

Hearing Minutes

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

Others In Attendance: Anne Morrow, Andrew Hanna, Brandon Maus, Terry Ullum, Tim Stanghor, Gene Stanghor, Amber Thompson, Elizabeth Herbel, Andy Floyd, Scot Loyd and Bob Bartlett

7:00pm: Mayor Brady Gragg opens 2025 RNR Hearing

Mayor asks for public comments concerning Revenue Neutral Rate – None

Mayor Gragg Reads Resolution No. 0826-24; Motion by Dan Ravenscraft to accept the Resolution, Ken Stringer seconds. Trent Clark and Kathryn Coleman vote Aye. Grant Bowlin opposes. **Resolution No. 0826-24 to exceed the Revenue Neutral Rate of 53.304 mills was adopted with a 4-1 vote.**

Council signs Roll Call Vote document. This closes the RNR Hearing, 7:02pm

7:02pm: Mayor Brady Gragg opens 2025 Budget Hearing

Mayor asks for public comments concerning the 2025 Budget – None

Motion to adopt 2025 Budget by Ken Stringer, second by Dan Ravenscraft. Trent Clark and Kathryn Coleman, Aye. Grant Bowlin opposes. **The adoption of the 2025 Budget was passed with a 4-1 vote.**

Council Members signed the Budget Certificate bringing the 2025 Budget hearing to an end, 7:03pm

Scot Loyd left the meeting.

Meeting Minutes

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

Others In Attendance: Officer Tom Moore (mid-meeting), Anne Morrow, Andrew Hanna, Brandon Maus, Terry Ullum, Tim Stanghor, Gene Stanghor, Amber Thompson, Elizabeth Herbel, Andy Floyd, and Bob Bartlett

7:05pm: Mayor Brady Gragg calls the City Council Meeting to order.

Additions to Agenda:

- Parks & Rec would like to report, added as the first Personnel Report.

Motion to Approve: Accept the agenda with this addition. Coleman, second by Clark. Ayes Carried: 7:07pm

Approval of July Meeting Minutes:

Ravenscraft motions to approve the July 22 Meeting Minutes as written, Coleman seconds. Ayes Carried: 7:09pm

Open to Public

Resident of Whitewater, Amber Thompson expressed that she doesn't want to pay more in property taxes. She asked for the reason for the rise in the property tax and what the money would be going towards.

Ravenscraft – The taxes are dependent on the property assessments or appraisals.

Bowlin – Every single evaluation in Whitewater has gone up.

Stringer – noted that it is assessed by the County.

Bowlin – Would have liked to pump the brakes on all the tax increasing and believes that saying it was the county and not the city is “hogwash” and in this case it wasn't him. Further stating that people in this town are “fed-up”.

Resident Thompson – Is just wanting a clearer picture of where this money will be used. It would be preferable if it were to go to things like the Whitewater Rec or the Festival, not individuals but the community. Example: If you wanted to get a street sweeper, her street never gets cleaned, so it would be a waste of money in her opinion.

Mayor Gragg – There are budget increases across the board yet there is still equipment that needs to be purchased for the city. The Street Sweeper was an item the council looked at but did not purchase.

Resident Thompson – I'm thinking more of the needs of the older community that may be on Social Security and still need to buy groceries, everything else costs so much, they continue to be taxed but no longer work and wanted to speak up for them if they don't come to the meetings.

Mayor Gragg thanks her for addressing the council.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

SCOUT HOUSE RENTAL FEE: – Proposal to raise the rental fee from \$50 to \$60 and maintain the \$25 reimbursement, according to prior discussions. There are some much needed updates including such things as the bathroom and AC unit.

Coleman – Have we looked at what we are spending on the Scout House? How much does it cost to operate currently? How did we come up with \$60?

Morrow – We were trying to keep the rent low but give a slight increase to help with the updates and maintenance. Just trying to keep it going and maybe a few updates.

Clark – the AC only runs when people are using the Scout House, you also must keep a little heat going in the winter, so it doesn't freeze up.

Gragg – there was discussion on possibly getting a mini-split unit, which has not been looked at as far as a cost.

Is there a motion to increase the rental fee from \$50 to \$60?

No Comments.

Coleman – Wants to see what it is costing us to maintain it so we can decide how much more is needed to improve it. And set the rate based on that.

Morrow – It's a low cost right now to rent, if we do a cost assessment and see what it will take to get it a little bit better and a few updates in the bathroom, we will see that the cost will need to be raised a whole lot more than \$60. We will crunch numbers and look at what is coming in from rentals, cleaning costs, insurance costs, utilities...

Gragg – Are we breaking even, losing money, I don't know.

Morrow – Reiterates safety concerns from a previous renter and how that could possibly impact the city. I don't want to raise the prices too much; I was just hoping to get a little bit to work with.

Coleman – We have projects on our list, but we have money to put towards that if that is something we wanted to pursue.

Ullum – We charge currently \$50 but we return \$25 at the end of their rental. It's a fairly inexpensive rental. If we did the \$60 with the \$25 return, that give us \$35. Currently it is \$25.

Coleman – The Scout House is also a service to the community, to have available to the community. And we would like to keep it accessible to the community. We do not need to make much money off it.

Ullum – Absolutely, that is why we are trying to keep it lower.

Morrow – We are not trying to make money, that is not the idea here.

Stringer – Lets find out some exact numbers but keep things affordable.

Gragg - We will table this for the September meeting and have the requested numbers for operating expenses compared to revenue.

Public Comment, Elizabeth Herbel: People in town can rent the American Legion for \$50 if they are a member and a \$100 if they are not. So, if it's going to be raised at the Scout House, I can see folks not using it.

Consensus: Table the discussion to September meeting. 7:20pm

Financial Report – Terry Ullum, 7:21pm

- Nothing out of the ordinary. Everything is routine.
- The council reads the report.

Motion to Approve Financial Report: Stringer, second by Clark. Ayes Carried: 7:23pm

PERSONNEL REPORTS

Parks & Rec – Andy Floyd, Parks Board President, 7:23pm

- Thanks the council for taking time to hear from the Parks Board.
- Whitewater Rec would like to fill the recently vacated position 3, with Elizabeth Herbel who has helped with fundraisers and ran T-Ball in the last year. This is a 2-year commitment, end of term 2026. Asking to instate her immediately.
- Baseball and Softball went well. The fields are in good shape.
- P&R will do a needs assessment this fall. (Baseball, softball equipment and field's needs)
- We are hoping to get a permanent or temporary fence on field 3. - Can we circle back to the discussions about the overhead wires and hope to have that dealt with before the fence goes up?
- Several kids have signed up for Flag Football & Volleyball in El Dorado and Newton. We have tried to help by directing our kids to those programs.
- In about a month we will start Basketball signups.

Brandon Maus – What would it take to have the Parks & Rec and/or the School take over the setup and teardown of the sound systems used during Ball Games? The City Maintenance is currently setting it up and tearing down the city sounds system.

Floyd – That's a good question, you are talking about the High School games? That will probably be something to talk to the schools about. Just be mindful that there is a little give and take going on with the school and rec concerning time and use of properties. It's been a longstanding verbal agreement to share the time and efforts. You could talk to them, possibly the Athletic Director, about the sound system if you are willing to make it accessible to them.

Motion to approve, upon the recommendation of the Parks Board, the appointment of Elizabeth Herbel to the Parks Board for a two-year term by Trent Clark. Second by Coleman. Ayes Carried: 7:30pm

Mayor's Report – Brady Gragg, 7:30pm

- No Report

Clerk's Report – Anne Morrow, 7:30pm

- Clerk has been able to scan all the city codes and then send them on to Ranson CityCode, next she is scanning all the Ordinances to be followed by all the Resolutions and sending them along as well.
- City Park signs have come in and are now posted.

Gragg – Have we had court since we got our new attorney? Answer: No

- I have reached out to Attorney Bina concerning what might be necessary for me to be more efficient in being the court clerk, we have a phone call scheduled for Aug. 28th to discuss that further.

Police Report – Tom Moore, 7:32pm

- Would have been here on time but he was helping some elderly ladies who had broken down on 254.
- Things are going well, only 3 traffic stops.
- I have been checking the ball diamonds: there was a call about a transient along Butler Rd. but someone must have picked them up before he got there.

Maintenance Report – Andrew Hanna, 7:33pm

- July 29th another water leak, not as big, estimated loss of 2500 gallons.
- Don has officially retired, we had a small party for him.
- The crew has been busy painting curbs, and crosswalks in preparation for the school season.
- City building grass is starting to grow.
- KDHE wastewater inspection: No major issues, Recommendations:
 - build a new lift station to handle our growing town, which Hanna will continue to pursue with the City Engineer;
 - need to investigate changing where we discharge when we need to discharge. If possible, into the land around it instead of the river, this would allow us to change our classification into a small systems operation;
 - need to make sure we have an ordinance that prohibits sump pumps from going into the sanitary sewer system, the number of how many there are doing this unknown currently;
 - suggest we measure our sludge in the lagoon, KRWA would be able to help with that.
 - The grates on top of the boxes out at the lagoon need fixing; They are rusted out, attempts to fix have not held up and anyone could fall through.
- Maintenance has started looking into a new mower; There are dedicated machinery funds available. The mower that is needing to be replaced is from 2006, has 3500 hours on it and requires a lot of maintenance – if we don't get it traded in for a new machine, it will end up going into the shop because it requires hydraulic fluid daily. The wait to fix it will take until winter time before Ravenscraft can get to it.
- Burnout from El Dorado (Chlorine) is in full swing, residents have been able to taste it in the water, we are doing our best to regulate it.
- KRWA does Valve exercises with a hydraulic machine to run the valves many times and cleans the treads, etc. and eases the ability to turn the valves on and off. We have about 190 water valves around town. Exercising Valves helps to keep them lubed up, prevents rusting, helps maintain the seals. Trying to get our valves to function better.

Maus – commented on the need to work on the valves around town to assist in their ability to correctly and efficiently take care of water leaks that spring up around town as well as routine maintenance.

Bowlin – it's not just one valve here and there, this whole town needs valves replaced. What happens when they break them when they are exercising these valves? What about the pressure needed?

Gragg – They probably won't eat the cost of replacing a valve if our old valves start breaking during the process. That is something we will need to talk to them about and clarify. Are you saying do all the valves in town, or are there some hot spots you are looking at? What is the estimate?

Hanna – There are some that desperately need it. It is very difficult to spin some even with cheater pipes and two people. Even leaky valves need to be worked to try and work out the debris so it will seal back up. Was told it would take approximately two days to do all 190 valves in town.

Gragg - We would want extra valves on hand.

Ravenscraft – This could cause more problems and create leaks, but it would be nice to be able to cycle them.

Hanna – Our town is a big loop, so when you do one at a time you are not losing pressure anywhere. But you can't tell if there are leaks along the route.

Morrow – Do they do this on a service where they routinely do this in cities? **Answer:** They are on call when needed.

Stringer – What type of valves are these? **Answer:** Gate Valves, allowing the ability to regulate the speed of opening and closing, but requires many more turns to open and close completely.

Ravenscraft – How many of our valves require more than one person to open?

Hanna – Since my time of being here, probably greater than 50% have been at least two people. During my training it was recommended the valves needed to be exercised yearly or bi-annually. So if I can get someone who can get in here and get that done at a great rate, that is what I'm looking at. I was told it would cost \$25 an hour to get one person and a machine out to do it. We have created a valve map noting which valves are problems and which ones are not.

Maus – They also have the ability to mark each valve with GPS where we can then pull it up on the maps and see where our valves actually are, we have spent a lot of time and effort in trying to even find some of our valves, some of which we still cannot locate... so in reality we need to put in 2 new valves that we know of. The one at Willow and the one near 4th and Walnut. In the future, those that leak will need to be replaced, and there is possibly another one where we talked to previous maintenance workers and still have not located it.

Gragg – Before you do the work, will you have estimates to bring before the council? (**Answer:** Yes) Thank you, very informative.

- Burned the dump pile again today. Might be a bit smokey.
- Future projects: Get the parking lines painted in the downtown area
- Need to add a valve on Willow St. to replace the one that is currently in the middle of the street and move it over to the grass so it no longer gets paved over. It is cheaper to place a new one in the park grass than to dig in the street and replace the current one. Has talked to Graber Backhoe to get a quote – we currently have a valve so they will only need to charge for the labor.
- Viking has been in contact about working on the water tower in September.

Stringer – talking about the parking and such downtown, some of the signs are hard to see.

Maus – Yes, we have been looking into some signage for the city and that specific one will need to be a special order.

Ravenscraft – Lagoons, you said they will get someone out to measure the sludge?

Hanna – One of the ladies during our inspection asked when the sludge was last measured? Doesn't know if it ever has been.

Maus – With how long it's been since the sludge has been measured, it will be a good chance that we will need to get the sludge cleared out which will lower our water levels out drastically to the point where we might not have to discharge for quit a while. We are looking at about 20 years of buildup.

Hanna – KRWA can be contracted to do this. So we can talk with them to see how much it would cost to do something like that.

New/Unfinished Business

Fire Hydrant Repair – Bob Bartlett, 7:55pm

- Fire department went around and did fire hydrant testing: Found several with issues.
 - Elm & 1st – need major repair or replacement. Low flow issues
 - Oak & Topeka – need major repair or replacement. near school and apt.
 - Locust & Topeka – need major repair or replacement. near school
- not as bad but don't drain well, very slow. Bad Threads can't get hoses on some.
 - 2nd & Oak
 - Locust & Vine
 - 5th? & Locust
 - Central & Pine

Ravenscraft - Is there a tool to “chase the threads” on some of these hydrants? **Answer:** Unknown, that will be something that the city will need to look into. NH or NST threads.

- need to replace, 2.5in gaskets on 90% of the hydrants
 - order 70, \$150
 - replace 6 due to threads - \$360
 - need about 20 caps - \$57 each, \$1140-- this is not replacing any hydrants.

City Maintenance - a lot of the hydrants do not have specific valves for shutting off at the hydrant, so they will have to be shutting of water to a whole block or more depending on the valves, so to work on these will require the city workers to work at night so they will not be shutting people's water off during the day.

- Most of these problem hydrants are from MH 1961(24), we have 5 different sets of hydrants.

Bowlin - Do you have a punch list of what's needed? (Bartlett provided a 2024 Hydrant Inspection Report)

Clark – It would be nice to budget to replace 1 or 2 hydrants a year. A few years back we replaced some.

Gragg – I think we used Covid \$\$ for that, was an extra purchased at that time? All have been used.

- A lot of hydrants are leaking at the bonnets and we are losing water there.
- High priority is replacing the caps and gaskets. Keep in mind the others will be needed to work soon, so getting them prioritized in important. If you end up replacing hydrants he recommends Steamer Hydrants, which is the same ones used in the most recent replacements. Was told it was cheaper to replace with those. Look online, possibly Fire Hose Direct.

Gragg – Thanked Chief Bartlett for working with the city on checking the hydrants and the recommendations.

Agenda Items for September 23, 2024

- Report for cost on Hydrants & Repairs
- Report for Scout House Costs Assessments
- Quotes for a new Mower
 - **Bowlin** questioning the use of the Equipment Reserve Fund and would like to pump the breaks on the overall spending. Seems like we are spending money we don't have. Stated we raised taxes to add to the General Fund and trying to pad that. Doesn't mean we should just be spending money.
 - **Ullum** the Equipment Reserve Fund is from last year's ending cash balance, one of the reasons we talked about spending that on a Street Sweeper is because the cash was already sitting there. It wasn't put there specifically for a piece of equipment. It is for whoever comes up with the best use of that money. Grant does have a good point, we have some infrastructure that will need attention coming up, a mower will be used a lot but we might need to see what is happening with these water lines and valves.
 - **Bowlin** – Do we still have our \$45,000 budgeted for the Water Tower? It was supposed to be sitting there for 2 years. Is it still sitting there? **Answer:** Don't know where that went.

Exasperated, that is not a good answer!

Ullum – That contract was created and approved in 2019, and there was no specific line item created. It could be part of the Capital Improvement Fund which is at \$39,977.

Bowlin – So we will have to rebudget money that has already been budgeted?

Ullum - Or allocate, yes

Stringer: Did we use some ARPA funds for the Water Tower?

Ullum: That could have been where some of it was but the ARPA money needed to get used by a certain point and it was decided to use what was in ARPA for the sidewalks.

Bowlin – This is why we need to pump the brakes and figure out where we've been. Just when we think we are flush, we don't know where \$40,000 went. We need to find out where it went.

Ullum - Well, we have \$98,434.42 in the General Fund, where if we need to designate it, we will need to do so by approval. We also have Refuse, Water, and Sewer Funds and we put some of that in reserves so we have money we can use from that. We can begin to look at where we want to create the line item from to designate specifically for the Water Tower.

Clark – how much longer is the contract with Viking, if I remember correctly, it was \$43,000 for so many years and then not as much for the rest of the contract?

Hanna - 2025, This major tower project was supposed to be completed last year but continued to be put off due to some variables.

- A motion to allocate funds for the Water Tower contract with Viking will be created.
- New Valve(s) placed in town by Graber Backhoe Costs
- Lagoon Sludge Measurements and Removal Costs

Motion to adjourn the August 26, 2024 City Council Meeting by Clark, second by Coleman. Ayes

Carried: 8:21pm

Meeting Adjourned – 8:21pm