

CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – July 18, 2023

The regular monthly meeting of the Mulberry City Council was held Tuesday, July 18, 2023, at 7:00 p.m. in the City Council Center at 606 Church Avenue.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Jimmy Moore	Kimberly Bruce
Bobby Tweedy	Wilma Peevy
Stacy Muntz	Gary D. Baxter, Mayor
Sheila Trent	

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Executive Assistant to the Mayor	Tommy Watts
Shannon Gregory, Police Chief	Ronnie Adams
Dwayne Fields, Public Works Director	Scott Oestreich
Jason Sumpter, Assistant Fire Chief	Mandy Oestreich
Kay Baxter	
Suzy Ferguson, Director Mulberry Community Food Pantry	
Eva White, Director of Crawford County Library System	

Mayor Baxter called the Council Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., led in prayer, and followed with the Pledge of Allegiance. Steve Hurley took the roll. A quorum was established.

Bobby Tweedy made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda and previous month's minutes. Sheila Trent seconded the motion. All present council members voted yes.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Chief of Police Shannon Gregory gave the Police Department report stating the department had 169 calls, 60 traffic stops, 17 citations, 13 total arrests (7 misdemeanor and 6 felonies), 10 clean up orders and 383 business checks.

Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter gave the Fire Department report stating that the department had 26 calls that consisted of 1 structure fire, 3 grass fires, 1 large hay bale fire, 18 medical calls, and 3 cancelled calls.

Public Works Director Dwayne Fields gave the Public Works Department report stating the department was fully staffed and that even in 100-degree weather everyone was doing their job and staying hydrated. He went on to say that the new line that had been installed was charged now and it has been bled off two times and that samples would be taken in tomorrow (Wednesday June 19, 2023) to get cleared, that way the meters could start to be hooked up to the new lines. Bobby Tweedy asked about the portable toilets at Bluff Hole park and wanted to know if there was a reason the city was not using permanent bathrooms. Director Fields stated that there was maintenance that needed to be done. The maintenance has now been completed and the portable toilets have been ordered to be removed. Steve Hurley confirmed that the order had been placed to remove the portable toilets. Bobby Tweedy asked how often the bathrooms at Bluff Hole park are cleaned. Mr. Fields answered that the bathrooms are to be cleaned every evening and that they are being cleaned by the same people that clean the bathrooms in the city park. Bobby Tweedy followed up by asking if there is anything we use for odor control in the bathrooms. Dwayne Fields answered that one round of odor control additive had been completed but would do a second round. Mayor Baxter mentioned that a vent had been installed to help alleviate the smell as well.

Eva White with the Crawford County Library System came to the podium to announce the new Branch Director of the Library Tammy Watts. Mrs. Watts mentioned that she had been with the Crawford County Library since 2005. Most of that time she had been at the Alma library. Discussion ensued.

OLD BUSINESS

Steve Hurley read the third reading of ORDINANCE NO. 2023-02 AN ORDINANCE SETTING WASTEWATER/SEWER RATES FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE MULBERRY CITY WASTEWATER SYSTEM AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES.

Bobby Tweedy made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2023-02. Wilma Peevy seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Stacy Muntz voted no, and all other present members voted yes.

Steve Hurley read the third reading of ORDINANCE NO. 2023-03 AN ORDINANCE SETTING WATER RATES FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE MULBERRY CITY WATER SYSTEM AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES.

Jimmy Moore made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2023-03. Sheila Trent seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Stacy Muntz voted no, and all other present members voted yes.

Steve Hurley read the third reading of ORDINANCE NO. 2023-04 AN ORDINANCE SETTING WATER FREES FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE MULBERRY CITY WATER SYSTEM AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES.

Kimberly Bruce made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2023-04. Jimmy Moore seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Stacy Muntz voted no, and all other present members voted yes.

Steve Hurley read the third reading of ORDINANCE NO. 2023-05 AN ORDINANCE SETTING WASTEWATER/SEWER FEES FOR CUSTOMERS OF THE MULBERRY CITY WATER SYSTEM AND FOR OTHER RELATED PURPOSES.

Wilma Peevy made a motion to approve Ordinance No. 2023-05. Bobby Tweedy seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Stacy Muntz voted no, and all other present members voted yes.

Suzy Ferguson with the Mulberry Community Food Pantry came to the podium to discuss the food pantry and the Supplemental Meals Improve Lives and Enrich Summer (S.M.I.L.E.S.) program. She started by stating that due to the rising cost of food and increased food insecurity for families in the area, the food pantries in the River Valley have had to clearly define their service area. When the program first started the food pantry was serving everyone in Crawford and Franklin County. Now the service area is anyone in Mulberry, Dyer, Alma, Mountainburg, Locke, and Fern. The remaining areas have other food pantries to take care of them. This enables the pantries to better serve their areas. This became effective July 1. In June, the pantry served 1,153 individuals. The cooler and freezer have been turned on. It takes about three weeks to get acclimated, but they are being used. The generator has been installed and they are just waiting for the gas meter to be installed. She then discussed the S.M.I.L.E.S. program. She discussed how it assists the students to have access to meals in the summer. They have had 212 kids register and more are registering every week. The S.M.I.L.E.S. kits include 5 breakfasts, 5 lunches, 10 snacks, 5 drinks and they are all shelf stable products, even the milk products. Harps grocery is selling fruit at cost to the food pantry, so the kids get to pick what fruits they want as well. The S.M.I.L.E.S. program is every Monday from 9 am to 11 am. There are three weeks left, they are currently in week 7. The final day will be August 7th. Discussion ensued.

NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business to discuss.

MAYOR'S REPORT AND PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Baxter mentioned the Pickle Ball Courts opened yesterday (July 17th, 2023). He addressed the fallacy that was reported on Facebook that the surface was coming up from the concrete. He explained that when the fences were being installed a pole had been dropped and caused a small divot on the court and the contractor was coming back to fix that area. It would take about 5 days and the area is not on the playing surface, so the courts could be open during the time of repair. Wilma Peevy asked about the dirt that was left over from the Pickle Ball court construction. Mayor Baxter answered that the contractor was going to dress up the area around the courts with that, and the left-over dirt would be spread throughout the park by the Public Works Department to level the area. Dwayne Fields mentioned that the spreading of the dirt had started earlier in the day. Mayor Baxter stated that the sidewalk project on Church Avenue was progressing nicely. He then discussed the Mexican food truck and the Mexican restaurant at Industrial Park Drive. The Comprehensive Juvenile Services project is expected to start before the end of the year. There will be a ribbon cutting this Saturday for the Bee Ready Daycare at 2 pm. He then called Steve Hurley to the podium to discuss the new website and technology advancements. Steve Hurley discussed the new website located at mulberryar.gov and the reasons a .gov email address and website are important. He then discussed the internet redundancy that the city had built into the system to safeguard against a potential loss of internet. Mayor Baxter then spoke on the water line extension on Alma Avenue north of the cemetery for a new resident. He went on to discuss the new overlay that was completed. He mentioned that the Silver Bridge project has been delayed to November due to an endangered species of Bat being found in the area. The Mayor then gave an update on the roofing project for the city buildings. Mayor Baxter then discussed the Crawford County Fair that starts on the Monday after Labor Day. He also said the Saturday before that there will be a parade. He went on to discuss that the Crawford County Conservation District had been awarded the 2023 Outstanding District in the State of Arkansas. He went on to mention the pollinator gardens that were going to be installed in Mulberry. The Mayor discussed the duplexes being built and the update on the water treatment plant. The school projects are going well and construction on the ball fields should start soon. There will be a back-to-school bash at Kirksey Park on Saturday August 5th from 10 am to 2 pm. There will be free clothing and shoes for the children at this event. Mayor Baxter went on to discuss an agreement with AmeriCorps to provide the city with a volunteer from Full Circle Farm Corps to work on projects to deal with food insecurity. The Mayor then discussed an initiative that the city is doing to help build a gift package for the school faculty at their convocation on August 7th. Wilma Peevy asked about the trash service and people stating that they were not getting their trash picked up. Discussion ensued. Kimberly Bruce asked if the Back to School Bash needed clothing donations and if the clothes were used or new. Mayor Baxter stated that the clothes are new and for further details to contact Candi Hopp. Discussion ensued. Mayor Baxter gave an updated on the laundromat and their progress. At this point the power went out and the recording stopped.

With no further business to discuss Stacy Muntz made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kimberly Bruce seconded the motion. All present members voted yes.

This meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.

These minutes were taken by Steve Hurley.

APPROVED: 

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

ATTEST: 

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer