

CITY OF NEW STRAWN
COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday, July 11, 2019

Present were: Mayor Mark Petterson

Council Members: Richard Croll
Jeanne Haas
Gary Haehn
Rhonda Taylor
Jim Weeks arrived at 7:13 p.m.

Others Present: Joni Hernandez, City Clerk
Tom Robrahn, City Attorney
Bob Saueressig, County Commissioner

Patrons present: Mike Baumann Tammy Baumann
Tai Troxell-Coons Amber Dittrich
Travis Fromme Larry Hargreaves
Shirley Heath Kraig Kirchner
Robin Laird Steve Laird
Galyn Meier Ginny Mitchell
Sarah Nuessen Tim Nuessen
Joyce Hopkins Steve Hopkins
Scott Porter Colin Sleezer
Adam Stahl Mike Stuart

Call to Order: Mayor Mark Petterson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Flag Salute: The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Additions and/or Amendments:

Under Parks and Recreation Report

- a. Playground Equipment

Under Mayor's Report

- b. Golf Course

Before Staff Reports

- Executive Session to discuss Non-elected Personnel Work Performance

Haas moved, seconded by Haehn, to approve the agenda with additions. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Approval of Consent Agenda:

- Move to approve the June 13, 2019 regular council meeting minutes
- Move to approve the Warrants dates June 14, 2019 through July 11, 2019 in the amount of \$66,867.16
- Move to approve the June 2019 Payroll in the amount of \$11,422.95
- Reviewed Contractor's License approved by Mayor for Fatboy Electric, Inc.

- Reviewed Contractor's License approved by Mayor for Infinity Sign Systems

Haehn moved, seconded by Croll, to approve the consent agenda. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Public Comments: N/A

Financial Reports:

Haas moved, seconded by Croll, to approve additional warrants in the amount of \$278.60. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Executive Session to discuss Non-elected Personnel Work Performance:

Haehn moved, seconded by Croll, to go into executive session for ten minutes at 7:08 p.m. to discuss non-elected personnel work performance. **Motion carried 4-0.**

Council Member Jim Weeks arrived at 7:13 p.m. He did not enter executive session.

The Council returned to regular session at 7:18 p.m. **No action taken.**

Staff Reports:

City Superintendent - Absent

Council reviewed bid from Trophy Fisheries for City Lake treatment. Need clarification regarding bid. Years listed are for 2018, 2019 and 2020.

City Clerk Report

- City-Wide Garage Sale in conjunction with City of Burlington – August 3rd
- Codification Manuscript completed and notebooks available. Need to review.
- Dogs at Large complaints, emails, messages, police call report, animal shelter assistance
- Franchise Fees from Century Link (waiting for representative to return call)
- League of Kansas Municipalities/American Legal Publishing notification regarding Insurance Proceeds Fund
- Trash pick-up complaints
- Website updated

City Attorney Tom Robrahn thanked the Council and noted he was absent from last month's meeting due to a Kansas League of Municipalities seminar in Wichita. Information he obtained is helpful for keeping up to date with City business.

Golf Course: Several patrons addressed the Council regarding why the change in action taken at its last meeting regarding the approval to purchase the golf course. Many were concerned the Council relied on inaccurate numbers from GreatLife Golf and Fitness regarding revenue and expenses as it pertains to New Strawn.

Members of the Council explained the City can't afford to operate the golf course. In addition to the loan offered by the County, the Burlington Recreation Center would be needed for operations and additional funding. At a previous BRC meeting, they failed to pass a motion to help with operations of the golf course by a vote of **2-2**. The mayor noted that although the Rec did not approve funding, they were not given another opportunity for a second vote at the June 14 BRC meeting.

Many in attendance explained after the Council's approval to accept a loan from the county to purchase the golf course, they have been volunteering and helping to maintain it by watering and spraying the greens and mowing portions of acreage to keep in best possible shape until middle and other sections can be mowed.

With the Council's change in vote, the greens have suffered and will be more costly to bring back but not impossible.

Grants and other funding ideas were discussed, such as The Jones Foundation and Southeast Kansas Regional Planning Commission (SEKRPC) grant writing opportunities.

Patrons expressed importance for the City to own or control the land instead of allowing it to be "pieced out" and continue to become overgrown and taken over by coyotes, skunks, snakes, etc. There have been several complaints about the current look of the golf course.

Council members explained duty to be fiscally responsible with the City's money.

Council member Rhonda Taylor asked if residents who live on golf course might consider forming a homeowner's association to be in control of the golf course. Response was that is normally done at time of development and would be difficult to require inclusion now.

Taylor explained nothing to hide and that the meetings are open to the public and the Council has an obligation to provide services: Water, Sewer, Streets, Zoning, etc. with a limited budget. She asked patrons to call her with concerns.

Patrons wanted to know what caused the Council to change its decision in such a short time. Response was the draft budget numbers would show an initial loss to the City of approximately \$80,000 to \$100,000.

There was discussion and disagreement as to whether the numbers were accurate.

The golf course has been a source of pride and a benefit to the community and can be to Coffey County and surrounding area; not just New Strawn residents. It's part of economic development; not a for-profit business.

It's one of the things we have going for us and our community. We need to keep it up going forward; not fall backwards and let it become an overgrown eyesore.

Mayor Petterson commented that he still believes the City can make it work with the right backing and commitment from BRC and others.

Several felt the Council was moving forward after they voted to purchase the golf course. It was noted that for future reference, patrons would like clearer communication. Council Member Taylor explained there was a rush regarding the decision due to the shape of the course and trying to keep it from drying out. After numbers were presented, the basis for the previous vote changed.

Some felt the Council should have tabled the discussion from the June council meeting to give the mayor an opportunity to see if the BRC would commit.

There was concern that GreatLife should not be considered as consultants if the Council could utilize previous and/or current owners.

Council Member Weeks stated there is not enough to budget to pay GreatLife.

Mayor Petterson noted he would have liked to have had the opportunity to meet with BRC to see if they had the votes to help with operations.

County Commissioner Bob Saueressig addressed the patrons and City Council that the county has not taken the loan off the table. The City took it off the table at its June meeting.

There was concern the property values will go down in New Strawn if the golf course dies.

Current owners Mike Baumann and Tammy Baumann addressed the Council. Mike stated he doesn't trust a verbal offer now. He will consider another offer, but it will need to be in writing with signatures. He felt there was a previous offer that he and Tammy accepted. Tammy stated she felt like the community was misled by the Council.

Council Member Richard Croll apologized to Baumanns. He expressed that if the Council makes another offer it needs to be in writing and signed.

Tammy Baumann noted that one of the goals they had was to allow kids to golf for free, but in hindsight, the vision that families would play together didn't work out.

Commissioner Saueressig commented that the patrons and City Council are important to him and it was his opinion that offering the opportunity to buy the land is a way to help the community with the best economic development whether it remains a golf course or not. He and Council Member Taylor expressed that the patrons should go to the BRC meetings and the school board meetings.

Bob also noted that if they go forward with the purchase, they have time to apply for grants and work with the school's cross-country teams as well as walking trails, etc. It will not be good for New Strawn if the golf course is "pieced out".

Sarah Nuessen volunteered to help write grants.

Patrons wanted to know what the options are moving forward. They are willing to continue to mow even if it doesn't remain a golf course. Many volunteers are mowing two acres or more. Others expressed their desire to know if the Council will give it a chance.

Council Member Croll asked if those who live on the golf course who may be interested in buying portions adjacent to their back yards would wait until next Tuesday for a response. He and the mayor will meet with the BRC Friday and attend the Coffey County Commissioners meeting on Monday. Council Member Weeks has attended previous BRC and Commission meetings as well.

It was a consensus of the Council to discuss golf course land acquisition at a special meeting on Friday, July 19, 2019. It was agreed the Council will not make an offer for the golf course clubhouse or any of the mowing equipment.

Finance and Economic Development: N/A

Community Building Report: N/A

Utility Report: N/A

Street Report: N/A

Public Relations:

Strawnfest Update

Council Member Jeanne Haas reported on Strawnfest held Saturday, June 22. There were 24 car show entries. There were 23 people who caught 40+ fish. Citizens State Bank and the Fire Department donations and help were appreciated. She was approached by some who would like to see a meal and more activities offered next year. It was suggested to contact Mike Stuke to see if he's willing to participate in a fireworks show for next year's 50th Strawnfest.

Fair Booth

Jeanne noted that she will not be available to set up and take down the City's fair booth this year. Council Member Richard Croll volunteered.

Halloween

Haas moved, seconded by Weeks, to approve the Halloween Committee to use the Community Building free of charge from October 27 to November 1. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Parks and Recreation Report:

Playground Equipment

Council Member Gary Haehn distributed bids from Park Planet for playground equipment with and without installation. He will meet again with representatives to work on proposals for equipment installed by the company. He will wait until after the budget meeting to make a request for playground equipment purchase of up to \$25,000.

Mayor Petterson noted that he spoke with Scot Jeffers, BRC Director, about soccer field and baseball diamond expansion. He stated the Rec is willing to mow. Development plans from City Hall that were created several years ago will be reviewed later.

Public Safety Report:

Dogs at Large

Mayor Petterson reported on dogs at large issue. Residents Galyn Meier and Steve and Robin Laird were present to address the Council regarding dogs at large. The Lairds have submitted several verbal and written complaint forms from June 13 through July 11. Steve Laird submitted a written statement to the council and doesn't feel the situation is being handled between the City and the Sheriff's office.

More information is needed such as name of dog owner(s) and addresses. The time of incidents reported are outside normal business hours when staff is unavailable. City Superintendent Parkey and Maintenance Steven Dwight have attempted to pick up dogs during business hours but were unable to locate them or they been in their yard, i.e. not running at large.

The city clerk has been working with the mayor and city attorney to obtain dog owners names and addresses. One dog has been vaccinated and tagged. Burlington Animal Control assisted by contacting one of the owners with advice. The animal shelter is currently full; however, there may be openings after Saturday. The city superintendent will take some chain link fencing to the dog owners. He was going to haul it to the dump; however, the city clerk received permission from the apartment owner to give the fencing to the tenants. City Attorney and City Clerk will work on violation letter to be mailed to owners of dogs at large.

New Business: N/A

Old Business:

Code Enforcement Officer

Taylor moved, seconded by Croll, to hire a code enforcement officer for \$15 per hour up to six hours per week. **Motion carried 3-2. (No votes - Haehn and Weeks)**

Haas moved, seconded by Weeks, to make the code enforcement officer position a trial basis for review in December. **Motion carried 4-1. (No vote - Haehn)**

Other Business:

Haas moved, seconded by Croll, to schedule a Special Meeting for Friday, July 19, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. for the following:

- Budget
- Land Acquisition
- Playground Equipment
- ~~Trophy Fisheries~~
- Zoning Administrator Appointment

Mayor Petterson adjourned the meeting at 9:59 p.m.