



MINUTES  
LAWTON CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING  
THURSDAY, MAY 23, 2024 – 6:00 P.M.  
LAWTON CITY HALL  
212 SW 9<sup>TH</sup> STREET  
LAWTON, OK 73501  
COUNCIL CHAMBERS/AUDITORIUM

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Mayor Booker called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M. Notice of meeting and agenda were posted by the City Clerk's Office as required by law. Invocation was given by Linda Chapman, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Stan Booker, Mayor  
Mary Ann Hankins, Ward One  
Kelly Harris, Ward Two  
Linda Chapman, Ward Three  
George Gill, Ward Four  
Allan Hampton, Ward Five  
Sherene L Williams, Ward Seven

ABSENT:

Bob Weger, Ward Six  
Randy Warren, Ward Eight

ALSO PRESENT:

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

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**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

1. 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 the presentation may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Huntley said the last time we spoke we had a few open-ended items that we needed to address – these items include approval or denial of the CPI, finalization of our CIP projects (to include adjusting the funding and adding/deferring projects), and we also need to look at expenses to determine if we want to cut expenses further.

Mayor Booker said he would really like to see us not raise rates with the CPI, but he also didn't realize the CPI was so much. He asked if the CPI is still at 4.9%.

Huntley said that's correct as of March 30, 2024 per the Southwest Region CPI.

Mayor Booker asked how much this makes each water bill go up.

Huntley said she does not have that information.

Mayor Booker did the math and advised that this would raise each water bill by approximately \$8.00.

Mayor Booker noted that we'll be taking roughly \$4 million from use tax, which is equivalent to the 2 & 1/8 CIP number, and moving it over to CIP. He asked what this will do to the fund balance.

Huntley said it would lower the fund balance if we didn't cut expenses elsewhere.

Mayor Booker asked if we'd still be above GFOA standards.

Huntley said yes.

Mayor Booker asked for clarification on the GFOA rate requirement.

Huntley said for the general fund, it's 60 days' worth of expenses, or about 16% of the operating expenses for the year. For the enterprise fund, it's 45 days' worth of expenses, or about 12% of the operating expenses for the year.

Mayor Booker asked Huntley to help him understand where we are and where our peer cities operate.

Huntley said she does not know where our peer cities are – she would have to look at their budgets and make some phone calls to see where they're at.

Mayor Booker said he is going to assume the Council would like to not raise rates if possible. He asked Huntley to let the Council know what our peer cities are running on with their fund balances before Council makes the final decision on Tuesday. Mayor Booker said it's his understanding that we have an emergency fund, and our peer cities do not.

Huntley said that is correct.

Mayor Booker asked Huntley to provide the following information in her budget presentation next Tuesday:

- Fund balance of the Emergency Fund
- A breakdown with real numbers for the 60 days' worth of general fund expenses, or

about 16% of the operating expenses for the year and the 45 days' worth of enterprise expenses, or about 12% of the operating expenses for the year

Hampton noted that the water bill was raised by 15% two years ago.

John Ratliff, City Manager, said there will also be an increase in the industrial water rates – these rates are going up. The President of Republic Paperboard currently pays .89 cents for 1,000 gallons of treated water. As soon as we get our agreement signed with Republic, this will go up more than \$2.00. Ratliff noted that the rates for Ft Sill will go up to the same rate that Republic pays, so we are anticipating a huge revenue spike in this area.

Mayor Booker asked if this has been calculated in the budget projects.

Huntley said yes.

Hampton said he noticed that Oklahoma City had a line item on their utility bill for a needed water line replacement, and they increased just this line item on the water bill by 2-3% for three years to pay for the water line replacement. The 2-3% increase fell off the water bill after 3 years. Hampton said we need to work out some sort of system to where we can drop off things once we pay for them – it's much like what we do with the bonds.

Rusty Whisenhunt, Public Utilities Director, said he received the draft report today of a recent rate study – this report has the comparisons of our peer cities. This report is scheduled to be presented to the Fees Committee next week. He said the recommendations from the consultant, Freese and Nichols, reflect that we are considerably underfunded in sewer and storm sewer.

Mayor Booker said we will discuss this further on Tuesday.

Huntley asked for feedback from Council with regards to how they would like to allocate the Capital Improvement expenses for the next fiscal year.

Mayor Booker said the Council is okay with what's listed.

Mayor Booker asked if changes have been made to the Neighborhood Services budget for next year.

Huntley said yes – two code enforcement officers were added to the budget with a salary of \$63,000 each.

Mayor Booker asked if we have additional personnel lined up to operate the new liter vacuums.

Ratliff said we didn't add additional personnel, but we'll be able to incorporate that into the existing personnel structure.

Mayor Booker said the main concern is meeting citizen expectations with regards to Neighborhood Services and liter abatement. He said he thinks we are headed in the right

direction.

Ratliff said we will meet the expectations of the citizens with regards to Neighborhood Services and litter abatement.

Chapman inquired about the vacant position in Engineering.

Joe Painter, City Engineer, said this position has been vacant for a while, but only because we haven't been able to find an applicant to fill it.

Chapman asked if we will start contracting this work out.

Gill said we have been contracting this work out to WSB, and they've been doing a great job at staying ahead of schedule.

Mayor Booker inquired about the added positions to Financial Services.

Huntley said we are adding an accountant, and we are also reclassing two fiscal technicians to accounting clerks so they can do accountant type of work (their current job descriptions limit what they can do).

Ratliff said we're continuing to cast a broad net in terms of getting accountant type help. Not only are we adding this accounting position, but we've also reached out to Hatch, Croke & Associates to try to get additional accounting support. Unfortunately, they were not able to help. Ratliff said we're also reaching out to Cameron University to see if we can pull in any students over the summer that could potentially help with the audit.

Huntley said the most notable increase to the general fund operating budget is the increase of \$8.9 million for streets.

Huntley said the most notable increases in the enterprise fund have to do with repair and maintenance of the Water Treatment Plant as well as a constant rise in the cost of chemicals.

Huntley said if the budget were to pass as is, the general fund balance would drop from \$53 million to \$35 million, the enterprise fund would drop from \$165 million to \$74 million, capital improvement funds will drop from \$39 million to \$35 million, special revenue funds will drop from \$19 million to \$7.9 million (these funds can only be used for certain things), internal service funds will drop just slightly from \$9 million to \$8.8 million, and other funds would increase from \$230 million to \$232 million.

Mayor Booker asked why the enterprise fund is so high.

Huntley said we've incurred a lot of debt service, and we have to accrue that entire note even though we're not going to pay it back in the first year – that's why the fund balance dropped like it has.

Mayor Booker asked Huntley to define special revenue funds.

Huntley said special revenues are items that are for a specific purpose. For example, we have a special revenue fund for our police and fire training. There is a \$5 fee on tickets, and that money goes into a special revenue fund to be earmarked for specific types of expenses.

Mayor Booker asked Huntley for clarification on which three things she needs feedback on from Council.

Huntley said she needs clarification on the CPI, whether to cut expenses, and CIP projects.

Mayor Booker noted that the CPI will be brought back to Council with more information on Tuesday.

No action was taken on this item.

2. Consider adding the City of Lawton Lake Headquarters Office Building as a project to be included in the proposed 2040 CIP extension and take action as deemed necessary.

Larry Parks, Parks & Recreation Director, provided background information on this item. Parks gave a presentation on the existing conditions of the City of Lawton Lake Headquarters Office Building. A copy of the presentation may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Parks said our current Lakes Division main office is in extremely poor condition right now, and it's in need of immediate attention. Parks reviewed the poor conditions as follows:

- Main entrance into office, no ADA access, and door jam and threshold are rotten.
- Siding on office is dry rotting, brittle, and pulling away from the structure.
- Windows are old aluminum, no insulation, and several have cracked panes.
- Siding pulling away from window, and bare wood exposed.
- Drop box location that is not ADA accessible, data lines run through the wall and not in conduit, and door is not functional for access in/out of building.
- More data lines are run through the wall and not in conduit, and siding is breaking apart from sun baking and becoming brittle.
- More data lines are run through the wall and not in conduit. Partial roof image showing 2-3 layers of shingles that all need replaced.
- Siding crumbling at ground level and sewer line is above ground going underground outside the office into the septic tank.
- Rear door opens into an office and is only used for emergency access if needed. No ADA access in this location.
- Another window with cracked pane and siding pulling away.
- Wood framing exposed around window.
- Linoleum flooring ripping up in kitchen/break room. Room was added to the old house because it is plywood decked.
- Indoor/outdoor carpet ripped, no pad, put directly over old hardwood in most walking

spaces throughout office.

- Indoor/outdoor carpet ripped leading into the main office location.
- Ceiling sagging from water leak in front office. We have tried to locate the leak, and tar seems on the roof.
- Ceiling cracked sheetrock near exhaust vent in restroom.
- Wall cracked sheetrock in restroom entrance.
- Two wall cracks in sheetrock entering the fee collector/inspector office.
- HVAC unit that located in the fee collector/inspector office. City HVAC employee stated that it is not to code because wiring block was added, eliminating being able to place cover on the unit.
- Shingle damage of outer layer of roof. Appears to have several layers of shingles that need to come off. Quotes obtained from licensed contractors indicated the sheeting underneath shingles will need replaced also.

Parks said currently our engineers projected the cost for a metal/steel structure at \$720,000. Currently, this facility houses nine employees, it's just under 1,200 square feet in size, and we service just under 4,000 customers annually. Parks said staff is asking that this be included into the PROPEL CIP extension.

Mayor Booker said he thought boat licenses can be purchased on your phone now.

Parks said that is correct.

Mayor Booker asked Parks if this has cut their traffic flow.

Parks noted that the program that allows you to buy licenses on your phone is currently very slow and it times out. Because of this, a lot of the customers frequently visit the facility to purchase licenses.

Mayor Booker asked what we're doing to get the program fixed.

Parks said he is working with Judy Franco, IT Director, and representatives from Tyler Technology to get this issue resolved. Parks said he believes they are scheduled to revamp the entire system in September.

John Ratliff, City Manager, noted that the Lakes Division main office building is also shared with the lake patrol police.

Mayor Booker asked Parks if they're wanting to tear down the existing building and build a new metal building for \$720,000.

Parks said that is correct – he believes the current facility has outlived itself.

Harris asked Parks if they've explored self-service kiosks. He said the City of Duncan has one where you can purchase permits.

Parks said we have not explored this option, but we can do that.

Gill asked for clarification on how many employees are housed at the facility and what their sole purpose is.

Parks said there are a total of 12 employees including the three lake patrol officers. These employees deal with licensing as well as maintenance of the land and lakes.

Gill asked if we have a maintenance building somewhere to keep equipment in.

Parks said yes, we do.

Gill asked for clarification on the job description of the lake patrol units as it relates to the Lake Headquarters Office building. He asked if the office just serves as a place for the officers to change clothes.

Parks said the lake patrol officers use the building to change clothes and to routinely converse with the other lake employees.

Gill said the only problem he has is that we've got to get the Waller debt paid back, and we also have to take the money we're generating out there to make improvements to the overall grounds that bring the people in that generate the income. Gill said he has looked at the existing building, but he questions if this is the right time and place to purchase a new building when it looks like the online permitting would really cut the need for that many employees to do that particular service.

Mayor Booker asked Gill when he looked at the existing building.

Gill said he looked at the building about three weeks ago.

Mayor Booker asked Gill if he went inside the building, and he asked Gill to share his thoughts on the building.

Gill said he did not go inside the building.

Ratliff said he would encourage Council to go inside the existing building to see what conditions our workers are going to everyday. He said this building is in bad shape. There are water stains in the building, you can smell the mold, the roof leaks every time it rains and there are buckets all over the place.

Gill said he doesn't disagree with Ratliff, and he doesn't disagree that the building is in poor shape – we've had homes on the D & D list that are in better shape than this building. However, Gill said his argument is with the amount of money the new building will cost for what it's going to yield back for the employees we need. He noted that we've been looking at increases to the budget in other areas, and that is something to think about.

Chapman asked Parks if he has looked at other alternatives for smaller buildings that would cost less.

Parks said we did not send out a request for proposal, but we can do that.

Chapman asked who came up with this building and cost.

Parks said our engineers did.

Hampton asked Parks if there is a size difference between the existing building and the proposed new building.

Parks said the existing building is just under 1,200 square feet, and the proposed new building would be approximately 800 square feet larger than the existing building.

Mayor Booker asked Gill to go look at the inside of the existing building before Tuesday.

Hampton said he will go with Gill to look at the building.

Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager, said the existing building is undersized, and there really aren't any public restrooms – it's an old farmhouse that's been converted to an office space. The floor sinks in different places. There's really no place for officers to take reports if a citizen comes in to file a report. Burk said we looked at a 40x50 sized steel facility – we thought the \$720,000 was really a large number. If we shift the location of the building site, that may play a factor in the cost as well – this is something that Council can weigh in on. Burk said the space that we were requesting was slightly larger, but it was in order to accommodate some actual office space, and it would accommodate ADA public access requirements.

Hampton said he would like to discuss the feasibility of building. He said it's possible the construction of the building could be phased out as the money becomes available. He asked if the cost of the new building includes the cost of furnishings.

Burk said he does not believe it includes furnishings. One of the things we were taking into consideration is that there's no conference room or meeting area to collect the staff to make plans. Burk said he doesn't believe the lake staff is going to get any smaller, especially after taking on the Slough and with the additional improvements that are being made at the lakes. He thinks at some point we are going to start seeing this area continue to grow, and it may require some additional staff members. Burk said we felt like it would be appropriate to accommodate what we have and also have some room for expansion.

Hampton said it's important that we build things that last, and it's no doubt that the Council is supportive of this. However, we are trying to budget the money to be responsible to the citizens as the money is being spent. Hampton said he would like to see more detailed plans regarding this proposal and its cost.

Harris asked Parks how much income is generated per year from fishing and boating licenses.

Parks said he doesn't have that information with him, but he will get the information.

Harris asked if lake employees are responsible for collecting the rent from campsites.

Parks said yes.

Harris asked for clarification on shifting the location of the lakes building.

Burk said the lakes staff has identified locations that would work well for the building site. Burk said right now, the office is on the opposite side of the highway from the campgrounds. Staff is proposing it be placed closer to the campsites, or that it be visible from the highway at the very least.

Chapman said we all agree that this building needs to be taken away – the issue is the direction of choices ahead regarding the budget. She said she's interested in seeing some other possibilities for this building.

Gill asked Parks to obtain the stats on how much we might be able to save with regards to space and payroll based on when we get our tech system up and running. This may be something hard to figure, but he'd like to see at least a parameter.

Parks said he will look into this.

Mayor Booker asked Ratliff to find out if we have other buildings that we're allowing to get in this shape. He also asked Ratliff to determine if we have any kind of program in place to where we look at our buildings annually and come up with a list of what needs to be done so they don't get in this shape.

Mayor Booker said Gill and a couple other Councilmen will go look at the inside of the building before the meeting next Tuesday so a decision can be made at the meeting.

No action was taken on this item.

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

Mayor Booker asked Hankins to share more about the Victim Resource Center.

Hankins said there was an article in the Lawton Constitution this morning about the Victim Resource Center. She said this is really important to our city, and it's something that can be overlooked unless it has happened to you or someone you care about. In this city, what we were seeing was completely wrong. A person who had had an incident of a sexual assault would report it to the police and then go the hospital, and there might not be a nurse working that's qualified to take care of this person. Because of this, the victim was sent an hour and a half away just to be examined. Hankins said there was one incident where the victim was told to go home, not

shower and come back tomorrow. She said this is not okay. Hankins said she was not aware this was going on, but now that we're aware of it we have to continue to do something. She noted that we used to only have one SANE nurse, and now we have six. More are in training so that they can be spread out so this won't happen to anyone again. The Victim Resource Center will provide a place for victims to go – they won't have to go through the hospital or have additional exposure after the trauma they've been through.

Mayor Booker asked Council if there are any other comments about the CIP and where we stand today with what's been projected.

Chapman noted that we're having issues at multiple facilities, to include the Carnegie Library, the Museum of the Great Plains and the Armory. If we don't fix these problems and then have funds available to maintain these facilities and keep them up, then we're going to be right back where we are now in a few years. Chapman said this is a concern of hers.

Mayor Booker said he thinks that is a valid concern. He said he does think we have a City Manager that's watching the budget and moving us in this direction. He noted that Ratliff has also found alternate ways besides the CIP to deal with our air conditioner problem, and he appreciates this.

Hampton said maintenance seems to be a big thing we've been focusing on. He said he's excited that we are starting to get our facilities up to par. Hampton noted it will be important to have money set aside for ongoing maintenance of our facilities. He said he believes we are moving in the right direction.

Mayor Booker asked for clarification on the cost of the fire station alert system.

Jared Williams, Fire Chief, said the system costs \$1.18 million today, but \$1.2 million would be a good budget number, depending on how quickly we can make this purchase.

Harris said as a Councilman, public safety is job one. He said the new fire alarm system and the new body cameras for our Police Department are important. Harris said the Sports Complex is very important for the youth of our community, and he's a dog lover so the new Animal Shelter is also very important to him. He noted that improvements to our traffic control system is the highest priority on his list.

Mayor Booker said in either 2015 or 2016, the citizens voted on a public safety sales tax, which expired in 2026 if he remembers correctly. Then in the 2019 PROPEL, we made that number indefinite, and it comes out of the half a cent that's designated for water, sewer and infrastructure. Mayor Booker said there are two other things that come out of this, and it's a number not to exceed 2.684. Mayor Booker said there is also \$250,000 in the emergency fund annually. However, we feel like that \$250,000 is being diminished every year and we need to tie it to the CPI, assuming that the total income from the sales tax revenue is the CPI or greater. In other words, if the CPI was 4.9% and we only went up 3%, then it would only go up 3%. Mayor Booker said we want to create a new category for public safety wage maintenance, and we'd like to start off with a fund of \$350,000. This would go up annually after the first year based on the

CPI subject to the total increase in collections. Mayor Booker said we'd do the same thing for dispatch – we'd take a starting fund of \$40,000, and after the first year this fund would go up with the CPI subject to the total increase in collections. Mayor Booker said this actually doesn't add any dollars to the CIP because that half cent has grown so much since we started – it's limited to a half cent, so this works out well. Mayor Booker said he will provide more detail at the meeting on Tuesday.

Mayor Booker said we have a good CIP planned. We can keep the 40 Wins for the Citizens project going with the CIP, and he thinks the citizens are excited about that. He said we've got to address recreation and sports, and you can't ignore your parks.

Gill said the road program started out as 10 Wins for the Citizens, and it's been very successful. He said we have 40 streets going now. This week at the Streets and Bridges Committee meeting we approved additional streets to be repaired. Gill said we can thank our mayor for this.

Harris said he's been very impressed with all that's been accomplished out of the 2019 PROPEL. He said there have been accusations that we haven't spent that money where we said we were going to. However, Harris said it's his impression that we've spent the money exactly as we said we would, and he believes we have a citizen's committee that oversees the CIP.

Mayor Booker said that is true that we have a citizen's committee that oversees the CIP, but the committee has been having trouble getting a quorum. They had trouble getting a quorum for their meeting today, and there was going to be a full presentation. Mayor Booker said he asked for an ordinance to be drafted to add alternate members to this committee to address the quorum issues. Mayor Booker noted that we'll be getting a full audit on the CIP, but we can't finish the full audit until we finish our audit. We also have bond attorneys that keep us moving in the right direction.

No action was taken on this item.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

MOVED by Gill, SECOND by Hampton, to adjourn the May 23, 2024, special meeting. AYE: Harris, Chapman, Gill, Hampton, Williams, Hankins. NAY: None. MOTION CARRIED.

There being no further business to consider, the meeting adjourned at 7:01 PM.

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STAN BOOKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

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TAMMY BRANSTETTER, SR DEPUTY CITY CLERK