

# TOWN OF ASHLAND CITY Regularly Scheduled Workshop MeetingSeptember 03, 2024, 6:00 PM Minutes

#### **CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Greer called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

## **ROLL CALL**

Mayor Gerald Greer Councilman Tim Adkins Vice Mayor Chris Kerrigan Councilman Michael Smith Councilman Kevin Thompson Councilman Tony Young

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Councilman Thompson, Seconded by Councilman Smith, to approve the agenda. All approved by voice vote.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

August 6,2024, Workshop Minutes
 A motion was made by Councilman Thompson, Seconded by Vice Mayor Kerrigan, to approve the August 6, 2024, minutes. All approved by voice vote.

#### **PUBLIC FORUM**

Casey Withers – He is from Boy Scout Troop 126 in Ashland City. He is asking for permission and a possible location to build 10 bird houses for an Eagle Scout project. The council asked if he has a written proposal. He asked what they meant by written proposal. It was explained and asked if he has exactly what he wants to do and when he was looking to do it and all the details on the project. How big the birdhouses will be? He told the council that he does have build plans. He repeated that he came to ask for the council to assign him a location for the project. They asked if there was a location he was considering. He said Ashland City Parks or Care facilities. Mayor Greer connected him with the Parks Director to help him get set up with the project. Mayor Greer thanked him for bringing this to Ashland City. Councilman Thompson asked for copies of the plan and they were made for the council to have.

Steve Tillisch - He is a resident of Eisenhower. He was there to discuss an ongoing issue, and he thinks the workshop is the forum where he can do this. He stated that a lot of people are aware of the issue. CEMC installed 10 Stadium type lights that are very bright. He has spoken to Josh from CEMC, and he stated that they are the lowest wattage they could install. He described it as a baseball park. He stated that none of the residents know where the idea came from or who approved it. Because of the complaints about them 7 of them have been removed. There are still 3 of them up and a neighbor at 217 Eisenhower located right on the S curve as He travels a lot. The people directly across the street have one of the old-style streetlights hanging there and their next-door neighbor at the top of the hill as you go around the curve has another light at the end of their driveway. He stated that the area was already lit, and one was located 2 doors down from his home. When he spoke to CEMC and Josh, Josh stated that they had requested to leave at least one of those lights. What they want to know is who would have the authority to tell CEMC to put the 10 lights up without any of the residents knowing and Almost all of the residents objecting to it. There is no night sky with those lights. He stated that they have been able to see the space station fly over them since they have lived here for 15 years. They can no longer see that, and it is a concern to them. They would like to identify how it happened. They want to be proactive instead of reactive in the future. The resident would like to be more involved in those decisions.

Betsy Morely – She thanked the Council and stated it might be a little repetitive. I am here to

complain about the streetlights that were put up on Eisenhower Dr. She spoke about this at the last City Council meeting. The lights are extremely bright and disruptive to the night sky which is a key part of why I live where I do. After speaking to Ashland City Representatives and CEMC Representatives were told the lights would be taken out. Then, only some came down and some stayed up, and they were told that some people had asked for those lights to stay. I would like to suggest that however wants the lights on their street, put an appropriate light on them property that doesn't radiate on her property. They should do this at their own expense. She would like to know how this lighting fiasco came up in the first place. Who is Ashland City government placed the order. She wants to find out and wants to know that. This is a problem that they shouldn't have. Whoever is making these decisions should explain it. We as a city should not permit these types of actions to take place without contacting residents for them input. She stated that we really need to figure out how to stop this type of practice from happening again. She stated that she is speaking for other neighbors who were not able to attend.

**Joy Corn** – She is a resident at Hickory Hills Condominiums and has lived there for 8 years. She is on the HOA Board, and they want to keep it before council attention that they believe They are paying for a service that they are not receiving. They pay sewer fee, but they do not have a sewer. They are on a step system and the city does not pay to empty their holding tanks. They believe that they should not have to pay for this service since the city does not empty the tanks.

Phil Bales – He is a resident and the President of the Ashland Park Condominiums on Highway 12 South in Ashland City. He is echoing the thoughts of Ms. Corn. They are paying for sewage fees that they are not receiving the service for. At the last city council meeting they stated that They paid \$ 11,000 to have these tanks pumped. Prior to that the town used to come and do it twice a year. They feel they are paying for a service they are not receiving. Half of the water bill includes sewer and they do not get that part of the service.

Jennifer Able – She stated good evening, Mayor and Council. She is a resident at the Ashland Park Condominiums. She is also on the HOA Board and continues the conversation of Phil and Joy. The discussion of not only the sewer fee that they pay but they are receiving nothing for the fee. She would like to take a look at the original ordinance. When the ordinance was changed in order to justify that they are residential property, and they are not commercial property. The ordinance that was changed the language is stated that commercial property would not have their step systems cleaned. We are 48 individual units with separate owners. They are there to have this open dialogue and conversation to find out why it happened and when it happened and what can be done to rectify and fix the problem.

## **REPORTS**

- 3. Attorney Jennifer Noe was not present for the meeting.
- 4. City Recorder Mary Molepske gave an update on what she has been working on.
- 5. Codes Department Allen Nicholson gave a codes update and presented council with a full report.
- 6. Finance Department Gayle Bowman stated she emailed the finance report showing revenues verses expenses, fund balance, cash on hand and loan information and gave an update on the finance department and what they are working on.
- 7. Fire Department Chief Walker gave update on the fire hall. They had a 1 year walk through.
- 8. Human Resources Department Violet Black gave an update on new employees, interviews, and meetings she has attended. She also covered many other things that she is working on.
- 9. Parks Department Anthony Clark gave an update on the events in the park and grants applied for. Farmer's Market will be open until the last Saturday of September from 9 am 12 noon. Councilman Adkins thanked AC for sending out a list of the events in the parks each month.
- 10. Police Department Chief Ray gave an update on the calls for the month and new hires and applicants.

- 11. Public Works Department Clint Biggers gave an update of things they have worked on across the city.
- 12. Technology Department Justin Wheeler gave an update on what he was working on and new training completed.
- 13. Thrive 55+ Department Tammany Carter gave an update on events and attendance and grants they are working on. Also, gave an update on replacement equipment for the center this month.

## **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

14. Ordinance: Rezone Melton Property - 2nd Reading – Rezone property located on Highway 12. Rezone is moving from R1 to C2. This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading. It is within the land use plan. No questions asked by The Council.

#### **NEW BUSINESS**

15. City Administrator Discussion – Gary Jaeckel spoke to the council about reposting the City Admin Position. He had a couple of things to address about the last round and what came up from it. He recommended the council to loosen the number of years' experience with executive Management. It would be more attractive to people who are assistant City Manager's looking to move up or Department Heads looking to move up. The next suggestion is the salary range for the position. This salary was not looked at or changed when the department heads received the cost-of-living increase in pay. He will insist on a cut off time for submitting a resume for the position. He suggested from open to close should not exceed 2 months. He suggested advertising with the International City Manager's Association. There is a cost to that, but he thinks it is worth the cost.

Mayor Greer asked if he knew what the cost for the Association is.

Mr. Jaeckel replied that the last he used it the cost was \$175.00 but has not checked recently. Mayor Greer would like to see this advertised in as many places as possible to get a wide net out for more candidates. Mayor Greer confirms they were asking for 5-7 years of Executive experience and asked what he would recommend for the years of experience. He stated that we ask for management experience and not executive management to open the net to candidates more

Councilman Adkins asked what he is recommending for the Salary?

Gayle gave the salary range.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan gave the range of Salary for this position on MTAS and we were above the range so He is not sure that salary was really the issue.

Councilman Smith asked if we asked for 2-4 years' experience would we get more people interested and the salary we are offering.

Councilman Adkins asked Gayle what the highest paid department heads making now.

Gayle replied the highest is just a little over a hundred but has 30 years' experience.

Mayor Greer asked the top out salary.

Gayle responded she believes about a hundred and five from memory. She stated that when they made the pay scale, they made the Low and High to fit that salary scale. Police were only moved up one grade level.

Mayor Greer stated that could be part of the problem. We increased our top salaries for the police and fire departments to about a hundred and twenty and we are asking a city administrator to take less.

Gayle added that the fire and police would now be in level 10 where the public works was on the regular pay table.

Mr. Jaeckel replied they need to make the City Administrator pay scale need to be above the department head's pay table.

Mayor Greer stated it makes sense that the top person should make the top salary.

Gayle added the pay scale for the admin position at \$98, 808 mid-level is \$ 118,000 and top pay is \$ 124,800. Comparing the positions, the admin pay is the top pay. There is \$ 18,000

difference in the low \$ 16,000 difference in the mid and only \$3,000 in the high. Gayle stated that there is a good range in all of them except the high is the council would like to raise the high. Gayle stated that they will need to decide where they are going to start out with for the salary.

Councilman Thompson asked more questions about the Association web site for advertising. He mentioned a date in November which would be around the 2-month mark and Mayor Greer stated that there are things that need ironing out that might not line up with that date. They would need to vote on the job advertisement, qualifications, and the price.

Mr. Jaeckel stated that once the councilmen make the adjustments it will only take him 5 minutes to make the changes to advertise.

Councilman Thompson and Vice Mayor Kerrigan think those choices can be made by next week

Vice Mayor Kerrigan asked if they all agree to 3-5 years instead of 5-7 and Councilman Smith added 2-4 years or whichever they agree on next week. Experience was greed at 2-4 and they moved toward pay to get both issues settled to have it ready to vote on for the city council meeting next week. Change the top pay to \$135,000.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan stated that they would determine the persons pay weighing their experience during the interview process.

## 16. Temporary Chief of Staff Discussion

Mayor Greer explained his discussions with Gary and another representative who Gary brought to his office. Mayor stated that often times looking for someone for this kind of position as we have experienced it has taken us a while to go through the process just to get to the interview process and we did not have success at the first time around. This hiring process can take a couple of months, we are looking at the advertisement going into November. This would put the interviews sometime in November hopefully before Thanksgiving. In an effort to ease us into having that position and get our staff all moving in the same direction that this person would then come and take over. He has passed the idea by Gary and the possibility of someone coming in and not call it an interim position but come in and help out with some of the duties that are in our City Administrator job description. This is where my idea came up of a temporary chief of staff. We do not have to call it that, but he wanted some feedback on the idea. We could even have the possibility of one of the department heads getting assigned some additional duties. This would be for a temporary time period. This would continue for about a month or two after the City Admin is hired. Not only would this help us, and our departments move along, it would help us to get some things done that are in the City Administrator job description. Day-today operations in the offices. He thinks that adding this type of position or adding duties could help us out. This would help us to have more representation and supervision of our Day-to-Day operations of the city. We could take a minimal amount of the job description for the City Administrator and utilize some of those parts of the job temporarily. Position of Guidance and leadership. We could also use this person for onboarding a new employee. We would use this person to introduce this person to the job and Ashland City and the staff and to the elected council.

Councilman Smith stated that he would rather have a chief of staff to the mayor rather than an administrator. He thought that would make more sense. He stated that a chief of staff to the mayor could be very effective, especially when we have a part-time mayor.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan asked the pay for hiring someone in for this.

Mayor verified with Gayle that if a department head was stepping forward it would be 5% for the additional duties and review in 6 months. If a new position is being created, then we need to advertise if we are doing a interim with a department head doing additional duties we would not have to advertise. Since this is a council position it would be the council that chooses who this department head would be. Any department head that is interested should write a letter of interest and send it to Violet to take it to the council and the mayor. The council agreed that they may need to wait a month to get the interim position in motion and filled.

## 17. BZA Appointment

Mayor Greer stated that at the council meeting he was going to recommend Rick Johnson for the seat on the BZA council. He has interviewed him, and he is very interested in serving the town. Mayor Greer corrected the name of the person that he will recommend next week. It is not Rick Johnson; his name is Rick Gregory.

# 18. Employee Manual Discussion

Mayor Greer stated that in our employee manual, during COVID we were allowing some employees to work from home. Those times have changed now, and he thinks we need to get back into doing things with some sort of normalcy. He would like to recommend that we take out Walk- working at an alternate location. This brings everybody back into the office. He would like them to think before they vote on this next week that this is in their wage and salary policy. Do we take this privilege away completely or make changes to it. It already reads working at an alternate location must be approved by the mayor. He would like to have everybody in the office. He stated that we have plenty of employees that can only work by coming into the office physically. He stated out of fairness and to make it even across the board for everyone. Another thing he would like to look at is people working and earning hours while on vacation or flex time. Earning a salary and vacation time does not seem very fair to other employees. Gayle Bowman spoke up and stated that she is the guilty one for that. Being the Finance Director, there are certain things that I'm the only one allowed to have access to. So, if something happens, I have to be contacted. My laptop goes with me. I do try once a year to leave everything at home and get away. She stated that she cannot take vacation from January until June because of the budget. I take my vacation in August for 3 weeks and I am the only one to have access to our OGIP money. That is where the majority of our money comes from. That is a government system, and the government does not let more than 1 person have access to that money. Our regular bank accounts we cannot have more than \$ 250,000 minimum at a time. Part of her job is constantly moving money back and forth to pay our bills and then it would give a large some, so I have to move the money and a week of vacation, could cause the city to be overdrawn on accounts if I and not moving money where it is needed. This would also safe quard the city from violation of any of the laws. Gayle stated that she is a salary employee not hourly so she is on 24/7 and can be called at any time. She stated that she is the biggest violator of that because her computer and phone goes with her everywhere. I am the only person in the city that has access to your major money. That is just the way it is set up. Vice Mayor Kerrigan asked if she would be earning flex time or anything off that? Gayle stated that It would just take away from her used vacation hours. Like this time she had 2 hours of worked time and most of the time she does not even count the time she works. She worked 2 hours and only took 38 hours of vacation time. She had 226 hours of vacation time and now has 206 due to the meetings and things she has to-do. Her department gets guite a bit of flex comp because of the long hours when things need to be done.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan asked who keeps track of all that?

Gayle responded it is through the payroll system. She handed it out to all of the department heads to let them know how much comp time, flex time, and vacation time their employees have. On December 31<sup>st</sup>, they can only roll over 100 hours, so all the extra hours don't. The council passed a resolution a couple of years ago that required us to take flex time and comp time first. Any extra time for meetings, I have to use that time first before my vacation time. It is the same for AC because he has employees working so many events, they have lots of comp time. They will have to roll their time over or they will be off the entire month of December. Violet stated that if they are hourly employees and there is comp time it is paid out in their paychecks. If your salary and have flex time you just lose it. If you were an hourly employee and move up to salary you get paid out for the flex time and comp time.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan stated it goes back to what he said in the past: when you are a salary employee, he does not understand how you get flex time anyway. That is his personal opinion, and a lot may not agree with it but your salary. If you spend 2 hours on vacation, he does it all the time. Tim said the same thing. If he takes a vacation his computer goes with him. If his stores call and say they need an order he puts in the order.

Gayle stated that she knows what her responsibilities are, and she knows what her job is. She stated that whether she got those 2 hours or not and it is her job to do that. She stated that the resolution put a max on it and they can only earn up to 80 hours and some department heads

lose time every year. Some department heads, if they work over take off early on Friday but my job does not allow that.

Justin Wheeler spoke from the audience and stated that his job is the same being in technology. He has to answer all of those calls as well because he is the only person in his department. Vice Mayor Kerrigan asked if we have an issue with people working from home? He stated that it says it is required to have approval by the mayor. He questioned if it is necessary to change it if it requires approval by the mayor.

Mayor Greer asked again if they should remove it so that there is no more option to work from home at all.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan stated that he does not see an issue leaving it in there if we are not having an issue and no one is using the work from home as a way not to come into the office. That way if there ever is an issue we already have it in there and covered.

- 19. ORDINANCE: Rezone for City 1st Reading Allen Nicholson explained that this is currently the location for city hall. It is currently zoned C1 and residential and they want to clean that up so that it matches the zoning ordinance. He is requesting it be rezoned to c1, pud, downtown overlay district.
- 20. GNRC- Ashland City Municipal Government -on-call Grant Contract Clint stated that the is the grant they have for the replacing the sewer pump stations. This is the contract for GNRC to manage it.
- 21. CDBG Grant- Task order 1 Clint stated that this is for them to review the environmental report that we have. We pay them out of the Grant.
- 22. CDBG Grant- Task order 2 Clint stated that this is the administrative service they provide for us.
- 23. Water/Sewer fee Discussion Clint explained that everyone from the bypass south of town. They are hooked to sewer the system here. Everybody is on our sewer system and a septic tank. If you are on a septic tank, it takes twice as much money to treat. The pipes are twice as expensive, and we have bigger pump stations and so that is why the fee is there. Hickory Hills has multiple units on one tank. This is not standard residential use for sewer systems. A simple residential can go 50 years without being pumped because it is not misused. The reason that it is called septic is because it turns septic. There are more gases, the water turns black. When we used to pump it, it would kill our sewer plant for a week. We would be in violation with the state. That was the reason for the ordinance because there are no other utilities that pump apartments or restaurants or any commercial businesses. The ordinance in question is 4 years old.

Mayor Greer asked in the ordinance if he recalls correctly, it says non-residential, is that correct? The questions that are coming to Mayor and The Council from the residents that live at Hickory Hills and Ashland Park Condominiums is that they are zoned residential. They are individually owned and it's not a commercial business or living space.

Clint responded: They are individually owned but they are all hooked to one septic tank for 12 units. It is not a standard residential tank.

Councilman Thompson asked why they are on a septic tank?

Clint responded: That whole area of Town is on gray water only. This means we just take the water off it. It holds all the solids and that is what has to be pumped. On that side of town we only accept gray water. The system from the bypass that way, the mains are only able to take water. It won't hold solids. The pump stations won't pump solids and that was an addition years ago and separate from this part of town.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan stated: When we made the resolution the understanding was those were listed as commercial because of the septic. The wording in the resolution is technically incorrect. We say non-residential. If that is what the council wants to do is not pump, then the wording on the resolution needs to be updated. It should read commercial septic system not non-residential. Mayor Greer stated that they are considered residential.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan said the zoning is residential, but the septic is used as commercial. Clint stated that the whole purpose was the sewer plant was it was killing the sewer plant. We were in violation with TDEC also.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan stated he remembered when it came through and the issue was discussed. He is unsure if there was a full understanding of how it was separated.

Mayor Greer asked what we were charging the residents when it was full service?

Clint responded that they were not charged and that we just went and did it.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan stated that we then had several issues because our system cannot handle that.

Mayor Greer stated that one of the frustrations he has heard is that they were not notified of the change. The residents found out by walking out to the parking lot to raw sewage. He would like to know why they were not notified of the change.

Gayle Bowman stated that she looked in her computer and this would be her 2<sup>nd</sup> computer since this occurred and she was not able to find the letter. She is also on her 3<sup>rd</sup> office since then and she has searched for it but has not found anything. She remembers it happening but cannot locate the letter.

Mayor Greer stated that he has heard from several residents that they never received anything. He has not gotten feedback from any resident that says they received a letter.

Councilman Thompson asked: it is not the sewer line, and we are accepting the gray water. It is the pumps to get it to the plant on that end of town without a solid tank in between.

clint responded correct it is set up for only water. He stated that there are no utility pumps in an apartment complex.

Mayor Greer asked if there was any compromise.

Clint stated that he will do whatever the council wants him to do.

Vice Mayor Kerrigan asked if we went and pumped them so could the sewer department handle that.

Clint responded: not at this sewer plant. He said that most cities are not doing it because it is 10 times worse than residential, and it kills the sewer plants.

Councilman Thompson offered to make some calls and find some answers for the questions asked.

- 24. Streetscape Improvements Contract Clint stated that this was the landscape engineer, and he has not sent the updated contract. It is dated incorrectly. Mayor Smith signed it in May, but it needed to come back through again for Mayor Greer to sign it. He stated that they had reached out by email and phone and the gentleman has not responded. Mary the City Recorder stated that she would reach out since he has responded to her in the past pretty fast.
- 25. RESOLUTION Check Signer Gayle Bowman stated that this removes the former Mayor JT Smith and adds Gerald Greer to the local banks so that he becomes a signor on the bank accounts.
- 26. Library Maintenance of Effort Agreement Gayle Bowman stated this is our yearly agreement with the library where we pay \$12,500.00 into the budget.
- 27. TBI check user Agreement Violet Black stated this is for the Police Department, but we have employees in the police department that are not officers and have to be in the TBI. She has an agreement with a company that they have to get signed by the mayor and we will also have to pay. We have 2 employees, the cleaning person and Justin and they will have to be fingerprinted and they cannot go through the police department. They will have to go through this other service to be in line with the TBI Audit that they have to go through.
- 28. RESOLUTION: Thrive 55+ Interim Pay Violet Black stated that this put Judianna and Tammany up to the director's position. They are going to split it because of the late notice. They do not have the schedule to hit all the meetings. They both stepped up and taken on the activities at the Senior Center.
- 29. Redd Stewart Historical Marker Councilman Adkins stated the county Mayor Kerry McCarver contacted him for the family of Redd Stewart asking if the county would place a historical marker along Tennessee Waltz Parkway to recognize Redd Stewart. He was a native of Ashland City and he wrote our state song The Tennessee Waltz. The family asked for the sign to be installed near Dillon Transportation or the Braxton area of the bypass since that was close to his home

decades ago. Mayor McCarver told the family it would be the city and possibly The Tennessee Department of Transportation since the is a state road and said that County historian Lisa Walker helped the county several years ago get a historical marker on Highway 12 North and Henrietta for Summit and he said at the time that was about \$ 1400.00 and I just wanted to put it out here. He said that was pre- covid so I'm sure the prices have changed. I wanted to know if this is something the council would like to pursue.

- 30. Park Advisory Board Discussion Councilman Smith stated because of the last meeting. It is an ongoing issue; we have a few issues we would like to clean up. The secretary, according to the original ordinance that was made, states the secretary must be a city employee, not a board member anymore. Currently, we have Renee Cannon as our secretary, who is a part-time employee of the city, and she is also on the board. The problem is when the old secretary who was a city employee resigned the board could not find someone who was a city employee who could do or would do the job. He thinks they came to council, and it was changed that a board member could be the secretary. Renee then turned out to be a board member and the secretary. He would just like to clarify if that is still ok. It was suggested to get the advice of Jennifer Noe if the wording should be changed to reflect that. They also put a lot of events out on the city website and would like to add a tab for the board to put events out so the public does not have to search for them. He would also like a better way to recognize when someone donates something to the parks. It was recommended to get with AC to find out how to utilize the site more efficiently.
- 31. CEC Amendment to owner Engineer Agreement No.3 Gayle stated this is a new agreement with CEC to add an additional \$ 20,000.00 for their work adding the new belt press. It will be \$ 20,000.00 in labor and whatever work they are doing to get this new belt press for the new facility.
- 32. Ashland City Fire Station 2 Fire Alarm System Component Replacement Estimate Allen Nicolson stated this is a lease agreement. The fire alarm at station 2 went out and was showing an alarm continuously. We had 2 alarm companies come out and give quotes. They also had PPE because they turned into the insurance because they thought lightning had struck it. The engineer looked at it and said it did strike it and it was age. The current system there now is a proprietary system and that means that only that company can work on that system. That is Johnson Controls, and you have to use their products and their technicians. The higher quote is the system that matched station 1 and is a little bit higher but will be better in the end. It would also only be 1 company monitoring both stations and right now there are 2. Mayor Greer asked if that was SWC.

## **SURPLUS PROPERTY NOMINATIONS**

None

#### **EXPENDITURE REQUESTS**

- 33. Ashland City Fire Dept- Equinox Quote Chief Walker stated this is for adding 2 more tornado sirens and it was put in the budget. This quote is on the Federal contract. He stated that it was a little higher than what was budgeted. It came in as \$ 73,614.00. They do not have an exact location at this time until the company comes down and do a study but we have an idea. We had \$ 68,000.00 in the budget.
- 34. Expenditure Request Active Shooter Kits \$ 18,055.25 Chief Ray stated that it was already approved in the budget. This was to make them aware of spending that money for the kits. They have already been ordered and should be in soon.

#### **OTHER**

There was some extended conversation and questions about the lights from CEMC.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Amotion was made by Vice Mayor Kerrigan, seconded by Councilman Thompson to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 7:52 PM.

