



City of Lawton

City Council

MINUTES

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

Monday, April 22, 2024

6:00 PM

**Lawton City Hall
Council Chambers/Auditorium**

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

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER WITH INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

- Mary Ann Hankins, Ward 1
- Kelly Harris, Ward 2
- George Gill, Ward 4
- Allan Hampton, Ward 5
- Bob Weger, Ward 6
- Sherene L. Williams, Ward 7
- Randy Warren, Ward 8

ABSENT:

- Linda Chapman, Ward 3

ALSO PRESENT:

- Stanley Booker, Mayor
- John Ratliff, City Manager
- Tim Wilson, Interim City Attorney
- Donalynn Blazek-Scherler, City Clerk

BUSINESS ITEMS:

1. Receive a presentation from the Lawton Economic Development Corporation (LEDC) and the Lawton Economic Development Authority (LEDA) regarding the Westwin Elements Pilot Facility Project being developed at the corner of SW 112th Street and SW Bishop Rd to include a presentation from Blackshare Environmental, as a third-party review of the Air Quality permit application submitted to the Oklahoma Department of Environmental Quality for the Pilot Facility emissions. **NO ACTION TAKEN.**

Brad Cooksey from the LEDC gave a presentation on the Westwin Elements Pilot Facility Project, with the full presentation available for viewing at the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Derek Blackshare from Blackshare Environmental provided an explanation of air permits and air emissions, presenting his findings. The full presentation is available for viewing at the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Richard Rogalski from LEDA presented an impact scenario regarding the Southwest Oklahoma (SWOK) workforce. The presentation can be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Paul Greene, residing at 806 NW 52nd St., spoke about concerns regarding governmental accountability, criticizing the restriction of citizens' ability to ask questions, the focus on engaging only professionals, and the lack of citizen involvement. He expressed concerns about a lack of trust and requested full transparency in future proceedings.

Warren stated that he remains confident in the information provided from the beginning, noting that the process has been long-standing and has improved over the years. He acknowledged that any industry comes with inherent risks that must be addressed through preparation and training. He emphasized that the city's responsibility is to provide jobs and improve the lives of its citizens, and this is how those goals are achieved.

Williams noted that some constituents in Ward 7 have expressed support for welcoming the plant and the job opportunities it could bring to the City of Lawton.

Weger expressed his appreciation for the constituents in Ward 6 who have reached out to share their concerns, noting that opinions have been divided, with some against and others in favor. He emphasized that the primary concern is accountability, which he believes has been addressed. Weger shared that, personally, he has transitioned from cautious optimism to being fully on board with the project.

Hampton stated that having a plan is essential for any action taken, and he has also heard from citizens who want the City to proceed with caution. He emphasized that the best approach is to make a plan and stick to it. While some citizens believe the City rushed into this decision, he wanted to reassure them that careful planning and consideration have been part of the process.

Gill expressed concern about where the citizens have been in the discussion, noting that he has seen extensive advertising and public discussions about the project. He pointed out that there have been numerous town hall meetings, many of which have been at least a third full, and that experts have been involved in the conversations. Gill believes the process has been very transparent and that the project is

not new—it has been ongoing for some time. He shared that the most common questions he receives from citizens are about what will be done for the citizens and children of Lawton. He emphasized the importance of having industry in the town to drive its growth.

Harris acknowledged that he also had concerns about the project when he first heard about it, especially given his background in medicine. He expressed understanding of the fears people have but emphasized that efforts have been made to address those concerns by bringing in experts to provide transparency and reduce fear. He stated that the council works diligently to bring new industry to the city to foster growth and opportunity.

Hankins stated that there have been numerous opportunities for citizens to get their questions answered, including open forums, calls to council members, and access to city officials. She emphasized the need to move forward and take the opportunity, rather than remaining stagnant. Hankins also highlighted the availability of safety training for all manufacturers involved and stressed the importance of creating jobs for the community.

Mayor Booker expressed his appreciation for the LEDC for putting together the report and hiring the engineering firm to assist with the project. He mentioned that in December or January, he had announced on two radio stations that he would work with ODEQ to hold a public meeting, but he has been unsuccessful in getting them to agree. Despite this, he thanked LEDC for their efforts, noting that they have met with several small groups with full transparency to answer questions. Mayor Booker praised the City of Lawton for being transparent, stating that there have been more open meetings about this project than any other. He acknowledged that all projects come with risks but expressed gratitude for the council, LEDA, LEDC, CCIDA, and many community members for their hard work.

Mayor Booker opened the floor for comments from citizens, allowing members of the public to share their thoughts and concerns.

Veronica Hart, residing at 40 NE 25th St., expressed her feelings that the citizens have not been given a proper opportunity to voice their opinions on the project. She pointed out that many people have jobs and cannot take time off during the day to attend City Council meetings. Hart also mentioned concerns about racial remarks made by the City Council, stating that she feels there has been a lack of transparency and accountability throughout the process. Additionally, she noted that the citizens did not have the chance to vote on the project.

Robert Ratcliff, residing at 4427 SW Park Way, stated that he had done his research on the CDC website and expressed concerns about the project, particularly regarding the potential dangers it poses. He spoke about the risks and damage he believes the project could cause.

Kerri Thomas, residing at 6215 NW 56th in Bethany, Oklahoma, expressed concerns about the temperature differences between Oklahoma and Europe, suggesting that this could be a factor in the project's impact. She also mentioned the ongoing challenges of people not showing up for work post-COVID, implying potential issues with workforce reliability.

Becky Lekey, residing at 7132 NW Birch Pl, stated that while she trusts the third party responsible for permits and emissions, with whom she has worked with before, she expressed concerns that they do not seem to be focused on the smaller particles floating around in the air. She also mentioned that she has requested fence line monitoring to address these concerns.

Jordan Harris, residing at 4406 NW Denver, stated that he had emailed all of the Council members expressing his opposition to the Westwin project but had not received any responses. He mentioned that he worked in the city's Wastewater Plant and is familiar with its current state, which he described as

dangerous. He expressed concerns about the potential risks, stating that the city is not equipped to handle a cobalt refinery, particularly in the event of a spill into the water supply.

Mayor Booker referred all inquiries regarding the environmental report to the LEDC and then closed the agenda item.

2. Discuss the need for an extension of the PROPEL CIP and take action as deemed necessary.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Mayor Booker explained the need for an extension of the PROPEL CIP, highlighting the vision of the community achieving success through a plan tailored to meet its specific needs. He presented an overview of all the projects that the PROPEL CIP will support, which can be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Warren complimented the Mayor on his efforts in getting a comprehensive list of projects started under the PROPEL CIP. He expressed a desire to delve deeper into certain items that need further attention and clarification.

Williams stated that all the areas mentioned by the Mayor are much needed and emphasized that the PROPEL CIP will help keep more revenue within the city, benefiting the community and its growth.

Weger thanked the Mayor for the presentation, acknowledging that the projects outlined in the PROPEL CIP are important and will bring significant benefits to the city.

Hampton stated that planning is crucial for the future and for ensuring a high quality of life. He emphasized the importance of revenue in making these plans a reality and noted that many goals are already being met, such as improvements to the roads and the airport. Hampton also highlighted that being proud of where you live is key to fostering a positive quality of life.

Gill stated that many positive things have been mentioned, but emphasized that in order to reach all the beautiful goals the city is aiming for, good roads are essential. He reaffirmed his support for the road program, highlighting the progress made with roads that are being completed and those still awaiting construction. Gill underscored the importance of the CIP and the significant impact it will have on the city's development.

Harris highlighted his key points of support for the PROPEL CIP and expressed his deep love for the community and the people within it.

Hankins stated that if she didn't already live in Lawton, she would choose to move here, as she believes the city is on the brink of greatness. She encouraged the community to continue pushing forward and to do "More in Twenty Four."

Mayor Booker requested that the City Manager assist in gathering budget estimates for the storm siren and the cemetery fence so that they can be included in the spreadsheet for further discussion.

MOVED by Gill SECOND by Warren to ADJOURN THE MEETING OF April 22, 2024. AYE: Hankins, Harris, Gill, Hampton, Weger, Williams, Warren. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:42 PM.

ADJOURNMENT

The City of Lawton encourages participation from all of its citizens. If participation at any public meeting is not possible due to a disability, notification to the City Clerk at (580) 581-3305 at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting is encouraged to make the necessary accommodations. The City may waive the 48 hour rule if interpreters for the deaf (signing) is not the necessary accommodation."