CITY OF MULBERRY, ARKANSAS

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES – July 16, 2024

The regularly scheduled monthly session of the Mulberry City Council convened on Tuesday, July 16, 2024, at precisely 7:00 p.m. The meeting was held at the City Council Center, located at 606 Church Avenue, Mulberry.

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kimberly Bruce, Ward 2 Position 2

Bobby Tweedy, Ward 2 Position 1

Wilma Peevy, Ward 3 Position 1

Stacy Muntz, Ward 1 Position 2

Jimmy Moore, Ward 3 Position 2

Sheila Trent, Ward 1 Position 1

MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve Hurley, Assistant to the Mayor

Arnold McCabe

Shannon Gregory, Police Chief

Kay Baxter

Darren Fields, Water Superintendent

Amanda Fields

Alex Walker, Interim Public Works Director

Marie Crandell

Tina Thompson, CFM, GISP 911/GIS Western Arkansas Planning and Development District

Tammy Watts, Director Ralph D. Graff Library of Mulberry

Jason Sumpter, Assistant Fire Chief

Riley Walker

Mandy Oestreich

Scott Oestreich

Sadat Rice

Call to Order

Mayor Baxter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., leading the gathering in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call:

Assistant to the Mayor Steve Hurley, conducted the roll call, confirming the presence of a quorum.

Approval of Consent Agenda and Previous Meeting Minutes

The minutes of the June regular meeting and the July special meeting were presented. Kimberly Bruce motioned to approve the minutes, seconded by Jimmy Moore. The motion was approved unanimously.

DEPARTMENTAL REPORTS

Police Department Report – Police Chief Shannon Gregory:

- Chief Gregory reported 104 calls, seventeen reports, sixty-two traffic stops, four arrests, and 422 business/building checks in June.
- No questions or comments were raised by the council.

Fire Department Report – Assistant Fire Chief Jason Sumpter:

- Assistant Chief Jason Sumpter reported seventeen calls, including one structure fire, two grass fires, thirteen medical calls, and one service call in June.
- No questions or comments were raised by the council.

Public Works Department Report – Interim Public Works Director Alex Walker:

- Director Alex Walker reported thirty-two service calls and addressed concerns about road conditions and repair schedules.

Ralph D. Graff Library of Mulberry Report – Director Tammy Watts:

- Tammy Watts reported successful events in June, including a summer reading program kickoff with over two hundred attendees. The library had 2,175 visits, thirty-eight programs with 687 attendees, and various other activities.

OLD BUSINESS

- **No Old Business**

NEW BUSINESS

- **Zoning and Digital Mapping Presentation:**
- Tina Thompson from the Western Arkansas Planning and Development District presented a proposal to update the City's zoning maps and cemetery data into a digital format.
- After discussion, a motion to approve the proposal was made by Jimmy Moore, seconded by Bobby Tweedy. The motion passed with six votes in favor and one against.

- **Resolution 2024-10:**
- A resolution to seek a grant from the Arkansas Department of Parks Heritage and Tourism to improve recreation facilities at Mulberry City Park.
- Kimberly Bruce motioned to approve the resolution, seconded by Stacy Muntz. The resolution passed unanimously.

- **ARPA Funding:**
- The council discussed and approved the acceptance of $630,000 in grant funds from the Arkansas Department of Agriculture for rehab of the current clarifier.
- Motion to approve was made by Stacy Muntz, seconded by Kimberly Bruce. The motion passed unanimously.

- **Volunteer Event:**
- Steve Hurley announced a volunteer event at City Park scheduled for Friday from 10 AM to noon, focusing on general cleanup and maintenance.

MAYOR'S REPORT

➢ **Mayor's Report**

Mayor Baxter provided an update on the Crawford County Quorum Court meeting he attended at the request of the Crawford County Judge. He presented a briefing highlighting recent developments and achievements in Mulberry.

Key Points of the Mayor's Update:

1. **Arkansas Spay and Neuter Program:**
    - Received a $3,000 grant.
2. **ARPA Drinking Water Grants:**
    - A total of $832,849.50 was received for various projects including aerator and gate valves, Water Treatment Plant improvements, pH meters, Jar Tester replacement, and water plant rehab.
3. **Food Pantry:**
    - Awarded $300,000 for walk-in freezers and coolers.
    - An additional $500,000 was promised from Congressman Womack's office for further improvements.
4. **Industrial Park Overlays:**
    - $4 million allocated through Congressman Womack's office.
    - $100,000 paid to engineers for ongoing work.
5. **Senior Center Oven Grant:**
    - Awarded a 50-50 grant of $3,847.84.

6. **Water Treatment Plant Expansion:**
    - Awarded $5,294,000 in grants for this project.
    - Received $60,000 in police grants this year.
7. **Food Pantry Success:**
    - The food pantry supplies numerous meals, improving lives, and serves nearly 350 automobiles monthly.
8. **City Lake Spillway:**
    - Coordination with Cass Job Corps to clean the spillway and build a secondary access road.
9. **Business Growth:**
    - Workman's Travel Center plans to break ground in October, completing by June 2025, bringing fifty new jobs.
    - New laundromat on highway 64 and proposed Mexican restaurant at the industrial park.
    - Compass Cold Storage completed phase one and phase two.
    - Comprehensive Juvenile Services upgrading a facility for a new youth shelter.
    - Morrell Manufacturing constructed a new plant.
10. **Park Improvements:**
    - The addition of pickleball courts and permanently installed lights on the disc golf course, making it one of only two lit courses in America.
    - Steve Hurley elaborated on the disc golf course enhancements:
    - A nine-hole course with solar-powered lights on the baskets.
    - Professional-level glow-in-the-dark discs with the city logo will be available for $15 at City Hall.
    - Anticipates attracting more visitors and hosting night play.
11. **City Infrastructure and Technology:**

- Upgraded cybersecurity and technology infrastructure to be fully cloud-based by early 2025, making Mulberry one of only nine Arkansas cities to achieve this.
- Digital mapping and upgraded city website.
- Transition to a more secure .gov website and email addresses.

12. **Public Works Equipment Upgrades:**

- New John Deere with sidearm attachment.
- Ditch Witch Vac trailer for meter installations and leak detection.

13. **School and Community:**

- Construction of ball fields, refurbished gym, safe room, weight room, technology center, and PAC center with a 501-seat auditorium.
- Successful first city-wide garage sale and ongoing activities at the rodeo arena.

14. **Sidewalk and Road Projects:**

- Completed sidewalk project with requests for additional grants.
- Updates on the Silver Bridge construction, with completion now expected in November.

15. **Current Grant Applications:**

- Submitted applications for water and wastewater improvements, sewer line extension, water line replacements, water treatment cybersecurity, and sidewalk construction.
- Requested $75,000 for police equipment and $250,000 for a walking trail project.

➢ **Council Comment**

- Bobby Tweedy raised concerns about recent chip and seal work at the cemetery.
- Jimmy Moore mentioned road maintenance issues on chip and seal roads, prompting further action.

➢ **Public Comment**

- Arnold McCabe: Raised concerns about road conditions on Mulberry Wire Road and made photographs available showing the road underwater during rain.

ADJOURNMENT

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 8:26 p.m. The next scheduled City Council meeting will be on August 20, 2024.

Minutes written by: Steve Hurley

APPROVED: Gary D. Baxter

Gary D. Baxter, Mayor

ATTEST: Carla Dickerson

Carla Dickerson, Recorder-Treasurer