

## CAUCUS MEETING MINUTES OF THE ELSMERE CITY COUNCIL

May 2, 2023

6:30 PM

**LOCATION:** Elsmere City Building.

**CALL TO ORDER:** Councilwoman Maria Vogt called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL:** The following members were present: Mayor Marty Lenhof, Councilwoman Maria Vogt, Councilwoman Gloria Grubbs, Councilman Malcolm Daniels, Councilwoman Serena Owen, Councilwoman Missy Tester, and Councilwoman Joanne Barnett Smith.

**AUDIENCE REMARKS:**

There were no audience remarks.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

**City Wide Yard Sale Dates** – After discussions it was decided that the dates for the City-Wide Yard would be May 19<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup>. The residents will need to obtain a permit but there is no charge.

**Budget Discussion** – City Administrator Matt Dowling and City Treasurer Jessica Lucius along with Chief Joe Maier and Public Works Director Chris Zerhusen went through the proposed budget with the council.

Councilwoman Serena Owen asked the false alarm charges under miscellaneous. City Administrator Dowling explained that it was for homes or businesses who have alarms that go off. The first one is a warning, but they are charged for each subsequent alarm. City Treasurer Jessica Lucius explained the costs. Councilwoman Owen asked if it was mostly businesses. City Treasurer Lucius stated that it varies. She explained that most months there are no charges.

Councilman Daniels asked if anyone has taken advantage of the tuition reimbursement line item in the General Government Budget. Treasurer Lucius stated that we had one employee use it during the current fiscal year and he plans to use it again.

Councilwoman Owen asked to have the abbreviations for ARPA and COLA clarified. Mr. Dowling stated that ARPA stands for the American Rescue Plan Act. Ms. Lucius stated that COLA is Cost of Living Adjustment.

Councilman Daniels asked if there was one thing that is needed to make your job more efficient to complete. Matt stated that the Administration has been taken care of well. Matt stated that in the budget we built in making one of the part-time employees full time. Mayor Lenhof stated that moving into the new building there will be a lot of more technical items and they are falling onto our city clerk. This will alleviate some of the jobs.

Mr. Dowling and Chief Joe Maier went through the Public Safety Budget.

Councilman Daniels asked Chief Maier how the moral on the force is as far as salaries are concerned. Chief Maier stated that the force is very competitive.

Councilman Daniels asked if there was one thing that would make operation go smoothly what would it be. Chief Maier stated that he would like the Paycor App. If the department would go electronic it would make it easier. The employee would be able to clock in from their phone and at the end of the week the supervisor would be able to review it. This would include overtime, compensatory time, vacation time, and sick time. Then he would submit to Jessica to process. Councilwoman Grubbs asked what the cost of the app would be. Mr. Dowling stated that he would need to obtain pricing. Chief Maier stated that it's probably only a couple of thousand dollars. Councilwoman Grubbs stated that if that is all it would be then she would be in favor of adding it to the budget.

Councilwoman Vogt asked if when our employees go into another city to perform work would we have to pay taxes to that city. Mr. Dowling stated that some companies need to do that, but with emergency services it is not tracked like that.

Mr. Dowling and Public Works Director Chris Zerhusen went through the public works budget.

Councilwoman Vogt asked what happens if there is a natural disaster in the area? Would the cost come out of the city's budget or would there be federal money. Mr. Zerhusen explained that the initial cost would come out of the city's budget, but then the city would complete FEMA forms for reimbursement. He stated that it would be nearly impossible to plan for. Mr. Dowling stated that Emergency Management coordinates the disaster recovery process. He stated that the city would pay for the recovery primarily out of reserves.

Councilwoman Owen asked if the city has a place allotted during a disaster where people can go and if so, how much does it cost to maintain that space. Chief Maier stated that there are designated areas throughout the county. They are handled by Emergency Management Association (EMA). He also stated that the city has a crisis plan in place through EMA. She asked if the council could have a copy of the plan. Chief Maier stated he would ask EMA for copies.

Councilman Daniels asked what the amount placed in budget for signs consisted of. Mr. Zerhusen stated it was for general signs such as stop signs, street signs, poles, and the flashing stop signs. All of the roadway signs throughout the city.

Councilman Daniels asked if there was one thing that would make your job more efficient what would it be? Mr. Zerhusen stated that it would be an upgrade to the public works facility.

Councilwoman Owen asked if the city could have some training for the residents for EMA training. Mr. Zerhusen stated that type of training would come from EMA directly.

Mr. Dowling went through the remaining budget items.

Councilman Daniels asked if the cost of code enforcement would increase if the city was to allow chickens to all residents next year. Mr. Dowling stated that it would but thinks the city could absorb the additional costs.

Councilwoman Owen asked if there are any funds budgeted in the Parks and Recreation budget for summer programs for the youth in the city. Mr. Dowling stated that it would come out of our Strategic Plan line item.

Councilman Daniels asked if the city had any schools to contact the city to use our parks. Mr. Dowling stated that we had not.

Councilwoman Owen asked if it is possible to increase the strategic plan funding with grants. She stated that she is a grant writer. She stated she would be happy to help the city obtain grants. Mr. Dowling stated that if the city did not know the funding was available it would not be included in the budget, it would be amended at a later time. Attorney Voss stated that a councilmember would be able to assist in grant writing. Councilwoman Owen stated that she is a representative for the city on the OKI council and knows there are grants available.

Mr. Dowling stated that the city always budgets to a deficit. However, the city has some projects that are budgeted for, and are not completed. Over the past five years the city has budgeted to a deficit and four of the five have resulted in rolling over funds to our reserves.

Mr. Dowling went through the Street Tax, Municipal Aid and Capital Improvement Budgets.

Councilwoman Vogt asked if the city figures in savings from mild winters with salt purchases. The city currently is locked in on a good price for salt and the salt bin his completely full currently.

Mr. Dowling stated that this is the first year that he is proposing a true Capital Improvement Program. The city is seeing that it is hard to purchase a vehicle, not only from supply but also costs. There is a delay in getting vehicles and sometimes it crosses into more than one fiscal year.

**No Action Taken**

**Councilwoman Grubbs** had not report.

**Councilman Daniels** asked if the city had done a renewed push for the memorial banners. The city has the order forms on our Facebook and website. They will be put back up the week before Memorial Day.

Councilwoman Barnett Smith asked how many bricks the city has sold. Currently we have sold 24 bricks. She also stated that there are people cutting through the old police station, would the city be liable. Attorney Voss stated that the city could be.

**Councilwoman Tester** had nothing to report.


**Councilwoman Owen** would like to congratulate everyone who was selected to participate in the chicken program. She stated through the Kenton Extension office for those who are not as experienced in raising backyard chickens, there is a program across from the Erlanger Library on May 18<sup>th</sup> at 1:00. The Northern Kentucky Senior Games are this month. Check out the Kenton County Parks Website for more information. She wanted to thank the council for supporting Juneteenth and the Crown Act. She was wondering if the ordinance would be voted on at the council meeting for the Crown Act and if the second reading for Juneteenth celebration. She also asked if the city would be participating in the Juneteenth Parade and have booth. Councilman Daniels stated that the second reading for the Juneteenth ordinance will be at the next council meeting. Councilwoman Owen asked again about the ordinance for the Crown Act. She stated that she had thought Attorney Voss would prepare a draft. Attorney Voss stated that they were going to look into it. Mr. Dowling stated that the city could prepare an ordinance if the council supported. Both Councilman Daniels and Councilwoman Owen stated they supported the ordinance. Councilwoman Grubbs stated she would like to see what the ordinance says. Councilwoman Owen stated that it would be great if they could have a draft of the ordinance and possibly a first reading at the council meeting. Happy Administrative Assistant Appreciation Day and Municipal Clerks Appreciation Week! Our Elsmere City Administration and Professional staff team is awesome and greatly appreciated!


**Mayor Lenhof** stated that after the Memorial Day Parade the city is providing the V.F.W. to the council chambers to the city building for sandwiches from the Center Table. The V.F.W. will provide the drinks. He stated that the porch would be available for council members and their families. He stated that the city will be putting in a ramp from the parking lot from the bank side of the building to the doors.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Councilwoman Vogt adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Attest:

  
Misty Ezell, City Clerk

  
Mayor Marty Lenhof