



City of Lawton

Youth and Family Affairs Committee

Lawton City Hall
212 SW 9th Street
Lawton, Oklahoma
73501-3944

Minutes

Tuesday, September 16, 2025

9:00 AM

Lawton City Hall
3rd Floor Conference Room

Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call

"Official action can be taken only on items which appear on the agenda. The Committee may adopt, approve, ratify, deny, defer, recommend, or continue any agenda item. The Committee may also propose and enact floor amendments to any matter presented before them. When more information is needed to act on an item, the Committee may refer the matter to City Staff. Under certain circumstances, items are deferred to a specific later date or stricken from the agenda entirely."

The meeting was called to order at 9:07 AM by Chairperson Bob Weger.

Roll Call:

Members Present: Bob Weger, Taron Epps, Bernita Taylor, Karen Bailey, Carl Fuqua

Members Absent: Mark Cox (excused), Mary Ann Hankins (excused)

Also Present: Tammy Branstetter, Deputy City Clerk; Cynthia Williams, City Auditor; Jeanette Hutchinson, Harvest Plenty House of Prayer

Statement of Compliance with Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, 25 O.S. 301-314

Chairperson Weger confirmed with Branstetter that the notice and agenda for this meeting were posted by the City Clerk's Office as required by law.

Introduction of Guests

No guests were introduced.

Business Items

1. Consider approving the minutes of the June 17, 2025, meeting.

A copy of the minutes from the June 17, 2025, meeting may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Bailey said this is super minor, but I don't see my name listed as voting on the adjournment, and I'm sure I would have voted yes.

Branstetter said I can double-check that and make that correction.

Motion by Bailey, **Second** by Epps, to approve the minutes of the June 17, 2025, meeting as amended. **AYE:** Bailey, Epps, Fuqua, Taylor, Weger. **NAY:** None. **Motion Passed.**

2. Receive the FY 2024-2025 Annual Report from the Internal Auditor and take action as deemed necessary.

Cynthia Williams, Internal Auditor, said pursuant to Lawton City Code 2-3-9-367, it requires the Internal Auditor to give a comprehensive end of year summary to Council, to this Committee, and to the City Manager. In my report for fiscal year 2025, there were no awards given due to lack of funding that year. Therefore, no grant recipients had any issues of non-compliance, no misuse of funds, and no violations of the grant requirements. Williams said there was no corrective action required because no grants were given, and my recommendation is to continue to improve the application materials. We did a great job with that this year. The compliance guidelines and then the audit procedures — everything is up-to-date and ready to start receiving those reports for year 2026.

Motion by Epps, **Second** by Taylor, to accept the report as presented by the Internal Auditor. **AYE:** Bailey, Epps, Fuqua, Taylor, Weger. **NAY:** None. **Motion Passed.**

3. Discuss options for additional grant writing training for YFAC grant recipients, consider whether it should be a mandatory requirement, and take action as deemed necessary.

Chairman Weger said I'd like to just call it to the attention of the Committee - you remember back in January 2025, we had a meeting, and we discussed the matter of wanting to add to the training. In fact, Ms. Taylor mentioned to the Committee that it needs to be determined if we want to offer additional required training to help the applicants become self-sustaining in their programs.

Chairman Weger said Ms. Cynthia has really done an outstanding job as our auditor helping with the training for the pre-application. He asked for clarification on how many training periods there are.

Williams said there's one pre-application training, and then once they receive the grant, there is another training that's required 90 days afterward.

In looking at those, Chairman Weger said the Committee had discussed back in January about noticing a pattern that had been followed for years. Many of our applicants had no outside source of funding. YFAC is only a three-year funding process, 80-60-40. And so with that, we finalized that or rewrote that about a year ago. We wanted the applicants to understand that we are not a life stream for their programs. They're reaching our children and providing a service. We want that funding to continue, but it may not always be available. I mean, they have a three-year window, but that funding from the city will not always be there. So we did not want them to become dependent, which we found on the applications—many are dependent. Because in the application, most of them that apply say they have no other source of funding, or they're working

on it, but they don't have a set plan, and so that was the conversation that Ms. Taylor brought to our attention. Chairman Weger said the Committee further discussed that if we're going to require additional training, and Ms. Taylor made mention of this, that we need to determine what that extra training will be and how we're going to accomplish it.

Chairman Weger said the Committee was to work on finding resources to assist these directors. Ms. Cynthia does not have the time or the ability to dedicate herself to that — It's outside her scope of job description. And so we've had discussions, but we've never taken action on it. And so I wanted to see what your input is as a Committee. We've talked about it, but we need to do a little more than talk about it. We need to get this finalized, especially with our new year coming up for our new applicants.

Chairman Weger said I did a little research on this additional training. I came up with a few outside sources: libraries, colleges and universities, Cameron University, United Way has some chapters that provide training, and some community foundations I found have training available. There is also, I believe it's called Candid, formerly known as GuideStar - they offer grant writings and have a lot of free resources, I'm told. There's a Nonprofit Learning Lab — their focus is on fundraising and grant writing. The third one is known as the GPA, the Grant Professionals Association. They have a lot of training and mentorship, especially for local chapters, they stated. There's also [NonprofitReady.org](https://www.nonprofitready.org) that has free courses. And I'm not sure, but I've always been kind of the mindset that you get what you pay for. And I'm not criticizing in any way, but sometimes with the free grant writing, I'm curious, do they really give you that help to learn to write? In my mind, it's just you get what you pay for.

Taylor asked if the United Way charges.

Chairman Weger said no.

Taylor said those would be credible.

Chairman Weger said the Nonprofit Ready free online courses offer grant writing and nonprofit management. And then there's another one called [Catchafire.org](https://www.catchafire.org) - it matches nonprofits with volunteer professionals, grant writers who can assist with those. And then, one other one was [grants.gov](https://www.grants.gov) - it's a learning center. And then SBDC, Small Business Development Center, is another one. And that's all I've come up with.

Bailey said you might add the Technology Center as a resource as well.

Chairman Weger asked if there is a cost involved with that course.

Bailey said yes, but I think it can also be done on behalf of community involvement.

Taylor said especially if you have a set date and time for all the non-profits.

Bailey said did we agree that in-person training was better than online training?

Chairman Weger said we didn't really answer that question. I'm not sure — that question may not have been asked.

Bailey said I've not written a grant, so I know that sometimes, for organizations that are starting up, it's an obstacle to be able to meet the benchmark for what we're looking for in the grant. And so, if you know what you want, and I think you train toward that, online learning's easy for me, but it's not always for everyone. Plus, I think you have individual questions that come up that are best answered one-on-one. Bailey asked if the City of Lawton has funds to support training for this.

Chairman Weger said no. This would basically be that each nonprofit would have their own responsibility to get that training. We've looked at all options — the free as well as the paid. Which a lot of these that I've suggested for your consideration, a lot of these that I've read, most of them are free, but there are a few that do charge. I don't know the cost on that, but knowing that they're seeking grants, I don't think the price is going to be way out there, because they understand what you're trying to accomplish.

Chairman Weger said we have a lot of great programs, summer programs, and even year-round programs in our community. We want to encourage that. We see those that are up and rising, and we want them to find their sources of funding so they continue, because what we don't want it to do is fade away after three years. There are kids that are really taking to the programs, and we want to encourage that.

Bailey said Ms. Taylor has probably written many grants. She asked Ms. Taylor if she's ever had to pay for training in order to write a grant.

Taylor said when I first started, I drove to other states because I wanted to learn. So I just gathered a lot of information, but that was over 25 years ago. In the world that we live in today, information is readily available in all types - in-person, online, and webinars. The information is very well available, but knowing what you're looking at and how to use it is what you have to learn. And I don't think any one person, all they can do is give you the basics of what grant writing is, because each grant is specific. So you have to write the grant. They'll tell you the requirements, and they'll tell you what you have to do. They usually give you an outline of what they're looking for. So you can go to these grant trainings and learn all this stuff about grant writing, and then you get a grant that wants specifics. Grants no longer want a lot of words and fluff. They want you to be concise. So they outline, and they even tell you how many words and how many pages. So we can use all those options, or we can give people a lot of options. As long as, to me, we feel like it's really benefiting that nonprofit. Taylor asked if this is something we want to strongly suggest or that we want to mandate.

Bailey asked Williams for clarification on the grant training that she administers.

Williams said there is one on how to complete the application with the requirements of the grant, and then the second one is the 40 assets and how to submit the outcome based reporting. I touch on outside agencies for other funding, but I do not do a training on how to go and find other grants. Williams said, if I may, there are two different things that we're kind of talking about

here. One is training on how to go and find other grants, and then there's also, once you identify who supplies grants, then the second step is how to write that grant. And so, my thinking is, first we need to throw resources out there on how to find funds, and then it becomes, "What is a person's learning style?" Williams said I'm fine doing it online, but then there's other people who get so much more out of going to a class. I think that that depends on the individual who's going to be doing the grant. It's my suggestion that if you're going to do any type of requirement that it is a requirement on how to find grants, not how to write grants.

Chairman Weger said as a Committee, what are your thoughts on taking an action on how to find grants and putting that down as just our starting point so that we could have something in place to begin moving forward?

Taylor asked if we're going to require them to have certified training. She asked how they are going to meet the requirement if we do require it.

Chairman Weger said if we do, I would think there would be some type of certification they would or should receive. He asked if places like Vo-Tech would give you a certificate locally.

Taylor said if you pay.

Chairman Weger asked, so the free grant trainings probably would not give you any certification of completion?

Taylor said no, but I can make one on my own.

Chairman Weger asked Taylor, as a grant writer yourself, what are your thoughts on mandating this?

Taylor said to me, it should be strongly suggested, with a good paragraph detailing why. For example, "This funding is only for three years — we strongly suggest you take courses on learning how to find grants and how to write grants, and we have included a list of those resources."

Chairman Weger said how would we like to respond as a Committee when applicants then come back and say, "I've had your funding for three years, but I can't survive without your funding?"

Taylor said we don't have a choice — that's the way it's written.

Chairman Weger said correct - that would be my response. Failure would not be on our end, it would be on their end.

Fuqua said wouldn't that be something we would let them know up front?

Chairman Weger said yes, we should clarify that.

Williams said we do clarify this.

Epps said so it's stated in the training, and if I understand you correctly, we would reinforce that statement in that paragraph.

Taylor said yes.

Chairman Weger said so we would strongly suggest, as opposed to mandating it.

Taylor said yes, because if we mandate it, then we have to go through "what are the tools we're going to use to say that the requirement was met." We can say that if you give us an accredited certificate of completion, we can give extra points.

Bailey said you would think the reduction in funding over three years would be enough of a red flag.

Chairman Weger said one of the things I think we've got to let the citizens know, and I'm sure Ms. Williams touches on this, is that this is something the citizens, as a whole, have decided. It's their tax dollars, and if they say no more funding, guess what happens to YFAC funding? We don't have it. It's no longer in place. So, this isn't a Committee that's sitting on all these funds. Which in years past, it was the mindset that we sat on a lot of money. And as we saw some applicants requesting incredible amounts that were just beyond realism, it was like, "I'm sorry, but we're not funding a lot of kids — we're funding something, but not a lot of kids." And that is the whole purpose of this Committee.

Chairman Weger said I was watching heads kind of nod a little bit. Do we have a motion, then, that we strongly suggest each applicant look at the resources available for funding?

Williams said I would put a recommendation to add that as a part of the application that states what training, or what action you have taken to research additional funding, so that I can give points to it — I would put it in the application. I can't give points if it's not something that's in the application.

Branstetter asked if the Committee would want to see the application after the changes are made.

Chairman Weger said I would like that.

Taylor said yes.

Motion by Taylor, **Second** by Fuqua, to direct staff to prepare changes to the application to be brought back to the next meeting for approval. **AYE:** Bailey, Epps, Fuqua, Taylor, Weger. **NAY:** None. **Motion Passed.**

Reports/Comments from Chairman and Committee Members

No reports were given.

Reports/Comments from Staff

Williams said I have a report. She said at the last meeting, I told you that the 40 developmental asset training was outside of my wheelhouse, but I will say that I developed a course which includes step-by-step instructions along with worksheets. We conducted two one-on-one trainings with the two organizations that we've funded this year. The feedback was great, and I think we're going to have much better outcome-based reporting this time.

Chairman Weger said that's fantastic.

Williams provided the Committee with a copy of the training materials used for the outcome-based reporting training.

Chairman Weger said thank you so much for your time and effort on that.

Taylor asked what part of the training will that be in the future?

Williams said that's the training that is required within the 90 days of approving the funding.

1. Receive an update on the status of current fiscal year grants.

Chairman Weger noted that the applicant, Teen Court, did not take the funds they were awarded. He asked staff to verify this.

Williams said that's correct, and I believe it was due to change over, and they weren't sure exactly how they were going to be able to implement the program.

Branstetter said they had some challenges implementing the program and possibly with the additional matching funds, and they had a hard time getting that all worked out. That is basically what we were told, and they're going to try to pursue this next year.

Chairman Weger said so those funds you will find on the report when we give you a financial balance. You'll see that money that we had awarded them is still there.

Williams said no reimbursement requests have been made from the other organization that has accepted the funding.

Epps asked what happens to the funds that are not claimed.

Williams said they'll be banked.

Epps asked if the funds roll over to the next year, or if they would go back to the city.

Williams said if you request them to roll over, that is my understanding.

Taylor asked if we would need to put that as an agenda item for the next meeting.

Williams said I would hold until next budget year, because there may be other unused funds at the end of the year. We grant up to \$35,000. So if someone only uses \$30,000, we'd have \$5,000 extra there. So I would hold off until the end of the year, and then request any unspent funds to continue to build.

Chairman Weger said I believe we did this last year with the \$17,000.

Audience Participation

Chairman Weger introduced Jeanette Hutchinson with Harvest Plenty House of Prayer Church.

Ms. Hutchinson said we're on the east side, and we have the Literacy-Based STEM Program. I just came out today to get more information and really understand the inner workings of what is required for us so we can get funding for our program. First, I just want to say thank you all. You guys are doing a great job, and we appreciate everything that you all are doing. But I've noticed that we received funding for the 2023-2024 year, and we were denied funding for this current year. So, I just wanted to get an understanding of how everything is working and to say that not all nonprofits are the same. I know that may be a blanket statement, but I know for us as a church, I had to do some research, like you all were saying, to try to get other funding. One of the things I ran into is that, as a church, we're not required to do Form 990. I got that information, and I don't know if that's something you all look at or anything like that, but I just want to make sure that we're in good standing.

Ms. Hutchinson said as I sit here today, I'm so glad I came to really understand the whole ballpark, so to speak—how the funding is done, where you get the money from, and all of that—and how you all are requiring us to look for other funding sources. That's great because I know we can't just depend on the City of Lawton. So, to hear about the training and the workshops, I'm all for it. The bottom line is I want our program to continue, and we want to serve these kids. I'm telling you, in the three years of our STEM camp, what I've seen is that our kids cannot read. That is the problem. If they cannot read, it leads to behavioral issues. That's why you have high numbers in jails and things like that—because they're embarrassed, so they act out. That's what we're trying to do: help them from kindergarten to fourth grade, that foundation level. So, this is great. I'm just here listening, taking notes, and trying to go back and see what we need to do to make our program better.

Taylor said let me say this to you, because I've been to your site. Your program is not in question. We all know that you have an excellent program. We all know that your program gets results, that it is result-driven, and that you have the data. The thing is, we have to make sure that everyone meets the guidelines of the requirements. We have to do that. Because we're mandated by the city, it was mandated by the citizens. So that's where it came into, did you meet the requirements of the grant? But as far as your program, it's excellent.

Ms. Hutchinson said that's good to hear — thank you.

Chairman Weger said being a pastor of a church, you are a hundred percent correct—990 does not apply. That's not what the city's looking for. I think you and I spoke once on the phone about an audit. The audit is you showing, "Here's the money that came in, and this was spent on these

things pertaining to the children." You would not think city funds could be used for misappropriated things, but we did have some organizations that used funds for things that were well outside the spectrum that the city had established. Simply put, that's illegal — you can't do that. As Ms. Taylor said, those funds aren't ours—they're the citizens'. That's why the city asks for the audit, so we can show, "yes, that money was given to them, it was spent on this", and that we verified it. Because that keeps it right where you requested it, and therefore, we took action and approved your funding, and you used it exactly like ultimately you told the citizen you were going to. That's why we create that paper trail. Chairman Weger said I hope that helps.

Ms. Hutchinson said it does. Just to be clear going forward, we are to submit that audit along with the application?

Chairman Weger said yes.

Ms. Hutchinson said that was what I didn't understand. So in the beginning, it's going to be an estimate of what we would spend, is that correct? If I'm submitting it with an application, I haven't spent the money yet. So it's just a budget form or something to say where we're going to spend it?

Taylor said if it's approved, that's what you've got to stick to, and that budget is going to be based on what the grant will allow.

Ms. Hutchinson said that's what I'm trying to figure out, what I have to do for next year. That's why I'm here, to find out what is expected. So, when I submit the application for next year, I'm to submit an audit report of what we did when we did get funding from you all?

Taylor said if that's in the requirements.

Williams said it will be for the previous year.

Taylor said one of the things I want to strongly suggest to the Committee, because the amount is \$35,000, and you have to match, is that we don't require an audit. An audit costs a lot of money. My audit this year is \$20,000. But I have a single audit, so that's why it's so hard. But even before I had a single audit, it was \$11,000. So, I do think I'm going to propose to the Committee that we ask for financial records. That would be a third-party source — it couldn't be you. You'd still need an accountant that can say where your money is going and verify it.

Chairman Weger said you want a third party, to where someone who's outside your scope can say, "yes, here's how the money was used." They have nothing to lose or gain from this other than they're just saying, "yes, he or she used that money exactly like they told you they were going to."

Taylor said and a CPA will not lie to you, because they will lose everything. But I'm not saying that's how it's going to be. I'm saying that I'm going to suggest that to the Committee. But once those requirements come out, know that we are bound on what those requirements say.

Chairman Weger said with our audit that we currently request, we don't specify what type of audit that is. It could be a compilation audit, not a single audit.

Williams said I would have to reread that.

Taylor said you only have to do a single audit if you get more than \$750,000 a year from a government entity.

Taylor said audits are very expensive right now, especially for non-profits. My auditor is out of Florida, because I couldn't even find one in Oklahoma City. She noted there are some that no longer do audits for nonprofits. So, we have to think about all of that, and with the cost — is the cost worth the amount of money we're giving?

Chairman Weger said good point. He asked Ms. Hutchinson if she has anything else she'd like to share with the Committee.

Ms.Hutchinson said no, I think that kind of cleared it up and, like she said, we will just wait until we get all the requirements. I'm sure you guys will update the checklist of the items because the 990—the reason why I brought it up—is because it was on the checklist and that's not required for all nonprofits. Churches are exempt from that and that's what I was stating in my application. What I brought today is just saying that we are not required to do the form 990, and I do have our 501(c)(3) letter.

Taylor said there's one that's for the church that's not required, but a 501(c)(3) has to do a 990. She asked if this is under the church.

Ms.Hutchinson said this is under the church, and we are a 501(c)(3). I just wanted to make that clear. So, when I include that in our application, I will also have the documentation from the IRS stating that we are exempt, that we don't have to do that. She said we're different from a regular nonprofit. I'm sure they do have to do one, but churches are different.

Chairman Weger said there are a lot of churches that do not even have a 501(c)(3) because the US government has never made that distinction. They've always allowed churches to fall under the umbrella 501(c)(3) even though they may not have applied. There is talk in Congress — they are looking at changing that, but you know, it's been talked about for 20 years plus.

Taylor said the reason why grantors ask for those documents is because they've been through a third party and are then recorded on your federal record under your 501(c)(3). So, you'll get a UEI number and all of that every year, and you have to turn in the Form 990 each year. You have an audit that proves you're legit, and you have the 990. So, what I'm trying to say is, if you don't have either one, you still have to have financial records from a third party.

Ms. Hutchinson said that makes sense, as long as we're clear and we know that that's what's going to be expected. That's fine, but I'm just saying before it was the 990. That's what confused me. I know you all will make that clear, and that's why I just want to bring that up.

Adjournment

Motion by Epps, **Second** by Fuqua, to adjourn the September 16, 2025, meeting. **AYE:** Bailey, Epps, Fuqua, Taylor, Weger. **NAY:** None. Motion Passed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 9:48 AM.