

Bentonville City Council
Meeting Minutes
May 11, 2010

The City Council of Bentonville, Arkansas met in regular session, Tuesday, May 11, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Community Development Building, Planning Commission Meeting room, 305 SW A St., Bentonville, Arkansas. Present were Council Members Chris Sooter, Mary Baggett, Ryan Parks, Ed Austin, Jim Grider, James Dotson, and Bill Burckart. Council Member Shane Perry was absent. Also present were Mayor Bob McCaslin, City Attorney George Spence, City Clerk Suzanne Grider, the press, city staff, and the audience.

Mayor Bob McCaslin called the meeting to order and asked everyone to join him in saluting our nation's flag. After the pledge, there was a moment of silence for our military forces and the invocation was given by Bill Rogers of Word of Life Fellowship.

Motion was made by Council Member Parks, seconded by Council Member Baggett to approve the minutes of the regular meeting minutes of April 27, 2010 as written. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

Motion was made by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Grider to suspend the rules regarding the reading of all ordinances and resolutions on three separate days and further move that they be read by title only. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

Mike Churchwell, Transportation Director, introduced Tony Davis who has just been hired as the new street manager.

- I. **Presentation of Waverly Way Park Concept Plan – David Wright, Parks and Recreation Director and Dan Cole of Earthbenders. See attached memo.**
- II. **Award Bid to Two States Sod in the amount of \$35,970.00 for the purchase and installation of sod at Orchards Park.**

Motion was made by Council Member Sooter, seconded by Council Member Baggett to award the bid to Two States Sod in the amount of \$35,970.00 for the purchase and installation of sod at Orchards Park. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

- III. **Council approval of a grant award in the amount of \$160,000 from the Walton Family Foundation for the renovation of the trail system in Park Springs Park.**

Motion was made by Council Member Grider, seconded by Council Member Sooter to accept a grant in the amount of \$160,000 from the Walton Family Foundation for renovation of the trail system in Park Springs Park. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

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IV. Budget adjustment in the amount of \$5,000 for the Bentonville Public Library grant award from the American Library Association.

Motion was made by Council Member Baggett, seconded by Council Member Dotson to approve a budget adjustment for the library in the amount of \$5,000. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

V. City Attorney George Spence read by title only Resolution #(05-11-10A) authorizing the mayor and clerk to enter into a purchase agreement for the sale of certain real property to Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., a Delaware Corporation. (Piece of the South Bentonville Cemetery Property).

Motion was made by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Baggett to adopt the resolution. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

VI. City Attorney George Spence read by title only Resolution #(05-11-10B) authorizing the mayor and clerk to enter into an agreement with Garver Engineers for design of a 161kV electric transmission line in the amount of \$237,400 between Greenhouse Road and Elm Tree Road.

Motion was made by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Sooter to adopt the resolution. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

VII. City Attorney George Spence read by title only Resolution #(05-11-10C) authorizing the mayor and clerk to enter into an agreement with Garver Engineers for design of an electric substation at Morningstar Road in the amount of \$123,500.

Motion was made by Council Member Baggett, seconded by Council Member Grider to adopt the resolution. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

VIII. Review of Elected Officials Salaries. Mayor, City Council Members, City Attorney, and City Clerk.

Mayor –

Council Member Ed Austin stated that we have some nice comparisons here but what we do not have is information comparing apples to apples. The mayor of Bentonville has responsibility and management of over 365 employees, with 15 departments, a large budget, a utility company which consist of electric, water and sewer. It is my opinion that the job is a bargain. Council Member Austin stated why don't each of us give our opinion on this.

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Council Member Dotson stated that compared to other cities the mayor's pay is slightly above average. According to what we have in front of us. It is close to what Fayetteville's mayor makes. In my opinion, it could be raised slightly, maybe.

Council Member Parks stated he agrees with Dotson. It is a little skewed on the high side. We have a mayor in our city that has other functions that other cities do not have. Something really weighs on my heart is that we weren't able to give a cost of living increase to our employees last year. I know this isn't a cost of living increase, but if I were working for the city, it would be somewhat de-motivating to have the council approve a raise, but I not get any. Currently it is fairly adequate for now.

Council Member Baggett stated she would like to ask the mayor's opinion. If you were not in this job what would you think. Mayor McCaslin stated that it has helped him coming from a business background. You know what all it requires. There is justification for raising it. There are a lot of intricacies where a business background is helpful.

Council Member Burckart stated he appreciates everyone's opinion and feels that we should review benefits of all employees such as a COLA increase. In a COLA increase, it will increase your salary.

Council Member Grider stated you have some valid points. The mayor has a demanding job. In times like this it is difficult to say lets raise the salary, but then you also want someone with the capabilities and skills to lead. To get that you need to be able to dangle a carrot.

It was asked what the total benefit package is to the mayor. He has the use of a vehicle, health insurance, and retirement.

Council Member Sooter stated the COLA has not always applied to elected officials. I would like to raise the point to have the COLA apply to elected officials in the future. The job of mayor is as difficult as in some larger cities. We're not looking at this year but what this will pay for the next four years. I think it would be all of our intentions to increase salaries of our employees for the next four years. I propose to increase the mayor's salary to \$115,000 beginning at the next term which is Jan. 1, 2011.

Motion was made by Council Member Sooter, seconded by Council Member Baggett to raise the mayor's salary beginning Jan. 1, 2011 to \$115,000. Motion was denied (4-3) of those present with Council Members Austin, Baggett, Grider, and Sooter voting yes and Council Members Dotson, Parks and Burckart voting no. Council Member Perry was absent.

City Attorney -

Council Member Austin gave a background or history of our elected city attorney position and staff attorney position.

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It was asked if there are any other cities that have a city attorney set up as we do. City Attorney George Spence stated that Bella Vista is similar to ours. They have no reliance at all on the city attorney. Currently that office is vacant.

Council Member Austin asked City Attorney Spence to give his opinion of his salary. City Attorney Spence stated he thinks the way that we have engendered working this position the compensation is fair. I am contracted out to do condemnations and consulting with Camille Thompson on some matters. I serve the role as a sounding board and fill in for her when she is unavailable. There are certain markets that are unavailable to you because you sit in this position and you give that up.

It was asked what benefits the position holds. City Attorney Spence stated health insurance like all elected officials.

No action was taken on the city attorney salary for the next term. It was left the same.

City Clerk -

Council Member Austin asked City Clerk Suzanne Grider to give her opinion on her salary, since she will not be in the office for the next term. City Clerk Grider stated that there are a lot of differences between clerks throughout the state. It is very hard to compare them and what is required of them depending on how large the city is and what their council requires them to do. City Clerk Grider stated that there are a number of things that no one realizes you do other than taking minutes of the meetings, such as the need of a computer, internet access, a way to receive emails, a vehicle to record documents at the county, and just regular office supplies. You receive request from city departments and citizens for research, copies of resolutions, ordinances and minutes. You send out the ordinances and resolutions from each meeting to let department heads have a record of what was passed.

Council Member Baggett asked do we not need to provide this position with a computer. Council Member Grider stated that if we provide a computer for the city clerk then the city would need to provide a computer to all elected officials.

Council Member Burckart stated he felt it should be increased to cover expenses. We could increase it to \$8,000 at the beginning of the next term to help with supplies, telephone, travel, depreciation of the computer.

Most council agreed.

Motion was made by Council Member Burckart, seconded by Council Member Sooter to raise the salary of the city clerk beginning Jan. 1, 2011 to \$8,000. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.

City Council -

Council Member Austin stated that since we voted not to vote a COLA for employees or raises it would be hard for me to vote myself or whoever is in the next term a raise.

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Council Member Grider asked what was the raise we had looked at that never took effect. It was a raise to \$7200.00.

Council Member Burckart asked about benefits to elected officials and if everyone has access to these benefits. Council Member Burkart stated he was told by Human Resources that there weren't any benefits such as health insurance for elected officials. Is this a state statute or an ordinance? Council Member Burckart stated he would be willing to pay for it himself and it would be a phenomenal opportunity.

Staff Attorney Camille Thompson stated that with our Blue Cross/Blue Shield Insurance policy we define who is eligible for insurance. Elected officials would be eligible but it would only be for two years at a time depending on the term you held. City Attorney Spence stated that he has the insurance and is paying the same percentage as the employees.

Council Member Austin asked if the mayor would find out all the information concerning elected officials benefits and get back with the city council and give us a report.

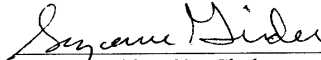
No action was taken on council members salaries.

Mayor Bob McCaslin announced the next City Expo would be on Tuesday, May 18 from 5 to 7 p.m. at the Bentonville Public Library.

Motion was made by Council Member Austin, seconded by Council Member Baggett to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried (7-0) of those present with Council Member Perry absent.



Bob McCaslin, Mayor



Suzanne Grider, City Clerk