Citizens know that they can attend meetings and council will decide regarding consolidation at the next meeting. Ritter left the meeting.

Minutes of the August 9 meeting were approved as written.

Motion by Brenner, seconded by DeLissa to approve Building Permits #21018, #21019-subject to state approval, and #21020. Motion carried with all in favor.

Boese presented council with an update on the KMIH loan/grant application and the process. The committee met last week and discussed the possibility of applying for \$200,000.00 in loans and \$50,000.00 in grants to build two homes affordable to middle income families on the Bainter lots. She plans to request permission to distribute community housing assessments at the Buffalo Bonanza, in the office and the major employers in the city. These are required as part of the application process. The committee will meet again this week to discuss more details.

Cordes reported that he has not yet been given a start date for the stoplight repairs and Penner is still waiting on supplies for the water project.

The motor for the lift station has been repaired and is working but Cordes was told it was a good “spare”. Cordes ordered a new motor for the main lift station at a cost of \$6,935.70 direct from Smith and Loveless and should come in 4-6 weeks. DeLissa suggested checking the other lift station motor for any needed maintenance.

Cordes reported that Meade Thriftway wants to do a solar project to save on their electric costs. DeLissa and Hegwood requested Cordes get more information regarding metering and safety. Cordes will also request Attorney Kuhns review state statutes regarding solar power.

Motion by Brenner, seconded by Holguin to grant Dennis Foster a 3-year wage increase from \$18.90 to 20.41/hr. Motion carried with all in favor.

Council consented for Boese to attend the KAPIO meeting on September 30, Gleason and Boese to attend the LKM Conference October 9-11, and Gleason to attend the CCMFOA training November 8-10.

Gleason reported that Bainter Lot 20 had been sold. The city received a check for full payment of the specials on Lot 20 and has been deposited and applied to the 77 (bond) Fund.

Attorney Kuhns reported to the council that Economic Development is working on plans and funding for a Business Incubator project. Consensus of Council was to provide in-kind services for building demolition, dirt work, meters, and possible soffit lighting if the project moves forward. They are also collaborating with the County on funding the project.

Mayor Hegwood reviewed the police report.

Cordes reported that the catalytic converters have been returned and that the city had not received any capital credits for the engines that had not been certified.

Brenner asked about the progress toward the tax sale. Attorney Kuhns stated that he is still waiting on abstracts.

Motion by Brenner, seconded by Kroth to donate \$250.00 to the Ranch Rodeo. Motion carried with all in favor.

Motion by Kroth, seconded by Lucas to adjourn the RNR hearing, the budget hearing and tonight's meeting. Motion carried with all in favor.

ATTEST:

J.D. Hegwood, Mayor

Janet Gleason, Clerk