

Smith Center City Council Meeting Minutes

March 8, 2021

I. Call to Order

Mayor Bryce Wiehl called to order the regular meeting of the city council at 6pm on March 8, 2021.

II. Attendance

Council members: Adam Rentschler, Don Wick, Chris Cole, Shawn Phelps, and Tracy Kingsbury.

Others: David and Linda Edell, Terri Jones, Deputy Presbrey, Chief Marshall, Kim Phelps, Tabitha Owen, Jaci Charbonneau, Officer Kenworthy, Officer Jones, Steven Clark, Jolene Brewer, Elizabeth McDonald, Darin Janzen, Rick Hileman, Sherry Weatherholt, Brad Howland, Deb Janzen, Denise Marcum, Brady Peterson, and Jill Conaway.

III. Consent Agenda

Motion by Rentschler, seconded by Wick, to approve the minutes from the February 22nd meeting. Motion carried. Motion by Cole, seconded by Rentschler, to approve payment of vouchers. Motion carried.

IV. Public Comment

- a) Darin Janzen addressed the council regarding economic development. As owner of the building referenced as the Manna Shop, he had several meetings with economic development as well as the prior department director. Through these meetings, various stages and goals of his renovation project were defined where economic development was to step in with assistance however, when it came to phase 2 everything ceased from economic development. When Janzen inquired with the director, he was told that work ceased because of the city council. He stated he was not here to blame anyone, just would like to move forward and asked what needs to be done in order to continue. Rentschler stated that the council was not presented any of this information and there obviously was a lack of communication. He was glad Janzen came to this meeting. Janzen explained that papers were completed and signed by downtown businesses for beautification needs and he likely would not have worked on the Manna Shop without economic development saying they would be on board. He met with the former chairperson and director yet nothing happened. Phelps inquired as to if he had a tenant planned for the building. Janzen responded that he did however they dropped out due to the situation. Mayor Wiehl thanked Janzen for coming to the meeting and bringing this information to the attention of the council.
- b) Sherry Weatherholt asked that the council consider a town hall meeting with the economic development board in order for the public, especially business owners, to share their visions and needs. Weatherholt explained that she was also part of the beautification project that Janzen spoke about and had she known there would not have been any progress, she would have completed some of the building needs such as the

replacement of windows. She stated that she knew there was not guarantee but she was also not given any information on whether there was any progress or not. Weatherholt asked if the economic development advisory board meetings were public. Mayor Wiehl responded that yes the meetings are public and he encouraged her and any others interested, to attend. Wiehl also stated that it is the council's intentions to keep everyone on board and do what we can. As town hall meetings are organized and attended by the public, he encouraged Weatherholt to set a meeting up.

- c) Steven Clark thanked the council. Clark stated that he did not want to be speaking at the meeting however after the last meeting he received a phone call and text messages from Councilman Phelps. He stated that at that time, he had nothing to do with a recall of Phelps however these communications had become threatening. Lawsuits were threatened to him, and he reported that others were threatened as well, including community members and employees. Clark stated that after the election, he congratulated Phelps. After that, things began to get personal with Phelps, including a vendetta with the mayor. Clark reported that he asked to be left out of it as he was not involved. He also stated that he had no personal problem with Phelps however Phelps had sent that he was "out for blood" and that he had Hubbard's personal lawyer to get to the bottom of it. Clark said that he had heard after the last meeting that there was a recall committee so he wonders who else has Phelps threatened. He stated that this behavior is wrong and is considered misconduct. In his research, the actions taken by Phelps qualify for a recall. The copies of text messages Clark has that others received from the councilman he reports to be disturbing and there is a pattern of using his family name and threats to sue. Clark stated that he didn't want to be part of the recall before but now he does and encourages others to reach out to him if they want to join him in this action.

V. Previous/Ongoing Business

- a) CDBG- A motion was made by Cole, seconded by Wick, to approve the CDBG Pay Request as presented. Motion carried.

VI. New Business

- a) Cereal Malt Beverage License-A motion was made by Kingsbury, seconded by Rentschler, to approve a CMB license to Center Fire Pizza. Motion carried.

VII. Department Reports/Committee & Board Reports

- a) Recreation Commission-After discussion, a motion was made by Wick, seconded by Phelps, to accept the resignation of Barry Brooks from the Recreation Commission after serving for over twenty years. Motion carried.
- b) Rick Hileman-The golf course has received the used reel mower from Red Cloud. The annual testing and maintenance on the wells are scheduled for this week.
- c) Jill Conaway-Reported on the transit program. There is a need to hire 2-3 additional drivers. As these positions are part-time and the employees are able to set a schedule that works around other commitments, adding 2-3 people would be ideal. Communication

with Tractor Supply has been attempted via phone and email with no response to date. Wick discussed a similar company, Tarwater Farm Supply, that has several locations to the east.

- d) Terri Jones-Jones reported that her and Conaway had discussed the possibility of opening the office back up to the public. After some discussion, it was decided that it was time to open back up with Reilley to do some additional cleaning throughout the day and the weekend on-call employee sanitizing 1-2 times each day. The building will be opened up on Tuesday.

VIII. Governing Body Reports

- a) Wick-Departments Parks/Pool
Progress on the swimming pool construction was shared, all on track to be opened for the season. Carrother's Construction is anticipating the pool to be filled the very end of April to begin training with staff.
- b) Kingsbury-Water/Sewer
Inquired on how the new street sweeper is working, as he noticed the streets that were recently done looked good.
- c) Cole-Departments Fire/Police
The fire department has been busier than normal responding to fires due to the dry conditions. Cole reported that Chief McNary has the building and all of the equipment in good order.
- d) Phelps-Departments Golf/Rec Commission
Reported that the Recreation Commission has started rolling on the spring events and the Golf Course is looking good.
- e) Rentschler-Departments Airport/Streets/Transit
Reports no changes at the airport. Rentschler reiterated the need for transit drivers. Discussion was held on some of the issues seen on the roadways after the recent extreme temperatures. Phelps stated that many of the streets have cracking and inquired on if asphalt can be replaced on them. Rentschler responded that in recent years, concrete has been more cost effective and that projects are always in the works however money and budget can only go so far.
- f) Mayor Wiehl
Addressed the council with a suggestion that a third position be created in the administration offices. This position could assist the clerk and treasurer as well as economic development items and the department could be better covered with shared duties within the offices to maintain good communication and work together. Wages and benefits could be split between the economic development fund and the revenue funds (water/sewer). Each time the department is without a director, it is a difficult transition. Wiehl suggested the council consider this position and asked it to be added to the agenda

of the next meeting. Discussion was held on whether the position would be remain a hybrid position or if a separate economic development director would be hired; options for changes; the clerk and treasurer covering additional duties; and the director position structure.

IX. Executive Session

Motion by Rentschler, seconded by Wick, to enter into executive session for five minutes with Owen, Conaway, and Jones present; for employee performance of non-elected personnel.

Motion carried. In session at 6:44pm-out of session at 6:49pm. Motion by Rentschler, seconded by Wick, to re-enter into executive session for five minutes. Motion carried. In session at 6:49pm-out of session at 6:54pm.

X. Adjournment

Motion by Wick, seconded by Rentschler, to adjourn. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 6:55pm.