



MINUTES
LAWTON CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024 – 2:00 P.M.
LAWTON CITY HALL
212 SW 9TH STREET
LAWTON, OK 73501
COUNCIL CHAMBERS/AUDITORIUM

Mayor Booker called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted by the City Clerk's Office as required by law. Invocation was given by Allan Hampton, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Stan Booker, Mayor
Mary Ann Hankins, Ward One
Linda Chapman, Ward Three
George Gill, Ward Four
Allan Hampton, Ward Five
Bob Weger, Ward Six
Sherene L Williams, Ward Seven

ABSENT:

Kelly Harris, Ward Two
Randy Warren, Ward Eight

ALSO PRESENT:

John Ratliff, City Manager
Tim Wilson, Acting City Attorney
Tammy Branstetter, Sr Deputy City Clerk

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Consider approving a fourth amendment to the Ralph's Resort Lease and Concessionaire agreement between the Lawton Water Authority, Steve and Sandra Perry, and the City of Lawton, modifying the terms of the agreement as it pertains to the transfer of ownership of the assets owned by the Perrys as shown on the "Asset List" of the agreement to the City of Lawton in exchange for the firm payment of three hundred thousand dollars (\$300,000.00).

Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager, provided background information on this item. A copy of the fourth amendment to the Ralph's Resort Lease and Concessionaire agreement between the Lawton Water Authority, Steve and Sandra Perry, and the City of Lawton may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Burk said this is the same agreement that was considered and approved by the Lawton Water Authority.

MOVED by Gill SECOND by Williams, to approve the fourth amendment to the Ralph's Resort Lease and Concessionaire agreement between the Lawton Water Authority, Steve and Sandra Perry, and the City of Lawton. AYE: Hankins, Chapman, Gill, Hampton, Weger, Williams. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

2. Due to the upcoming expiration of the Ralph's Resort lease and concession agreement between the Lawton Water Authority, Steve and Sandra Perry, and the City of Lawton, consider directing staff to initiate a "Request for Proposals" for the management and operation of the Ralph's Resort concessionaire area located at Lake Ellsworth.

Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager, provided background information on this item.

City Council and staff thanked Mr. Perry for his 45 years of service.

MOVED by Gill SECOND by Williams, to go out for Request for Proposals for Ralph's Resort. AYE: Hankins, Chapman, Gill, Hampton, Weger, Williams. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

3. Consider the FY 2025 City of Lawton proposed operating preliminary budget and budget book presentation and take appropriate action if necessary, to include making amendments to the preliminary budget to be incorporated in the final budget and budget book presentation that council considers.

Kristin Huntley, Financial Services, gave a presentation on the FY 2025 City of Lawton proposed operating preliminary budget and budget book. A copy of this presentation and the preliminary budget book may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Huntley said she will be discussing the CIP and capital outlay today. Capital outlay is an item individually costing \$5,000 or more, with a useful life of one year or more. This would include things such as vehicles and equipment.

Huntley said there have been some changes since we printed the preliminary budget. The changes include the following:

- Cut Fire Alarm Panel from Police Technical (\$70,000)
- Cut Skid Steer from Park Maintenance (\$150,000)
- Add ½ Ton Pickup to Police Patrol Rolling Stock (\$67,288)
- Swapped Station 4 Office Remodel for Whalen Program
- Added \$231,140,978 in revenue and \$172,915,618 in expenses for Lawton Water Authority loans and projects
- Reduced FY24 2019 CIP expenses by \$32,106,398
- Increased FY25 2019 CIP expenses by \$66,659,923

Huntley said from what she understands, the Whalen Program allows the Fire Department to track vehicles and provide diagnostics for them. She explained that this is not capital, so it's been removed from the Fire Department's capital budget. Huntley noted that both the office remodel for Station 4 and the Whalen Program cost \$15,000.

Mayor Booker asked for clarification on reducing the FY24 2019 CIP expenses.

Huntley said when the budget book was printed, we had a certain dollar amount of expenses that we thought we would spend. However, when we went back and looked at the expenses, we noticed we're no where close to that amount.

Chapman asked if the multiple roof repairs and replacements are due to the storm from last year.

Rusty Whisenhunt, Public Utilities Director, said the needed repairs are not due to the storm.

Mayor Booker said he wants to make sure that we have a plan for any remaining ARPA funds to be allocated by the appropriate time.

Huntley said this will need to be done by the end of the calendar year.

Mayor Booker asked what the 2005 Ad Valorem expenses were for.

Huntley said sewer rehab and the new City Hall were two of the big items.

Mayor Booker asked Huntley if we're going to get this cleared off.

Huntley said yes.

Mayor Booker asked what the 2012 Ad Valorem expenses were for.

Huntley said this was the remaining money from the fire station remodel.

Tim Wilson, Acting City Attorney, said if he's understanding Huntley correctly, this would have been for the Central Fire Station remodel that bond counsel did the opinion on and recommended that be put back into the sinking fund.

Huntley noted that the 2012 Ad Valorem expenses budgeted for FY 2025 have gained interest.

Mayor Booker said that while this is being budgeted for, the only thing it can be spent on is debt.

Wilson said if it's the sinking fund, that would be correct.

Mayor Booker asked Huntley if we're going to get this closed out.

Huntley said yes.

With regards to the \$8 million for the Goodyear Boulevard project, Mayor Booker asked if the \$5 million grant is in addition.

Huntley said she's not aware of the grant.

Mayor Booker said we've been awarded a \$5 million state grant through the Department of Commerce, however he doesn't know that we've received it yet.

Huntley said she will have to bring a budget amendment back to Council when we do receive this grant. However, the \$8 million that is currently budgeted for the Goodyear project is from loan proceeds only.

Mayor Booker asked for clarification on the Pavement Management Program.

Larry Wolcott, Public Works, said this is the IMS Payment Study that's been completed – this is not an ongoing expense.

Mayor Booker asked for clarification on the expenses for street maintenance.

Wolcott said \$10 million was set aside in the PROPEL budget specifically for street maintenance. He said their department has been doing an average of \$1 million a year in street maintenance. Wolcott noted that his department has also budgeted \$10 million for repairs next fiscal year.

Mayor Booker asked why the amount budgeted next fiscal year for the demolition of dilapidated houses has decreased. He said he does not believe anyone wants to slow down on this program.

Huntley said this was the number provide to her by Charlotte Brown, Community Services Director. Huntley asked Brown if she would like to request more funding for next year.

Brown said we do need to increase the demolition budget next year to \$550,000. She noted that they'll also be bringing commercial structures before the Council.

Mayor Booker advised Brown that she can bring commercial structures, but we've got to keep our goal of focusing on residential.

Gill asked what we've been averaging a year on demolition costs.

Brown said we're probably averaging about \$450,000 a year.

Mayor Booker asked for the average number of residential houses that are being brought before the Council.

Brown said they have set a goal to bring 22 residential houses before the Council each month. 229 homes have been demoed since 2020.

Mayor Booker said this is a good goal.

Hampton noted that the contractors are working quickly to get the dilapidated houses torn down.

Mayor Booker asked why funding has been cut in half next year for youth programs.

Huntley said this was done to balance the budget. She emphasized that these numbers are tentative.

Mayor Booker said he just saw an email where they had over requested funding for this year - he asked that staff spend more time addressing the budget next year for youth programs.

Mayor Booker asked if we received an engineer's estimate or a bid for the Elmer Thomas Park Aquatics Center.

Huntley said she believes this was an engineer's estimate.

Gill asked staff how they arrived at the budgeted amount of \$7,658,780 for the aquatics center for FY 2025.

Huntley said this amount is what we could fund in FY 2025.

Gill said we did have an estimate from an engineering firm to build the aquatics center for around \$8 million.

Huntley said then that would get us pretty close.

Mayor Booker asked when the estimate for the aquatics center will be brought back up for discussion.

John Ratliff, City Manager, said the plan is to bring it to Council soon – Joe Painter has been working to finalize the cost of the estimate.

Mayor Booker asked that staff get with the Youth Sports Trust Authority to verify the amount of funding they may need next fiscal year for the Youth Sports Complex.

Huntley said we have \$7.5 million plugged in for industrial development next budget year. We did get the FISTA's request – it is just over \$9 million. This is something we'll have to work out.

Mayor Booker said the \$25,000 that's been budgeted for the citywide signal improvement plan doesn't belong in the current PROPEL.

Mayor Booker asked staff for an explanation of what use tax is and how it's changing.

Huntley said use tax is essentially a tax on items or services on which no sales tax has been paid – online sales are a big part of this. Huntley noted that online sales have been on an upward trend, resulting in an upward trend for use tax. Our sales tax is not going up at the rate that the use tax is going up.

Mayor Booker said the information he has is that our use tax in 2017 was about \$2 million, and

now it's about \$8 million.

Huntley said that sounds about right.

Mayor Booker said when our ordinance was put in place in 1995, there probably weren't a lot of online sales at that time. He said he would like for staff to bring the ordinance back to Council at the first Council meeting in May. He would like to discuss the use tax and discuss whether we should amend the ordinance so that it gets the proper allocation.

Hampton said the concept of buying local seems to be going out the window. He agreed that this is something the Council needs to discuss.

Gill said would also like to discuss the allocation of use tax because the citizens want to recover the funds so they can be used on projects. He said he's not sure where the money is going right now – he knows the State of Oklahoma takes some of this money from sales. He's not sure how we're going about getting this money either.

Huntley said the State of Oklahoma collects the taxes and then they remit our portion to us. All the use tax goes to the general fund.

Hankins said we don't even have enough shopping in Lawton to generate these funds. Some of the bigger cities that we compare ourselves to do have more shopping. Because of this, Hankins said she definitely thinks the money should be moved to where citizens can benefit from it.

Mayor Booker asked staff if we are adequately resourcing to accomplish the expectations of the citizen, or to accomplish the mission.

Mayor Booker said he's been getting stories that we've got a lot of wild dogs we're not addressing. He said this makes him wonder if we're adequately resourcing at the animal shelter. Mayor Booker said he knows we've added one person, but he's not sure if that's enough to deal with the problem we're having. He asked Ratliff to determine if we are adequately resourcing the animal shelter to meet the expectations of the citizen.

Mayor Booker said our neighborhoods need some attention. He is very concerned that the Neighborhood Services Department is not being adequately resourced to meet the expectations of the citizens. He asked Ratliff to determine if this department needs more resources.

Mayor Booker said he's unclear about what License & Permits is doing with the third-party review contract. He believes this has kept us getting nearly 100% of our permits out within 30 days.

Brown, Community Services Director, said the third-party contract is an on-call contract, and we've utilized them quite a bit this year. Brown noted the License & Permits is still down two inspectors.

Mayor Booker asked if we are keeping this contract in the budget next year.

Brown said yes.

Mayor Booker said we've made a tremendous improvement in litter control this year. He said he still doesn't think we're meeting the citizen's expectations, but it was a giant leap forward. He wants to make sure that we're adequately resourcing the new litter vacuums to get them the manpower they need.

Mayor Booker asked staff to explain how the estimate for the aquatics center has gone from \$8 million to \$20 million.

Gill said he was under the impression that staff was moving forward with the firm that provided an estimate of \$8 million, and he thought Council decided at that time to move forward with the project so the aquatics center can be used by citizens by next summer. He asked for clarification on this project.

Joe Painter, City Engineer, said staff has moved forward – we spent \$12 million for the base of the pool, and almost \$8 million for the lazy river part of the pool, which is an alternate bid. The plans are 100% done, and there is an item on the May 14th Council agenda to start advertising for bids the next day. Painter said the architect will be at this meeting.

Mayor Booker said it's been discussed to have a certain percentage of the overall budget going towards streets. He said \$3 million was added to the budget last year for streets. This is how we got our first Ten Wins for the Citizens, and it also paid for engineering and cement panel replacement. He asked staff what the city's material budget was 3 years ago for street repair.

Huntley said it was \$1.5 million three years ago. The budget was \$4.5 million last year, and this year the budget is at \$10 million.

Mayor Booker asked for input regarding the appropriate budget for street repair. He asked staff if it's unreasonable to think that we could say we want \$10 million in the street repair budget every year. He said we don't want to cripple city operations, but we want streets to be a priority.

Ratliff said it won't cripple us this year, but every year is different – it's going to depend on revenue. Ratliff said he's hesitant to sign up for a fixed number, but perhaps we could come up with a percentage.

Hampton said he's been getting positive feedback from citizens about how we're taking care of the roadways. He said he does think that a certain percentage should be set each year to go towards the streets budget so that future councilmembers will know the importance of it.

Ratliff said the city could put a dollar amount or percentage in code, and if for whatever reason revenue is not where it was the previous year, Council could have the option to opt out of this.

Mayor Booker said this could be an option.

Hampton said he thinks this would be a practical option.

Gill said he thinks guidelines should be established that would require Council to address this issue at least once or twice a year.

Mayor Booker said he would like to talk about another companion item to the CIP. He said he feels like we need a minimum of \$1 million in our parks capital improvement from the budget to be used towards citizen usable amenities. He said he could actually make an argument for \$2 million. He said even if the citizens vote to designate a quarter of a cent, that's not going to be enough to do everything we need to do to catch up. He noted that Norman has a half cent, but we can't go there and do all the projects we need to do. He said this is why he's talked about a quarter and supplementing it. If we went with \$2 million, it would put us at about the equivalent of three-eighths. Mayor Booker asked Council what they think of this idea.

Chapman said she's seeing a lot of discussion on making Elmer Thomas the main park for the City of Lawton and that we're also looking at splash pads for the east and west side of town. However, Chapman said Kid Zone is in her ward, and it needs some work. The funds to pay for Kid Zone were pretty much raised by the people, and the park has nearly outlived its life. She said this concerns her because this park is very heavily used. She said she would like to see us come up with some funds to address this area also.

Mayor Booker said he thinks the answer is not relying totally on the CIP. He thanked the AMBUCS for raising the money for Kid Zone roughly 20 years ago. However, this is not a good plan going forward.

Ratliff said the lake headquarters is in terrible condition. Ratliff asked that Council consider this as we talk about improvements and upgrades to parks.

Ratliff said he thinks we should consider potentially using hotel motel funds to finance some of the needed park repairs.

Mayor Booker said the challenge we'd have with using hotel motels funds is that we'd have to decide what to not do because the requests are outpacing the income. This is something that needs to be discussed.

Gill said Larry Parks is doing a great job with the Parks & Recreation Department, but he needs some help. Relying on the CIP alone is not enough. He thinks \$2 million dollars is the minimum amount that should be budgeted for parks.

Hampton said the importance of putting money into our parks has to do with providing quality of life for our citizens. He said he would like for the city manager to work with the finance department to determine a realistic number that can be used to fund parks going forward.

MOVED by Gill SECOND by Williams, to direct staff to bring back a revised FY25 budget adding \$2 million to parks and direct the city manager to bring back a discussion about what could be an ongoing long-term funding amount for parks. AYE: Hankins, Chapman, Gill, Hampton, Weger, Williams. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

Mayor Booker asked staff when Council will go over each department's goals, objectives and benchmarks.

Ratliff said we have these ready, however they're not all in the same format. Once these have been formatted appropriately, they will be printed with the final publication of the budget book.

Mayor Booker said he is impressed with the budget presentation, and he is also impressed with the capital being put into this from the general fund.

Hampton thanked Huntley for being very clear and easy to speak with during her presentation.

Mayor Booker recessed the Council for a short break at 3:26 PM. Council resumed session at 3:32PM.

4. Discuss possible projects to consider and funding levels for the PROPEL 2040 CIP sales tax extension and take action as deemed necessary.

Mayor Booker gave a presentation on possible projects to consider and funding levels for the PROPEL 2040 CIP sales tax extension. A copy of this presentation may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Mayor Booker said he is proud to work with this Council that understands how important planning for the future is. He said PROPEL has given us the future funding that allowed us to address so many of our community's challenges. Before we could address any of these challenges, we had to plan. When there was no money allocated, there was little planning going on.

Mayor Booker said planning ahead also opens up the door to state and federal funding, because when they decide they want to give grants for something, they're interested in projects that are ready to go, so PROPEL is paying off in that regard too.

Mayor Booker said he hears from people all the time that they've never seen so much work going on at one time in Lawton's history. He said we do have a lot going on, and much of that is coming from the PROPEL CIP.

Mayor Booker noted that PROPEL funding is being used to change the water system. We also have our ad valorem. Mayor Booker said over 800 water breaks happened over the last year, but because of the funding that we've put in place, the waterlines that are causing half of these water breaks will be replaced by the end of the calendar year.

Rusty Whisenhunt, Public Works Director, said we have 23 miles of water line under

construction today. This covers 475 of the water breaks. Whisenhunt said an additional 23 miles of water line are scheduled to be under construction by December.

Mayor Booker asked Whisenhunt if he's correct in stating that $\frac{1}{4}$ of our water distribution system will be replaced within four years.

Whisenhunt said right now we are on track to have this done in a three-year cycle.

Mayor Booker thanked Whisenhunt for being a great planner.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing that \$85 million be allocated over the 16-year life of the program to streets and bridges.

Mayor Booker said he would like to see funding for Arts Camp in both June and July. He noted that keeping kids busy is how you keep them out of trouble. If kids are involved in the arts for four years, they have a 33% higher graduation rate. Mayor Booker said we must invest in our youth to raise the graduation rate. He would like to see this funded at \$2.5 million.

Mayor Booker said parks is on the same quarter cent program. We've run into a challenge of being able to designate the funding, but we can designate what we believe the quarter cent would generate, which would be \$85 million. This would go a long way in our parks over the course of 16 years.

Mayor Booker said it's his understanding that the McMahon Memorial Auditorium will soon be making a request for new seating. He said he plugged \$2 million in for this upgrade, however he's unsure of what the estimate will be. Because we recently put \$8 million in the auditorium, this might be a project that would need to wait.

Mayor Booker noted that the Sports Complex would come out of the parks category.

Mayor Booker said he's looking at adding \$7 million for D & D properties to get us through the next five or so years. Mayor Booker said he intends to put together a policy that would require this planning process be reviewed every five years.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$3 million be allocated for LATS.

Mayor Booker said there are many ADA ramps and sidewalks that need to be done. He is proposing we put \$1 million towards the installation of ADA ramps and \$3 million towards sidewalk installation. Mayor Booker said we also need to clarify exactly how much has been spent of our CIP sidewalk money.

Mayor Booker said the deferred maintenance crack sealing item was never intended to be a maintenance item – it was intended to catch up on deferred maintenance with a primary focus on preserving Cache Road. We do not want to get into a situation where we let Cache Road deteriorate. His proposal is that we reword this so that we catch up our preventive maintenance, then it becomes a standard budget item.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing that \$6 million be allocated for improvements to the Museum of the Great Plains and \$3 million be allocated for improvements at Carnegie Library.

Mayor Booker said he has budgeted \$5 million for the new animal welfare building.

Mayor Booker said he has allocated \$1 million for the Central Fire Station, but he's not heard from the department yet regarding how much funding they might need.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$15 million be used towards a Discovery Lab. This idea has to do with investing in our children. He noted that the City of Lawton would not have to build a building – we can put the Discovery Lab in Central Plaza/Central Mall. Mayor Booker said it's possible we'd be able to secure a federal matching grant for this project.

Mayor Booker said there is \$4 million allocated towards the Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence Resource Center. This is not a capital item – we've found that if we'll allocate this out to 16 years of funding it will open the door for capital investment by non-profits. Non-profits would build the building because we would ensure them of an operating budget for 16 years. This would actually be better than us building the building.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$10 million be allocated to traffic control automation and \$10 million be allocated to crime fighting technology, which could be used towards investing in new surveillance cameras to be placed around town as well as new body cams for officers.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$25 million be put into the redevelopment revolving fund. This would allow us to have the seed money to go into blighted areas of town and buy the property and place a TIF over that property and redevelop it. The TIF would then pay back the redevelopment fund, and over time you could focus your attention on other areas of town.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$2 million be allocated to improvements at the Municipal Golf Course. He said he's not sure the City of Lawton has put any money into the golf course within his lifetime. He said the golf course needs a well and a sprinkler system – there is currently no sprinkler system on the fairways.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$3 million be allocated towards improvements at the Lawton Fort Sill Regional Airport.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$35 million be allocated to the FISTA for industrial development and job growth. He said one of the most successful things in Oklahoma is the FISTA because \$30 million is invested in the FISTA by the state and federal government.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing that \$1 million be allocated towards storm sirens.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing \$1 million be allocated to the cemetery. While the cemetery fund might help keep it going, it's not enough to improve on.

Ratliff said the cemetery desperately needs an automation upgrade to get their records organized.

Mayor Booker said he is proposing that \$2.3 million be allocated for the remodeling project at the Lawton Public Library.

Mayor Booker said the municipal election date will be August 27th, and we have a resolution deadline of June 12th, so the target decision date is May 28th.

Mayor Booker said the Council will hold public input meetings on the following dates:

- Thursday, May 16th @ 6:00PM
- Monday, May 20th @ 6:00PM

Mayor Booker said the purpose of these meetings is to provide citizens with an opportunity to share with the Council what they think needs to be done in our community and potentially added to the CIP.

Mayor Booker asked for questions or comments from Council.

Williams asked if we'll be doing anything with Fire Station #2.

Mayor Booker said the airport has not made any requests for funds with regards to Fire Station #2, and they're currently in the middle of lawsuit.

Hampton requested that additional funding be considered for the Cultural Preservation Commission that could be used for matching funds once the Commission starts applying for grants for various historical preservation projects.

Hampton encouraged citizens to be proactive in discussing our community needs and how they relate to the CIP.

ADJOURNMENT

MOVED by Gill SECOND by Hampton, to adjourn the May 2, 2024, special meeting. AYE: Hankins, Chapman, Gill, Hampton, Weger, Williams. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no further business to consider, the meeting adjourned at 4:02 PM.

STAN BOOKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

TAMMY BRANSTETTER, SR DEPUTY CITY CLERK