

City Council Meeting

11/25/24, 7PM

Meeting Minutes

Attendees: Mayor Brady Gragg, Ken Stringer, Grant Bowlin, Dan Ravenscraft & Kathryn Coleman
Absent: Trent Clark

Others In Attendance: Officer Tom Moore, Anne Morrow, Andrew Hanna, Brandon Maus, Terry Ullum, Judy Silkmitter, Timothy Stanghor, Randy Jensen, Thelma Edris, Kara Sweazy, Dallas Sweazy, and Jessica Bowman.

7:00pm: Mayor Brady Gragg calls the City Council Meeting to order.

Ravenscraft requests addition to the agenda: Community Christmas Tree into new business.

Ravenscraft motions to approve the Agenda with Christmas Tree addition, Bowlin seconds. Ayes Carried: 7:01pm

Coleman motions to approve the October Meeting Minutes as written, Stringer seconds. Ayes Carried: 7:02pm

Open to Public

- **Thelma Edris**, I wanted to discuss the speed bump on South Elm. I don't see why one should be there. Our speed limits are down to 20MPH, and most small towns have their speed limits up to 30MPH. I don't think a speed bump is good for the city and I don't understand why things are getting so drastic. We have kids everywhere, we've always had lots of kids, I've raised my 6 kids in town here and I worked at the school for 40 years; I think it's time for us as a city to discuss things that we have not had meeting about and need to be able to discuss out in the open.
- Another thing I wanted to ask about was if you have decided to put the ditches back in my alley so I don't get water in my basement?

Mayor Gragg – Thank you. I don't believe there has been further discussion about that.

Bowlin – That whole thing probably died out when Donny left, you need to talk to different ears now.

(Edris) Donny didn't do it, the guy before him did it though. With all the added rock over the years added to the alley, it's so much higher than my property and the water just flows down, and I would like a culvert or ditch to be put back and if you don't, I'll get it done.

Mayor Gragg – Thank you.

- **Jessica (Bell) Bowman** –Bell Automotive, Whitewater KS Community Cats; I just wanted to address animal control issues. I do know we need an animal control officer, and we need someone to help enforce things. But I also don't want to see this go back on the animals, the animals aren't our issues, it's their irresponsible pet owners. I have worked on this issue since 2016, spay/neutered almost 200 cats in town. In the past year, it has been horrible. We have about 3 or 4 irresponsible pet owners; we have had about 40 kittens born just within the past few months and those people are the ones I have offered to help. They have refused my help. It needs to go back to the human owners. There needs to be some kind of programs going to help with spay/neutering assistance which is super hard in Butler Co. because they have nothing available. There is no Humane Society, no shelter, no low-cost animal care. I'm more than willing to help and since we have had no animal control officer, I've been the one getting all the calls along with Grant. We both agree it's easier to deal with the four legged than the two. I get calls about possums,

raccoons, skunks, ducks, geese, pigs, dogs, cats... everything. I'm willing to help however I can; I'm up to date on all the laws, and everything else...

Bowlin – Are you offering to be our Animal Control Officer?

(Bowman) No, I am not, sorry I can't do that. But I am willing to help someone with that. Dodge City is the Animal Control Officer organization of the U.S. so maybe they can get some help from that. If you can't get an animal control officer, what about forming an Animal Advocacy Group? Get a few of us who are willing to do this together instead of just one person who may not have the time. Maybe they can get together and start helping. That might be an option? I just know I am tired.

Mayor Gragg – An Advocacy Group? What do you think this group would be able to do?

(Bowman) Hopefully it could be a group of citizens who care, that are willing to go around and talk to the people, help educate them. I have done all the educating I can, I can tell you about a couple of situations on N. Elm where about 30 kittens were born. I spent two weeks getting everything set up and paid for including transport there and back, and all was required of the owner was for them to help load cats and they refused. So there needs to be some ideas on what we can do with people like that.

Bowlin – there are dog situations too. Which will not resolve themselves.

(Bowman) No one seems to be registering their pets, no one micro-chipping them, half of them are not spayed or neutered and the owners don't care. It's about how do we get humans to either care, fine them, create laws. Do we have a stray hold area for these animals? Do we need to talk with Country-Aid Vet? I have contacts for various locations around that we can try to get some animals in. But right now, I think the issue is, is that most of the animals are owned. It's the pet owners that don't care. I don't know what will happen with this, but I am here to offer my help. But I don't want to see the animals pay for this when it is not their fault.

Mayor Gragg - What was the name of your non-profit again?

(Bowman) It is called Whitewater KS Community Cats Inc., currently funding is down. We lost Amazon Smile but we do still have Dillions. Since I've started, I can count on one hand how many people in town, who have helped. Most of my support comes from people outside of town.

Coleman – How much help does the can drop off bring in?

(Bowman) Depending on about 2 or 3 times a year about \$600. But the average cost of \$140-\$220 to neuter/spay a cat, that will only cover maybe 4 cats. There is no discount given. And there is no low cost spay and neuter help anywhere around here. We are in a horrible bad spot.

Officer Moore – At Potwins last council meeting, they talked about a group that comes out and will do it for \$75 dollars a cat in a van or something. I didn't know if that is something to look into.

(Bowman) That is going to be happening in January in Potwin, I am part of all of that. It's being organized with Paws in Oz and I am going to be the head of all that in Potwin. In January what they are going to do is an "owned" or "friendly" spay and neuter and then in March there will be a "trap" dealing with Community cats, who are not so friendly. All of this is in Potwin. It could be an option to bring some of ours but when owners refuse to do it, I can't just do it without the owners permission.

Bowlin – That is where the legality of it all it needs to be someone from the City capacity to deal with that very issue. Tickets of some sort. Animals at large, Fines etc.

Morrow – What would it take to get something like the Paws in Oz to happen here in Whitewater?

(Bowman) That wouldn't take too much, the issue is we would have to have an average of 60 cats. I think that would be pushing it for here in town. Because I've already taken care of the stray cats but a few. The issue is we have pet owners who won't do it. Community cats are usually marked with a small notch in their left ear to signify they are fixed but living on the streets. It's the pet owners that are the problems not the animals themselves.

Morrow – None of these are registered through the city as their pet, so are they “their pet” in the city? Fines are less for registered pets; Fines and fees are less for animals that are spayed/neutered. We are getting into things that we have listed as a topic later in the meeting.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Discussion on Speed Bump on S Elm , 7:18pm:

Mayor Gragg – A speed bump on Sout Elm was discussed at the last city council meeting. It was put in the newsletter that the city was putting speed bumps in. I will take the blame for that. Mr. Hanna told me about the cost for speed bumps and I said to us to just take care of it then. So that was my poor decision making, not Mr. Hanna or Anne's. At the meeting there was a general agreement but there was no formal vote on it and so that is my error. There has not been a speed bump put down but there has been a speed bump purchased. It has not been mounted anywhere; it is not against the law for the city to place a speed bump down. It does not require an Ordinance to put a speed bump down.

Edris – You do know the buses go down that road and that is not good on vehicles, daily.

Mayor Gragg – Speed bumps are pretty common in most places. They are not in this town. I would argue the point that speed bumps would be detrimental to a vehicle. They are in neighborhoods all over America and don't cause damage to vehicles unless you are speeding across it on a regular basis.

Edris – Is that in small towns? **Mayor** – I didn't check the size of towns, but we all have speeders.

Edris – Well we have speeders who don't even stop at stop signs. So why do we have stop signs. It's not just the younger generation either, it's the older ones too.

Mayor Gragg – You are right, so part of that is enforcement and traffic awareness. So again, I will take the blame for the misstep, and you have my apologies for that. And again, no speed bumps have been installed, and it is open for discussion. And if Andrew cannot return the speed bump, I will take it out of my pocket.

Bowman – I will say as being at Bell Automotive all day, there has been a lot less traffic since the Cafe closed, our main problem is at the springtime when all the high school kids come down for softball/baseball. That's a big issue. I have also talked to a lot of people and the consensus is; folks will drive down main street, or they will drive in the ditch to avoid the bump. But there is already a huge decrease in traffic since the cafe has closed. It's hurting everybody. But back to the point, everyone I've talked to thinks a speed bump is a little silly. But Springtime with all the activities at the ballfields has created an issue. Folks are drag racing down the road. There is some fast driver's early morning but other than that the rest of the time it's not a problem.

Bowlin – We have approached coaches, superintendents...

Dallas Sweazy – What is the speed bump trying to solve? I wasn't at the last meeting, I didn't read the newsletter, I just got a letter saying this was something to be discussed at this meeting.

Mayor Gragg – Slowing traffic down on S. Elm. Scott Silknitter came to the meeting and stated that with his kids and other kids at the Silknitter residence on S. Elm and was concerned about the amount of traffic and the speeds of those vehicles he was asking for a speed bump.

Sweazy – Do we have any indication of how bad speeding is on our street?

Bowlin – Just from what we hear.

Officer Moore – I've sat out there and run radar and it's no different if I'm sitting on Elm or if I'm sitting on Main St. We have people coming into town and they go like 28MPH, maybe a few are at 30MPH, but as soon as they see me, they realize the speed limit is 20MPH. I don't clock people over 30 very much at all. I'm also not here 24/7. Some people have stated that kids are going 70 or 80 down the road but I haven't seen that.

Sweazy – So if the speed limit is 20, do we know how many tickets have been issued in the last 12 months?

Officer Moore – Zero. I have just been giving people verbal warnings.

Bowlin – There are restrictions in play, and I'm not talking down on Anne at all, but Anne is not, ... what is it called...? **Morrow** – It's fine, he can write tickets. **Bowlin** – I thought we still needed a court clerk.

Mayor Gragg – Anne is the Municipal Court Clerk. **Morrow** – He can write tickets. I've told him plenty of times to go ahead and do it, I will handle it. **Bowlin** – Okay.

Sweazy – If we have a law in place and we haven't enforced it; putting a speed bump in, maybe it slows people down maybe it doesn't. From where we live, I'm saying this because all the paint markings for this to be in place is right at my house, there is one type of vehicle that always speeds past my house and that is the Emergency type vehicles, they go down Elm Street very quickly when they are going out on emergency calls, are they okay with having a speed bump there? Will they have to reroute or slow down because of it?

Mayor Gragg - That's a good question.

Officer Moore – You would more than likely have more of them heading out via Main Street to get to 196 quicker if the speed bump were down on Elm.

Sweazy – What is the size of the bump itself, how long or wide would it be? Will it cover the entire road? Will there be anything put in place for people to not just go around it?

Andrew Hanna – Between 18 to 19ft long, that example is a 6ft section. So, there would be 3 of them. The entire road is 22ft wide. So, there would be space on either side of it. There will be signs to let them know it's coming. But there isn't anything to prevent them going around it.

Sweazy – Have there been any other alternatives discussed other than the speed bump?

Mayor Gragg – We did put up the speed/radar sign up to slow traffic, there has been talk of moving that or even turning it.

Bowlin – It was mentioned that it has turned into more of a game than speed deterrent. That was the first attempt.

Sweazy – Are you concerned about the speeders coming into town or heading out?

Morrow – It was also discussed as a deterrent to Semi traffic coming into town on Elm as well as out.

Officer Moore – To answer the question I think it's hoped to be a deterrent for both directions. People coming out of the ball diamonds and also the ones coming in off of 196.

Sweazy – Has there been any consideration of maybe putting in a 3-way stop at Carr St.?

Mayor Gragg – No, there has been no discussion about that.

Sweazy – Thinking of other alternatives and thinking of a speed bump, the issues with it. A 3-Way Stop would make the cars slow down and would allow the EMS to blow through it if they needed to. One way or another, you will re-route traffic. Just thinking about it, I found some documentation on how others have handled speed bumps: Kansas City, MO will not consider it if there isn't a curb present. They also consider the homeowner and if the homeowner within 50ft of the speed bump says 'no', they will not consider it. And EMS has full authority to determine if it will go in or not. So those are some considerations with me and this being right outside my front door. I would appreciate other discussions and considerations of deterrents, especially when we have speed limits for a reason, but we are not going to enforce them, I'm not sure what putting in a speed bump will do other than causing more issues. I'm struggling with the decision to put in a speed bump without looking at other alternatives. In the other documentation that I was looking at, speed bumps were a last resort after all other measures have been taken. I ask you to consider that, especially from an EMS perspective. We've had our place for 20 years, we've raised all of our kids there and we understand that there are some people who don't obey the law and they just go fast; we hear it, we see it, but if you don't have any data behind what the problem is that you are trying to solve; there will be nothing to determine if it is solved or not.

Mayor Gragg – Thank you for the ideas you brought and great food for thought.

Ravenscraft – Does our digital speed limit signs record highs? Is there a timestamp on the highs?

Mayor Gragg – I really don't know if there is any data collection off that.

Kara Sweazy – Are we trying to slow people down to 30 or 20? What is the high speed we are trying to stop?

Officer Moore – We are trying to get people to slow down to 20 because that is the posted speed limit. But like I said, the last couple of days I've sat out there and the fastest I've seen out there is 26-28MPH, I've flashed my lights, and they slow down.

K. Sweazy – So is that considered really fast down our street, I know it's speeding...?

Bowlin – I think there are more egregious situations like the drag racing.

K. Sweazy – That's what I'm more concerned about. That has dropped considerably. I might hear that early in the morning go by, I haven't seen or heard that as much as I used to. Like before the digital speed limit signs.

Officer Moore – We had numerous complaints, so I sat out there, I flashed the lights at them, and they slowed down. The more I sit on Elm the more folks speed down Main and Central, and we get complaints about those roads.

K. Sweazy – Exactly, so like you said people are going to redirect and if there is a speed bump right in front of my house I know I will redirect so I don't have to drive over it multiple times a day and if I'm going to, other will definitely redirect as well. For me personally it would be a big inconvenience, and I have read that the City must have their insurance up to date to make sure it does cover damage from speed bumps when people go over them at speed limit, especially low vehicles. The other question I would have, if there is a speed bump sign at my house, would that lower the value of my property? We've got garbage trucks that would be going over it, the noise factor of people slowing. Just a few other things to consider.

Judy Silknitter – I'm one of the ones that calls the city when we see speeders because I have a lot of grandchildren under the age of 5 that don't pay attention. Today, as they were taking naps there were two cars that were going down the street and the radar lights flashed but they were going so fast it couldn't even record it. Also, when parents pick up their kids and head south, several of them are speeding, on their phone, looking down, paying no attention to where they are going. When I parked my car on the street it had been hit before. Also, when we first moved in 44 yrs ago, and we didn't have a problem with speeding because we had the railroad tracks and once, they came didn't come down Elm, they came down Main because it was smoother. I just don't want my grandkids to get hit by a car. I don't want anybody. My neighbors to the south have a little guy who is deaf, and so we must be looking out for him because he can't hear while they are just out playing. I'm guilty, I've come off of 196 and it's flashing at me, so I slow down. I just don't want anyone getting hurt or paralyzed. During the 4th of the July someone came speeding down Elm and my sons confronted them. And if they do try to go around the bump into the ditch they could get hurt.

K. Sweazy – They would be fine going around the bump into the ditch area where it would be located. It's not as steep of section of the ditch there.

D. Sweazy – Can I ask why that location was chosen for the speed bump?

Brandon Maus – State law states that it must be 100ft from any intersection and 50ft from any driveway.

Hanna – so we centered it up between the two driveways.

D. Sweazy – A speed bump two and half blocks from your house isn't going to solve the 196 speeders coming into town.

Silknitter – No, no it won't.

D. Sweazy – So because I have two lots makes us the winner.

Bowlin – It also gives you petition power. If you own most of that block it gives you some extra say, I think. I know there are issues of wanting to shut down alleys, as far as ordinances show if you can get enough neighbors to agree on a petition or own, I think 2/3's of a block, then you have they say.

Ravenscraft – Well I'm kinda old school, I go down this road 75 times a day. I live on this road; I constantly go back and forth.

1. When I go by your place (Silknitters) no matter which direction I'm going I'm in the wrong lane of traffic, especially if there are kids around. Even doing 20MPH I'm afraid there is going to be a little kid running out. BUT roads are roads. Roads are made for cars, yards and sidewalks are made for people. Roads are not made for bicycles they are made for cars. I'm kinda against it (speed bump), so I'm not going to vote for it. I'm against it. We have other methods to approach; writing tickets, in school zones they have those flashing lights, so I wonder if we could have a constant flashing light at the 20MPH signs. It gets your attention. And traffic would be diverted to Kansas and Carr, or they would just plan go around the bump.

Silknitter – There are semi's that come down this road trying to get to your business.

Ravenscraft – They missed their turn to come to the business and we have tried to tell them that Elm is not the truck route, don't go down this road. Even though it is clearly marked that it (Elm) is not a truck route.

Morrow – Were they coming into town or leaving? I have seen where cars have to back up because a truck is trying to turn onto Elm from Topeka.

Bowman – We have had so many try to turn into Bell Automotive thinking that that is their spot because of all the equipment right there along 196. And then the easiest thing for them is to back out and come down S. Elm.

D. Sweazy – Are semis not allowed on Elm St.? Why?

Mayor Gragg – It's a residential road, not the truck route. There is also a TON limit sign posted.

Tim Stanghor – The main reason is that Main Street & Central are the two County maintained roads. All the other streets in town, if the heavy traffic is kept off them the city can save money with less wear and tear. Main and Central are built with a bigger base and engineered for the loads.

D. Sweazy – So how does a semi know before getting onto Elm Street that they are on the wrong road? The 8 TON sign is a hundred ft down Elm away from the highway. Where does he turn around now that he does see it? Can't turn around at Bell, can't turn at Kansas, or Carr. At the very least they must go to Vine. So maybe having something closer to the road would help them not turn onto Elm.

Ravenscraft – If Google Maps doesn't tell them they aren't going to know. I don't know what Google Maps is telling them. We try to tell them when we can.

D. Sweazy – So if you're saying a sign isn't going to help, what does help? Are we going to just live with it or not, I don't know how having a semi come down that road? How are we going to solve that? One last thing I would like to say is, I know we aren't as Kansas City but they went through the effort to write up guidelines. Getting a petition out and having everyone on that road sign off on it. And if someone is not involved in the process or has an opinion that results in a 'no' vote. I would just be careful in making a decision and going with it. From public sentiment, why would this happen? Like I said, I didn't even know this was happening until I got the letter. I don't read the Newsletter. I don't see it all the time, so I wouldn't even have known about coming tonight without the letter coming to my house saying we were going to discuss this. Especially if I hadn't seen the paint on the road, I wouldn't have known how severely I would have been affected by a speed bump. Not only in front of my property but also a sign right outside my front door.

Mayor Gragg – Thank you for the discussion this evening, is there any discussion right here with the council on this? Mr. Ravenscraft is against it. Is there anyone else that would like to weigh in from the council?

Coleman – I think I would support trying other options first. And maybe trying to get better data to find out what is the problem or if it is even a problem. We have some in the community saying its a problem and some saying it is not.

Stringer – Imma vote 'No'.

Bowlin – I just want to restate the importance of following protocol. There is a reason we have discussions. I'll vote no.

Mayor Gragg – It feels like it is a consensus for a ‘no’ a strong vote against it. Do we want to proceed with a vote to move forward with a study on a speed bump or do we want to table it indefinitely?

Stringer motions to table the speed bump idea indefinitely.

Bowlin – I think there are some good ideas brought up that warrant some more discussion, but I don’t want to start throwing Stop signs everywhere either. Because I would hear grief about those as well, but I think that’s a good idea. I don’t know if there is a general survey method that we could do, or anything like that. It’s not a county road so we can’t use their little meters to get data.

Ravenscraft – I would like to see if there is any data we can get off of the speed limit sign.

Mayor Gragg asks the City Maintenance to look into seeing if they can find out if there is any data that can be pulled off the signs. If something needs to be added to it, see how much it would cost.

Ravenscraft – What was that thing we talked about a few months back that captured some kind of data?

Bowlin – Flock Cameras, I have done a lot of talking with community members about that, it was something like \$3000 per camera per year not including the cost of the cameras themselves. Then the question of the data, do we keep it or turn it over to Butler Co., which would be best to keep the council out of it. None of it is traffic or speed enforcement. They can’t legally be used for speed.

Morrow – The data wouldn’t come to us, we would have no access to it. It would only be accessible by NCIC or departments like that.

Mayor Gragg – **We will table the discussion on speed bumps and continue to investigate alternatives for traffic control coming in and out of town, not just Elm. Problems will continue to move around town if we don’t look at the bigger issue. Thank you, it was a good discussion everyone. 7:55pm**

Animal Control Officer, 7:55pm:

Mayor Gragg – We have a job description that is included in the packet.

Morrow – I have also included a job description for a Zoning/Code Enforcement Officer, I have created both but obviously it is just a starting point, if you want to adjust, make additions, subtractions. We have to have something in place if we want to look to hire someone.

--- Ravenscraft and Bell express appreciation for the Animal Control Job Description ---

Mayor Gragg – To go back to something you said earlier Jessica, when hiring an animal control officer, I don’t think it is anyone’s desire to punish the animals or anything like that. It really comes down to the city ordinances that we have in place right now and they are not being enforced because we do not have an animal control officer. For lack of a better term, there is no ‘teeth’ to the ordinances that we do have. Until we have a way to enforce them, and those humans who are in violation because they are the property or animal owner, when we can start holding those accountable in municipal court, that gives more teeth to those ordinances. And the hope is to help control the animal population in town.

Bowman – It’s not just the city taking it out on the animals, but also; if we confront a cat owner, which has happened. Their way of dealing with it was to take the cat and kittens back to a farm because they don’t care and just dump them, cats have the best rehoming skills and the momma cat made it back to town really fast, cats will try to return. It’s not just the city or animal control taking it out on their animals but the pet owners. We are in a farming community, and they treat their cats like they are on the farms. They don’t feed them so the cats are good mousers, but that also can spread diseases. None of them get treated, they keep breeding and dying and spreading disease. It’s a tough community we live in and being out on the edge of Butler County, there are no resources. Harvey County has Caring Hands Humane Society, they are not city funded, it is 100% volunteer and donations, and they won’t help me out because they know all the cats I bring are from Butler County. I have reached out to Butler County about getting a Humane Society, they have so many huge businesses, Butler County is the largest county in the state, why can we not get something going? t’s such a big mess.

Ravenscraft – Can you go through the ‘TNR’: Trap, Neuter, Return, could you give us a brief overview of what that is? I would like the city to get more involved in that if we get an Animal Control Officer.

Bowman – It is the most humane way to solve the problem. Most of these animals are either dumped, abandoned or just careless humans allowing them to reproduce. It's a humane process where if they must be trapped, I will trap them, or if they are friendly, I will get them into a carrier, take them to the vet, they get spayed/neutered and vaccinated, then they are marked by being ear tipped. Most are but there are a few owners who have not wanted their ear tipped. Most of those stay on their property now so that is not a problem. These animals are returned to live their life. What spay/neutering also helps with is no they are not reproducing but also, they no longer roaming, fighting, marking, spraying their scents on other people's properties. It's the only thing I know to do to help keep this problem down. Most of these cats either I feed them or the home owner feeds them and takes care of them.

-- Continues to talk about the difficulties to continue with costs going up, inhumane ways others try to solve the problems, etc. There is not a big issue with strays, its the owned dogs and cats.

Ravenscraft – One thing the city needs to do and I think the Mayor needs to do, once we have a plan together, is go out and visit with Dr. Pat Regier at Countryaid Vet, that's who was worked with in the past, where they took the cats and dogs, I think the relationship has been broken at this point, not a letter, but a visit. Having the mayor talk with Dr. Pat & Debbie and figure out some things...

-- more about how things used to be with pens and past placements of animals.

Morrow – Some of this will start to be corrected if we can get someone hired. To where they can communicate with all these entities you have pointed out, to the public, and that is part of the Job Description, so that is why we need to look that over and see if there is anything else that needs to be voted on. Like I said, I have also included a job description for Zoning/Code Enforcement job description so that if there needs to be adjustments on that, we can and then have both in place. I think miscommunication and not tapping into the resources you have provided for us in the past to help educate, will be a great help for them (whoever is hired) to educate. You (Bowman) will be a great resource to whoever we do find. I think we need to circle back and get going on these job descriptions.

Mayor Gragg - I think all the things you (Bowman) discussed would be great to put in the community newsletter. And yes, it's been done in the past but there are new residents in town. And may not know the resources available.

Bowlin – So you (city clerk) just need to know if we are okay with you posting this (job description)?

Morrow – We will get to that part of it, if these look good to the council as job descriptions and you approve of them, then we can move forward in posting for jobs.

--- The council looks over the job descriptions, stating they look good. ---

One of the reasons I have given you both is because I have a resume from someone in town who has already submitted because they read updates in the newsletter and were aware of our needs. The following page in your handout is the information you requested concerning what other cities pay their animal control officers.

--- council discusses the variations of pay listed and what the pay was last time we had an animal control officer.

Ravenscraft – When you (Bowlin) ran into the two-legged problems was there a way you could have had a law officer with you?

Bowlin - Yeh, for sure, I had a gun pulled on me twice. In one case it was the very first encounter with the owner, trying to return his dog to his front door. And I was told to get off his porch. More discussions concerning his experience with owners and why he decided to no longer do the job. Unfortunately, being falsely accused by owners comes with the job. I'm in support of more of a stipend than what was given previously but I don't think \$500 is right either.

Mayor Gragg – If we were going to hire someone full time, I think it would be dealing with even more of the advocacy or educating the public. Going to schools, talking with the kids about proper ownership and taking care of animals.

Bowman - We do try to do that at the Library in October. Jean sets it all up.

Morrow – I don't know if we will find a full-time option.

Bowman - Lists off plenty of items that could be used by an Animal Control Officer that she already has. Organizations to work with: Alley Cat Allies (flyers from them given)

Mayor Gragg – What discussion do we need as far as salary? I agree with Grant, \$500 a month seems high and \$150 seems low.

Coleman - \$300 a month.

Stringer – I second that.

Bowlin – We don't want to incentivize catching animals and paying per call/catch.

--- Unanimous agreement. ---

Ravenscraft – the website works really well for dogs.

Mayor Gragg – We could put links our city site to different organizations.

Morrow – I don't even know what website that is, which one?

Ravenscraft – The animal control one for Whitewater... yeh on Facebook.

Morrow – Ohhh, yes. That works for those who have Facebook.

Stringer – I agree with the \$300, that's \$75 a week. You are looking at a part-time job, you might go for a month and not get a call, then Springtime you might get a call every time you turn around.

Morrow – There is plenty of other stuff that they can do; if we wanted to do a part-time per week type of hire, where they can clock-in, do paperwork, leg work, build relationships with organizations, etc.

Bowlin – If there are actual cases handled there is paperwork that needs to be done.

Mayor Gragg – They may need to show up to municipal court, etc.

Ravenscraft – To bad it couldn't be the Zoning Administration person too.

Morrow – Exactly, that brings me to the fact that I have already had someone reach out to me from here in town. Who works from home for Cox and is also a self-employed property manager dealing with HOA's. He saw in the newsletter where we have been talking about these things. He has also had some experience with dealing with animals. He has provided me with his resume. (*Provides it for the council to look over.) He has experience with both. So that is something to think about if you wanted to try to roll this into two things at once.

Ravenscraft motions to set the monthly pay for Animal Control Officer at \$300. Second by Bowlin.

Ayes Carried. 8:19PM

* Council has asked the City Clerk to invite this individual to our next meeting.

Financial Report – Terry Ullum, 8:20pm

Nothing new in October. It's remained pretty routine. No big payments or purchases.

Mayor Gragg – CD's are still looking healthy? **Answer:** Yes, the next one coming due is Dec. 24th. I will be checking the renewal rates again in December.

Ravenscraft – On the checking there is an entry, 10/30/24 says, deposit 402.06

Income:General:SMART Money. What is SMART Money? **Answer:** That's from Kansas, it's called SMART Money, and I really don't know what the acronym is. It's been there for years and has always been called SMART. Sometimes it's more than \$400 and on occasion they send a smaller amount. It could be a sales tax or highway tax; I can look to see what it was.

Ravenscraft – What does the city get from sales tax? **Answer:** I will have to look that up.

- City Treasurer will look at what the City receives from Sales Tax.

Mayor Gragg – And we are at 1% total on the city sales tax.

Stringer motions to accept the November Financial Report, second by Coleman. Ayes Carried: 8:23pm

PERSONNEL REPORTS

Maintenance Report – Andrew Hanna, 8:23pm

- The tower renovations have begun. Bladder Tank was set up 10-23, Drain the Tower 11-1, Flushed the Inlet 11-13, Filled the Tower 11-22, took samples 11-24 & 25, took said samples to the lab 11-

25; should get the report from the lab back Tues or Wed. If they are good results we can get our Tower back online. Currently still running pressure. It's been doing well.

- We had Trick-or-Treat Street at Halloween, we had lots of kids; there was a City Dinosaur. We got pictures if you missed that.
- Ball diamond grass is looking good, its still growing. Diamonds 1 & 2, they look nice, if you want to swing by and look. By Spring it should be really good for the kids.
- Leaf Control has being going like crazy. Students did their Rake & Run last Friday. It went well, we loaned out a couple leaf rakes for the kids to use and provided our dump trailer that assisted in allowing the kids to gather a bunch of leaves and cover more area. The pile out at the dump is pretty major.
- We had a minor water leak on N. Oak, Nov. 21. It was a small leak, less than 5,000 gal. lost.
- Been able to consult with City Engineer, Mr. Young about our lift station problems. And we are looking on developing a plan for renovations, replacements and upgrades. We are trying to stay ahead of the game and trying to be prepared for when State money comes available in the future. So if we have Drawings, Plans, all those steps needed to file for State assistance money to get this started, then we will be on the right path. Young wants us to do a Volume Flow Test on it and then he will start crunching some numbers. This is preliminary steps, right now. I do want to meet with him some more to hash out somethings once he crunches some data and looks to engineer.
- We have 2 fire hydrants with slow leaks. These are the old ones that do not have valves to shut off on their own. These are some of the 1961 hydrants dripping from the bonnets. Plans are to repair them once the Tower is back online.
 - **Ravenscraft** – Do these need to be fully replaced in your opinion? What does a new hydrant cost? We need to stay on top of that.

Either replaced or rebuilt if you can find a rebuild kit out there for these 1961 hydrants. There are six new ones, I don't know what it cost to replace them then.

(Maus) - I think it was something like \$10,000 for three of them.

- **Mayor Gragg** – so we need to have one on hand for sure if you have to tear one apart and can't get it fixed. So something can be put back in there.
- **Ravenscraft** – I think Graber Backhoe replaced the ones before.

I have found bits and pieces of fire hydrants at the shop, but I don't know exactly what all I have because I haven't rebuilt a fire hydrant yet. I have watched videos on it and it doesn't look to bad, but when its a 1961 fixture, it will be hard to know if I have the right parts.

- **Ravenscraft** – I think we need to get some bids on what it will take to replace them. So you say at least 3?
- **Stringer** – Do you feel like you could replace them yourself?

Two, for sure and another that is problematic. I would not feel comfortable replacing the first one myself, definitely not. Is that something I can do in the future, possibly. Like the valve, watching and learning from the guys as they do it really helped learn the tips and tricks.

- **Ravenscraft** – Is this something that can wait until Spring?

They are full, but if it gets cold enough, say -20, it could freeze them up. It depends on how cold we get this winter. Flowing water doesn't freeze, but is it flowing fast enough not to freeze? Probably not.

- **Mayor Gragg** – That might be something that we could get some Grant money for too, something to look into.

- Consulted with Brian from KWRA about converting our lagoon system from a discharge to river to an irrigation system. This would be putting the processed water out on the nearby crop fields. According to Brian this would be a better system anyway. We would partner with the local farmer to establish such a system.

- Certification Tests are Dec. 5th in Emporia, KS. I will be taking my small system water test and Brandon will be taking his wastewater test, class 1. We have been studying and getting some outside assistance on that as well.
 - **Mayor Gragg** – Best of luck to you both.

Police Report – Tom Moore, 8:43pm

- I gave four warnings. I've sat on Elm, Main, and watched them. If you guys want tickets, I'll give out tickets. The bad part about Main St. ... I don't like tickets, I'll tell you that, you give a kid a ticket their mom and dad's insurance goes up. On Main St., the four people I stopped, all four were leaving businesses here in town. All of which were from Wichita, super nice people. Now people are griping about J turns. If you want tickets, I'll give you tickets. But your town will be known as a speed trap. And businesses will lose a lot of business. They won't just be on Elm Street; they will be all over. All the white-haired ladies here in town are the ones who drive the fastest. Just know that when tickets start being given and people start griping to everyone in here about businesses or family members, that that's what you asked for. I won't just focus on the kids going back and forth to school, either. It's going to be fair all the way across the board.
 - **Bowlin** – I think there has been enough attention drawn to it from the community, not just the council, that short of throwing bumps out, we need to start doing something, in my opinion. If that means writing the tickets, I'm good with it. What is going to get the kids' attention is their parents lighting them up because their insurance went up. As far as repercussions for writing tickets, my skin is thick enough and I'm just like everybody, I have to hit the brakes sometimes too. I light my kids up when they are too.
 - **Mayor Gragg** – I agree with Grant, we've got to start writing tickets because... I know I'm going to have to yell at my son and daughter, if their making my insurance go up for sure.

Clerk's Report – Anne Morrow, 8:50pm

- I passed around the resume earlier.
 - **Ravenscraft** – If you could invite that guy to our next meeting that way we could meet him and talk with him a little bit.
- I'm just plugging away in the office; no new complaint forms this month. Any questions for me?
 - **Bowlin** – In the case that complaints do come in, are they part of public record. Do people need to apply for those, has anyone come in to see those?

No one has come in as of yet, I would have to research that to see where it falls according to KORA but I would probably require them to apply and return in 24 hrs. because we require individuals to put their names on those complaints I would want to redact areas if possible. I will research that but that, because of how I have the complaint forms created to where they can be used in court if need be and because we have no enforcement, but that is a great question. I can talk to the city attorney about that as well, Thank you.

- Utility Bill Payments have been coming through and more and more people are using that every day. It has been working out very well, especially for those who have a deadline, and they are not in town at the moment.

Mayor's Report – Brady Gragg, 8:55pm

- Nothing to report but I do want to apologize to the council about providing poor direction to Mr. Hanna and Ms. Morrow in regard to the speed bump. All I can do at this point is to apologize and I want you to know that it was with the best of my intentions, but it was executed poorly. I'll beg your forgiveness on that, if there are any costs that need to be covered, I will handle that.
 - **Stringer** – I don't think it's a bad idea to have it on hand.
 - **Hanna** – If it would be possible, could we put that at Ball diamond 1? The stop sign doesn't work there either. That is something to keep in mind.

- **Ravenscraft** – I've wondered if putting in those ditches in along Elm would slow the traffic down, I don't want them but it's an idea.

New/Unfinished Business

Community Christmas Tree, 8:59pm – Dan Ravenscraft

Usually, Centre Point Church and Mr. Bill Carey and his group help facilitate getting a tree and I help getting the tree and lights up. It has been harder and harder to find a nice tree that is tall enough. I've started calling around different places and most places aren't open until Friday and the lighting is happening on Sunday, so that has put a little crunch on time. Where they have been getting the trees is closing their tree farm down and don't have any of significant size at the moment. I spoke with Mr. Carey, and he wants to get it up on Friday, but we don't have a tree. So, I hate to say it, but they are looking at getting a Cedar Tree.

Morrow – What places have you looked into or called? And what are the sizes you need and types of trees? Do you need me to start helping to look.

Ravenscraft – I will have to look back at my list at the office but and some of them aren't even open yet, but some of the biggest they have there are 10ft tall. We are looking for one 12-14ft tall. Most of the ones in the past have been Australian Pines, Virginia Pines. It's a challenge to find a place open until Friday.

Bowlin – What are you needing from us, help with cost so we don't get a Cedar Tree?

Ravenscraft – I think the city gave some amount last year?

Morrow – Yes, I believe it was something like \$200-\$300 for the tree and they only paid a little over \$200 for the tree they got or something, I don't recall completely off the top of my head.

Ravenscraft – We are running out of places to find one, if we find a nice tree it will be more than \$300.

Mayor Gragg – We need to go ahead and vote on how much the city is willing to contribute to the tree.

Coleman motions to contribute \$300 to the Community Christmas Tree purchase, second by Ravenscraft. Stringer opposed; ayes carried: 9:05pm

Mower Quotes, 9:06pm (Mower Quotes Handout)

City Council members look over the handout containing 8 mower quotes.

Hanna – There is even two other brands of mowers with their quotes included, we wanted to see how a different make and model would compare in price.

Mayor Gragg – Stop me if I'm wrong but it looks like Ravenscraft IMP, is the least expensive of all the quotes provided.

Hanna – That is correct. State funding prices is why some of them look identical. It's a set rate, as Mr. Ravenscraft has explained.

Mayor Gragg – Is there more discussion before proceeding with a purchase? Do we want to not make a purchase and see if we can get another year out of the mower we have?

-- Discussion on resale value of the current mower. Hoping for more than trade in value. Other recently sold items, the money from those sales has already gone into the Equipment Fund.

Bowlin – I wanted to see more quotes and always want to pump the brakes a little when it comes to spending money. Just because it's there doesn't mean it has to be spent.

Coleman – I think it's going to have to happen, it's just a matter of when we want to buy it. It's now, or six months from now, when we will be forced into it.

Stringer – I don't see anything going down in price. I see everything going up in price. If we sit on it we will end up paying even more.

Ravenscraft – I'm going to abstain from voting on this.

Stringer motions to accept the Ravenscraft IMP bid for \$20, 300 for a new mower. Second by Coleman. Ayes carried. 9:14pm

Policy & Procedure Handbook, 9:14pm

These handouts were given at last month's meeting for any revisions, additions, changes. Once we have it how we want it, it needs to be approved by the council.

Morrow – The only thing that I have added to it is the actual retention schedule from the State for these certain areas. They are listed with what needs to be retained and for how long, its usually 3 or 5 years depending on what the record is.

Stringer – I read through it and thought it was very well done. I couldn't find anything I could shoot a hole in. I didn't find anything I didn't like.

Ravenscraft – I had a question: It doesn't come up too often; Lets say Bid A, is from a Whitewater Business and a Bid B, is from Newton. Should there be any extra consideration for Bid A considering it is a local business even if the bid is higher? I must deal with the county and recently won the bid, our bid was a little higher than the lowest bid but because I'm in Butler County I got it.

Coleman – I did have the same thought, should there be a preference for local businesses when the quotes are similar.

Morrow – One of the areas in here it does say in Vender Selection and Criteria is, "Vendors shall be selected on criteria such as price, quality, delivery, and past performance." - So, some of those things are to be part of the consideration. It's not just the lowest bidder.

Brady Gragg – There is no state law or statute that states you must go with the lowest bidder.

Ravenscraft – I was looking at 4.2 Formal Bidding & 4.1 Small Purchases.

Morrow – 4.2, Procedure - "The bid shall be awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder." I asked something like that to Mr. Ullum, as we were developing this and the aspect that is there is that of 'VALUE'; that doesn't always mean lowest because you need to weigh the value as well.

Bowlin – Are the numbers any different? Are we changing any of that?

Morrow – No, that's what we need from you guys is feedback on those things, what needs to be changed so it can be accepted and have actual policy and procedures to work from come 2025. When it comes to that number, we discussed that in-house and actually brought that number down from what it was originally presented.

Bowlin – I remember that his opinion was that our small purchases number was not big enough. And I totally disagree. But is that number up for debate?

Morrow – Right all of this is up for debate, but we have to have you guys accept this or something to move forward.

Coleman – So on 4.2; it only says lowest responsive and responsible bidder...

Bowlin – So does that need to be most valuable? (Morrow - Add Value in as well?)

Mayor Gragg – Responsive: Talks about bids for the state and other counties a non-reply is not a no-bid, it is required to state that 'No, they are not bidding'. To make a formal no bid.

Morrow – It must be a formal bid, going through the proper procedures of the formal bidding process. That is where the "...awarded to the lowest responsive and responsible bidder." Comes into play. It's not just whoever does the lowest bid. If they don't get back to you in a timely manner, that would equate not being very responsive.

Mayor Gragg – Do we need to change wording on 4.2?

Bowlin – Do we want it to read the same as 4.1 on Procedure? One says, best value the other says lowest bidder.

Coleman – I think people see best value and think, low bid and quality product.

Morrow – On 4.2 are you wanting "best value" added to or instead of "lowest responsive and responsible bidder". It might need to be combined.

Coleman – I still don't love it but that's fine. (Morrow - What do you mean you don't love it?)

I just think, "The purchase shall be awarded to the supplier offering the best value." Sounds like, if someone in Newton is offering a \$50 cheaper product, its a better value, Value doesn't have to be monetary, but it's commonly understood that way. And people may question if we are following this by showing preference to local businesses and not the best value. (Morrow – so on small purchases you are wanting best value and what?) I don't know, I think the discussion is should there be a preference to local businesses?

Stringer – Here is the way I look at it: When you buy something, you need to be buying it thinking of service. For me ‘service’ is ‘value’, you look for service before you buy not after. Even with a car, you go to a dealership and if they do not service well, that’s not good value.

Coleman – I think it’s fine, I don’t have better wording. I just don’t think other people will necessarily read it that way. I think there could be a clearer way to say that. But I don’t know what it is.

Ravenscraft – I think it could be interpreted in a number of different ways.

Stringer – I used to bid on a lot of government jobs and got the bids even when I was not the low bidder, because we took care of the customers. They considered that service as a good value.

Morrow – We are trying to get this in place so we can start the new year with actual policies and procedures. That is why we handed it out last month, for you to look over it and ask these questions so we could have this ready to go but, how about we send this with you again and if you have questions reach out to Terry and myself throughout the month, we can revise it, make some of these changes, so that in December we can have it done. Unless you are ready to do it.

Stringer – I’ve already reviewed it and didn’t see anything that needed to be revised.

Mayor Gragg – I think there were some questions around the dollar amount that we need to seek council approval for.

Morrow – The numbers there on the policy are a placeholder, it’s a matter of what the council feels comfortable with.

Ravenscraft & Bowlin – What was it before? (Morrow – I haven’t found that yet.)

Morrow – I haven’t found that, I was thinking \$600 but that is what I was told, not that I have seen that anywhere. That is why you can set that and we can present this again as a full package to you in December.

Stringer – You can’t even buy a water hydrant for that.

Mayor Gragg – Right, and that could fall into the Emergency Purchases, Section 5. If we had a hydrant out, Andrew could call me and get emergency authorization.

Morrow – And that is why we are trying to get this in place, so we formally have a playbook to go off of. And if people do have questions, we can say, we were following our purchasing procedures.

Bowlin motions to accept the Policy & Procedures presented as it is to be effective January 1, 2025 with minor rewording on Purchasing Policy 4.2, Stringer seconds. Ayes carried. 9:32pm

Trash/Refuse Fees for 2025, 9:32pm

Print out of cost for Trash Services established by Ordinance 636 which was passed in 2022. This will be in the December newsletter.

Ravenscraft – What is it right now for a 95 gal can? (Morrow - \$15) So it’s going up to \$15.50

Mayor Gragg – What I believe we are trying to do, over the life of the contract, was an increase of roughly 50 cents a year. I think it was a 5-year contract.

Stringer – They have increased the dump fees here quite a bit.

2025 Calendar, 9:34pm

Print out 2025 calendar, with City Handbook Holidays marked as well as City Council Meeting dates.

Morrow – A decision needs to be made on either Dec. 24 or 26 as a designated city holiday day.

Mayor Gragg – seeing that 3 of the 4 city employees are present, how do they feel about it? Christmas Eve or the day after Christmas? --discussion on preferences-- Let’s give them the 26th off.

Morrow – As far as the City Council meetings, I need a decision on May, because the fourth Monday, May 26th is a Holiday. So, when do you want to have your council meeting in May?

-- discussion on how to decide -- The Tuesday after; May 27th.

Ravenscraft motions to approve the 2025 City Calendar with Dec. 26th as a holiday and May 27th for City Council Meeting. Second by Coleman, Ayes carry. 9:38pm

Agenda Items for Dec. 23, 2024

- Cemetery Revisions Review

Bonuses & Cost of Living Discussion, 9:40pm

Advised by City Attorney Bina not to go into executive session for this discussion if they are going to be across the board. It is not performance based.

--- Dallas Sweazy takes his leave and thanks the council for all they do and listening to his questions and concerns. ---

Question for what was done last year? Do we want to change from what was done last year or make changes?

Bowlin motions to give Bonuses like last year (possibly \$500 for FT, \$100 for PT). Second by Ravenscraft. Ayes Carried: 9:42pm

Cost of Living increase? What did we do last year? Was it more than 3%? For Social Security recipients is 2.5% this year according to Biden.

Bowlin – Between 2 and 3%

Mayor Gragg – cost of living increase is between 3.2% and 2.5% for 2025.

Bowlin motions for 3% cost of living increase for all city employees effective January 1, 2025. Coleman seconds. Opposed, Stringer. Ayes carried. 9:44pm

Bowlin motions to bring the November Council Meeting to an end, Second by Ravenscraft. Ayes carried: 9:44pm

Meeting Adjourned & Happy Thanksgiving – 9:44pm