



City of Lawton

Lawton Enhancement Trust Authority

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

Minutes

Wednesday, June 11, 2025

3:00 PM

Lawton City Hall
3rd Floor Conference Room

Meeting Called to Order and Roll Call

Vice-Chairman Rabon called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM in the 3rd floor conference room of City Hall.

ROLL CALL:

PRESENT: Charles Owens, Addie Smith, Johnny Owens, Dwain Baxter, Chris Rabon, Jeremy Lohman

ABSENT: Mary Ann Hankins (excused), Dwight Tanner (excused), Barry Ezerski (excused), Ted Symuleski (excused)

OTHERS PRESENT: Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager; Caitlin Gatlin, Communications & Marketing; Neal Kirmer, Communications & Marketing; Tammy Branstetter, City Clerk's Office; Wesley Simmons, City Attorney's Office; Larry Parks, Community Enrichment Director; Jason Poudrier, Arts & Humanities; Jonathan Jernigan, Department of Safe and Clean Neighborhoods; Susan Schlecht, Financial Services; Dennis Totte, Bedrock Nursery; Vincent Saylor & Candance Hammond, Holiday in the Park (Chamber of Commerce); Matina Davis, Citizen of the Community; David Reeves, Citizen of the Community; Kaysa Whitley, Citizen of the Community

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

Vice-Chairman Rabon confirmed with Branstetter that the meeting notice and agenda were posted by the City Clerk's Office as required by State Law.

Introduction of Guests

Guests of the meeting introduced themselves.

Reports

1. Receive a report from Dennis Totte with Bedrock Nursery regarding current landscaping and irrigation projects, provide direction to Mr. Totte on current projects and take action as deemed necessary.

Totte said we've now completed the annual flower planting at all of our landscape and maintenance sites—everything is 100% done. From here on out, we'll be focused on regular maintenance for the rest of the summer. That includes things like shrub trimming, weeding, and all the usual upkeep. If anything comes up or if you'd like to request an estimate for additional work, feel free to bring it to my attention during any of our meetings.

The Authority next considered Addendum items 1 -4.

2. Receive a report from Neighborhood Services regarding monthly updates on departmental activities and take action as deemed necessary.

Jonathan Jernigan, Department of Safe and Clean Neighborhoods, provided a report regarding departmental activities.

Jernigan said for the month of May, we sent out violation letters to over 672 different properties for issues such as tall grass, weeds, unsecured structures, and other various violations throughout the City of Lawton. Out of those, over 314 were submitted as work order requests, bringing our total number of completed work orders to 1,600. So far this year, we've requested 172 securing work orders. For D&Ds, we've demolished 58 structures year-to-date, and a total of 216 structures have been declared dilapidated.

Johnny Owens said I just want to say you all are doing a heck of a job. I know it's stressful, but you're doing a great job.

Jernigan said thank you, sir. We appreciate Matt reaching out to us and working with the county to ensure that even county properties are being taken care of more quickly. We really appreciate that.

3. Receive a report from Parks and Recreation regarding departmental projects and monthly updates and take action as deemed necessary.

Larry Parks provided a report regarding departmental activities.

Parks said that everything is close to being on target and on time. As far as our beautification projects, we are experiencing some delays, but we're making up time. We expect everything—aside from the major projects—to remain on target.

4. Receive a report from the LETA Executive Director regarding ongoing LETA projects and take action as deemed necessary. - **STRICKEN**

This item was stricken from the agenda, as Charlotte Brown could not attend the meeting.

5. Receive Monthly Ward Updates from Trustees and take action as deemed necessary.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said I noticed that parks like Kathy Newcomb Park were washed out by all the spring rains, and now the playgrounds don't have any wood chips in them. He asked Parks if that is correct.

Parks said it's fiber, and yes sir, you'll see that happen in three other parks as well. Right now, we do have orders in for that, but we're no different from any other town in southwestern Oklahoma—everyone is in line to get the fiber. That's what's going on.

6. Receive a report from the Communications and Marketing Department regarding LETA's social media accounts and publicity projects, provide direction to staff on said projects and take action as deemed necessary.

Caitlin Gatlin, Communications and Marketing, advised that she has no new updates to give at this time.

Vice-Chairman Rabon noted that this is LETA's 20th year of being established. He said I'm wondering if we could do something to highlight the projects that we've done over the last 20 years.

Gatlin said the good thing is it's only June, so we still have a few months to put a plan together and present it at a future LETA meeting. Whether that's a social media campaign or something more involved—like an event—we'll have time to figure it out, and I'm sure we can make it happen.

7. Receive a report from the Cultural Preservation Committee on the Carnegie Library Town Hall exterior entry staircase contractor selection, City of Lawton Art Collection, and City Hall Archive Room and take action as deemed necessary.

Jason Poudrier, Arts and Humanities, provided background information on this item.

Poudrier said for the Cultural Reservation Committee, we're excited to report that we're moving forward with renovations at Carnegie Library Town Hall. We received three bids for the front steps, and one of them was from Old Home Rescue—the same company that completed the arch restoration at Highland Cemetery. That's the company we're recommending for the repairs at Carnegie Library.

All the bids came in fairly close to one another, but Old Home Rescue has the most experience. They also recently brought on a lady who previously worked for the State Historical Office. This gives us added confidence that the steps will be restored in a way that looks as though they were just completed in 1920.

Johnny Owens inquired about the cost of this project.

Poudrier said this is actually coming out of McMahon Auditorium Authority funding, and it will cost roughly \$70,000.

Vice-Chairman Rabon inquired about the plaque at Shepler Park.

With regard to the plaque at Shepler Park that this group approved to do also through the Cultural Preservation Committee, Poudrier said the pedestal is there, and the plaque should be there by the end of the week. They had to order special brass bolts that matched the original bolts. So the plaque that is dedicated to Ned Shepler Park, that plaque will be going back on top of that pedestal. Then, hopefully within 60 to 90 days, the landscaping will be done around it, and we'll have some major improvements there at Shepler Park.

No action was taken on this item.

Business Items

1. Consider approving the minutes of the May 14, 2025, meeting.

A copy of the minutes of the May 14, 2025, meeting may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Motion by Johnny Owens, **Second** by Charles Owens, to approve the minutes of the May 14, 2025, meeting. **AYE:** Johnny Owens, Rabon, Baxter, Smith, Charles Owens, Lohman. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

2. Consider approving the list of expenses and paid invoices for the period from May 12 – June 9, 2025.

Susan Schlecht, Financial Services, advised that the list of expenses were included in the agenda packet for the meeting. The expenses for the period of May, 12, 2025, to June 9, 2025, are as follows:

- 5/20/2025 - \$600.00 to Bedrock Nursery for LETA Yard of the Month gift cards
- 5/13/2025 - \$1,623.00 to Almetal Extendible for Freedom Festival derby car kits

Motion by Johnny Owens, **Second** by Lohman, to approve the list of expenses and paid invoices for the period of May 12, 2025, to June 9, 2025, as presented. **AYE:** Johnny Owens, Rabon, Baxter, Smith, Charles Owens, Lohman. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

3. Consider approving the Treasurer's Report for the months of April and May 2025.

Schlecht presented the Treasurer's Report for the months of April and May 2025. A copy of the Treasurer's Report may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Schlecht said we'll begin with a review of the balance sheet for April. At the top, the LETA Beautification Fund currently sits at \$31,751.16, which is down by \$7,589 from the previous month. This decrease is due to expenses from the Eye Candy Awards and several smaller expenses not listed here. The Hotel Motel Tax Fund stands at \$155,123.19, an increase of \$95,000 from the prior month, resulting from a reimbursement that was received. Committed Funds are now at \$40,302.02, a decrease of \$86,362, which reflects funding for three Bedrock projects and a down payment for the fireworks show. Children United received \$950 in funding from the Eye Candy Awards, specifically from the auction of flower arrangements, bringing their current cash fund to \$18,234. The Freedom Festival account increased by \$6,850 due to vendor fees, with a current balance of \$19,667.68. At the bottom of the page, the total City National Bank account shows \$343,556.63.

Turning the page, accounts payable total \$2,818, which includes a 2nd Street Bedrock invoice and a Freedom Festival invoice that have not yet been received or processed. Net income is reported at negative \$94,078.246, representing a \$30,580 change from the previous month. If there are no questions about the balance sheet, we'll move on to the tracker sheet. The profit and loss sheet is also provided for anyone who would like to review more detailed information, although the tracker sheet includes these numbers as well.

On the tracker sheet, the Hotel and Motel Tax is listed at \$91,291, an increase of \$33,161. The Freedom Festival Hotel and Motel Tax shows \$62,500, which is the reimbursement for LETA following the deposit payment for the Freedom Festival show. The Beautification Fund, sourced from municipal fines, brought in \$6,262 in March, bringing the year-to-date total to \$43,630. Earned interest for April was \$25.52, raising the total interest income for the fiscal year to \$273.41. Near the bottom of the revenue section, the Children United revenue shows the \$950 donation from the Eye Candy Awards, totaling \$1,950 for the year so far.

Regarding expenses, the LETA Grant Awards included a \$3,000 check for the Ambucs for their Fly a Flag program, bringing the total expenses to \$57,499.88. The Eye Candy Awards totaled \$6,523.60, covering payments for services provided at the event. The Trash Off event had expenses of \$4,327.20. LETA Hotel Motel Freedom Festival expenses were listed at \$62,500, a number that appears multiple times in connection with that event. As of April 30th, total expenses for the fiscal year stood at \$269,500.80, and the remaining budget was \$381,975.15. No changes were noted on the project page for this month.

Moving into May, the balance sheet begins with the Beautification Fund, which now has \$29,271.16, a decrease of \$2,480 due to expenses related to Journey Production for services at the Eye Candy Awards, as well as some Bedrock charges. The Hotel Motel Fund is at \$144,534.19, down by \$10,589 due to transfers made into committed funds for projects. Committed funds currently total \$50,152.02, allocated for the tree rings project and the Art Walk project, both of which were previously discussed. The Freedom Festival account shows \$18,194.68, reflecting a decrease of \$1,473 from a vendor

payment. The 2nd Street Project has \$7,413.86, down \$318 due to a Bedrock invoice. The total City National Bank account stands at \$330,546.63. Interest receivable for May was \$30.08, and the Freedom Festival has a \$31,000 receivable from five sponsorships. An additional sponsorship receivable is still in progress.

On the accounts payable side, the total is \$2,500, which covers MWR's bouncy houses for the Freedom Festival. An important item to highlight involves equity: the net assets restricted line and net assets unrestricted line. Restricted items are donations or funds allocated for specific purposes. Now that several of those projects have been finalized, the funds are no longer restricted. These were reclassified into the unrestricted balance, resulting in a \$436,000 difference. This change is significant, and while it may not seem important now, it is useful to understand in case future reports reflect this shift and raise questions about where those funds went.

Looking again at the tracker sheet as of May 31st, earned interest for the month is \$30.08. Freedom Festival sponsorships now total \$38,712.14, including \$31,000 received recently and previous contributions. On the expenses side, professional and technical services increased by \$300 for the website administrator. Dues and memberships came in at \$340 for the Chamber of Commerce. A \$99 subscription to WPS Forms was also recorded. Additional expenses of \$1,880 were added to the Eye Candy Awards Banquet, bringing the total for that event to \$8,403.60. For the Yard of the Month program, six \$100 gift cards were purchased, bringing the total to \$991.75. Freedom Festival expenses increased by \$1,623, bringing the total expenses to \$4,123.

Our remaining balance so far for this year is \$366,965.15. Year-to-date income is \$241,216.42, and year-to-date expenses total \$274,660.80. The project page reflects a few updates: at the top is the Lighting City Hall Project, which still has a remaining amount of \$1,465, a result of both savings and lower-than-expected costs. The Lawton Art Walk project was added, with a \$1,000 allocation for this beautification. Under repairs and maintenance, \$8,850 was added for the Lee Boulevard tree rings project. These were the only updates to the project page for the month.

Schlecht said she'd be happy to answer any questions regarding the financials.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked who will be tasked with presenting the financials going forward.

Schlecht said initially, it will be Kristin Huntley.

Motion by Johnny Owens, **Second** by Charles Owens, to approve the Treasurer's Report for the months of April and May 2025 as presented. **AYE:** Johnny Owens, Rabon, Baxter, Smith, Charles Owens, Lohman. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

4. Receive an update regarding the status of hotel motel tax collections and expenses as they pertain to LETA.

Schlecht provided an update regarding the status of hotel motel tax collections as they pertain to LETA. A copy of this report may be obtained from the City Clerk's Office upon request.

Schlecht said this report date is as of June 10th. As of that date, our total collections for Hotel and Motel tax revenue amount to \$1,546,317, which is approximately 66% of the budgeted amount. The outstanding collections are \$793,683. For this same time period, LETA received \$11,230, Freedom Festival received \$8,483, and Holiday in the Park received \$6,786. These additions bring the total collected amounts to the following: LETA at \$102,521, Freedom Festival at \$77,439, and Holiday in the Park at \$61,951. Based on our collections so far, I'm certain we're not going to reach the full \$2.3 million budgeted. That's just not likely at this point in the fiscal year. Typically, we don't see significant incoming revenue during the last couple of months of the fiscal year. I believe I estimated an additional \$10,000, and I think that estimate was specifically related to Holiday in the Park.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked Schlecht if she's saying the remaining collections are projections, and that we'll fall short of those.

Schlecht said yes, I'm certain we're going to fall short of that - there's just no way we can cover that much ground in two more months.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked Schlecht where she thinks the projection would end up at if she were to amend the \$2.3 million projection.

Schlecht said I don't know that I can give you that information - I did not look at it from that perspective.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked if he's correct in stating that this will impact what we have for money.

Schlecht said yes. She said I didn't pull that estimate on those monies from the whole pot - I just did it from what our normal trend is.

No action was taken on this item.

5. Consider approving a funding request from the Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$68,995.00 for the purchase of additional display(s) for Holiday in the Park.

Vincent Saylor, Holiday in the Park, provided background information on this item.

Saylor said there's a new display that's kind of a picture-taking opportunity. It's a carousel—specifically, a horse-drawn carousel, based on the picture I've seen of it. I know that this year, we may be setting it up in Shepler Park or another location due to construction or other considerations. It's portable, so we can place it in Shepler Park

this year and then move it back to wherever Holiday in the Park will be held in the future.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked if this would be a static display all year once we place it at some point.

Saylor said it would be a static display just during the lights. It's more of a picture-taking opportunity. I know Mayor Booker has kind of asked for more 3D types of displays rather than flat displays - this would be a 3D type of display that he's kind of looking for.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked Schlecht if the funding exists for this.

Schlecht said we do have Holiday in the Park funding. None of the \$61,000 has been claimed yet, so we still have the majority of it available. I also estimate that we'll receive some additional funds. However, there is a risk—if you want to call it that—that we may not collect enough Holiday in the Park hotel motel tax revenue to cover the entire invoice. That is a possibility. If that happens, it wouldn't be a large shortfall, and I would hope it could be brought before the board for consideration to cover the remaining amount. That's why I'm referring to it as a risk—we may not have enough hotel tax revenue to fully cover the invoice.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said if I understand correctly, this isn't the total amount that we've set aside for Holiday in the Park - they wouldn't be claiming everything that we have set aside for that.

Schlecht said if the board agrees to the purchase of the particular item, then LETA will be providing the \$68,000 for Holiday in the Park to make the payment. That being said, we would file that expense against the Hotel Motel fund so that the Hotel Motel would reimburse us. However, the Hotel Motel fund can only reimburse us up to the amount it has actually earned. That's where we may come up short, because I'm just estimating at this point—I don't truly know what the final numbers will be. What I can say is that we do have \$61,078 available, so any difference—and we know we're going to collect something from the hotel tax—I feel like if we don't collect the full amount, the shortfall would certainly be \$5,000 or less.

Johnny Owens asked who would be providing the warranty on this item. He also asked where the display will be placed.

Saylor said we don't know for sure yet—it can move. From what I understand, this year they're talking about having it in Shepler Park or possibly spread throughout the city. So it can be moved to wherever it fits, and we'll handle the relocation and everything. It's my understanding that Holiday in the Park takes care of all of that, including the setup. He said there is a five-year warranty on the carriage.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said the invoice shows parts and materials covered for three seasons, and lights have a one-year warranty. He asked if that's what prompted Johnny

Owens' question.

Johnny Owens said that's correct. He asked where the five-year warranty came from. He said I mean, that's great - I'm for the carriage, but I like warranties. He asked if that change could be added.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked Poudrier to verify if the warranty is for five years.

Poudrier said it's for at least 3 years, but I'm double-checking with Kelley at the Chamber to see what her findings are.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said well, I know the Chamber's goal is to continue building on what we started with Holiday in the Park from year to year. I think maybe last year was a bit of a setback because of some construction we had going on in the park—nobody's fault, just something that happened.

Dewayne Burk, Deputy City Manager, said for the next two years, there will be significant construction as we start working on the boardwalk and amphitheater.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said so this will be something that's kind of in flux for two years until we move back into park.

Burk said most likely.

Saylor said from my understanding, there are some designs that have already been started for Shepherd Park, and it does allow for us to fit there. We might not use as many of the things that we currently have available—specifically, the flatter, non-3D ones. Over the next couple of years, during the construction phase, we might scale back on using those. Instead, we're aiming to focus more on the 3D displays, including this one if this gets approved.

Candace Hammond, Holiday in the Park, said we're supposed to decide next month for certain where we're going to have it. So we may be able to use more than what we have, but this will be the only thing that we're ordering this year.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said I think it would be a really grand display.

Poudrier said the way the warranty works, if you were just to set it out there, it would be like five years, which would cover at least three seasons.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said I know the little truck that Holiday in the Park placed under the pavilion has been really popular. And the entrance you set up for that—I'm not sure exactly what it was that people walked through—but it turned out to be a great spot for taking pictures.

Motion by Johnny Owens, **Second** by Lohman, to approve the funding request from the

Chamber of Commerce in the amount of \$68,995.00 to purchase an additional display for Holiday in the Park. **AYE:** Johnny Owens, Rabon, Baxter, Smith, Charles Owens, Lohman. **NAY:** None. **MOTION PASSED.**

6. Discuss voting procedures for the Yard of the Month contest and consider establishing guidelines on the number of votes allowed per person.

Caitlin Gatlin, Communications and Marketing, provided background information on this item.

Gatlin said what we're kind of noticing is that whenever we receive nominations, the person either nominating themselves or someone who knows the nominee tends to go on the site and click a lot. As a result, they typically end up getting the most public votes. However, it's important to remember that the board still carries 33% of the final vote. I just wanted to bring up the idea of possibly limiting the votes to one per day. That way, we don't end up with an astronomical number of votes for one specific yard. If that's a decision you all want to make, we would likely need to upgrade our account on the website we use for voting. Right now, it costs \$99 per year, but the upgrade would be \$300 annually. Also, after looking at it more closely and doing some quick math, that 33% board vote really does make a big difference—at least in this month's case. It all depends on how many citizen votes each yard receives. So, I just wanted to get your thoughts on whether or not we should limit the number of votes per day.

Gatlin said so for example, this month, Ward 6 has 353 votes, Ward 5 has 129 votes, and Ward 2 has 9 — as of the last check. But in this case, with the Board's 33% weight in the final decision, if the Authority were to vote for a different yard, it could potentially tip the scales in the next yard's favor. It really just depends on how many votes come in for a certain yard. So, say this month, if Ward 6 were to end up with 700 votes and Ward 5 still had 129, then the 33% weight that the Authority holds really wouldn't make much of a difference — just because the other yard has 700 votes. That's just a hypothetical situation, but I kind of just wanted to see what the Authority thought about someone being able to vote continuously for their yard, or if it should be made more fair across the board for others who may not be able to refresh their pages as often.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked how many votes were from the same person.

Gatlin said we can't tell that.

Charles Owens asked if we can limit it to ten votes per individual.

Gatlin said I would have to look further into the website and see what it's capable of. Right now, as far as I know, you can limit it to per day. I wanted to bring up the fact that the Board's 33% of the vote is substantial. So in this case, and really on a month-to-month basis, it's kind of a case-by-case situation. But I did notice that some yards receive significantly more votes than others. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. If it's something you all want to address, we can definitely figure out a way to make it more even across the board. And once again, that's assuming the same person is

repeatedly voting for their own yard.

Lohman asked if the same Ward gets these large amounts of votes every time.

Gatlin said in this particular case, the yard with the most votes has been a winner before, so they're familiar with the process. If the Authority is looking for my recommendation — after doing the math and realizing that the 33% weight you all hold is actually pretty significant — there's probably no reason at this time to make another \$200 investment into it.

Vice-Chairman Rabon asked if there would be anything restricting us from increasing the percentage of the Board's vote, if we identified the problems.

Gatlin said that was something that was voted on a while ago, so we could just go back and kind of decide how you guys want the votes to be.

Vice-Chairman Rabon said that might be simpler than paying a fee. He suggested maybe we just watch this for a while.

Gatlin said I can let you all know and kind of keep you updated, and we'll tell you how many votes are coming in for the certain yards. We'll just keep an eye on it and follow up with you.

Smith asked if the same person can win Yard of the Month for two months in a row.

Gatlin said once they win for the year, they can't win again within that same year.

Johnny Owens left the meeting at 3:54PM.

Vice-Chairman Rabon announced that we've lost a quorum and will need to adjourn the meeting.

Gatlin said that's okay - we can vote on two Yard of the Month winners next month.

No action was taken on this item.

7. Select a Yard of the Month winner for May 2025.

The Authority was unable to consider this item due to losing a quorum at 3:54PM.

No action was taken on this item.

8. Consider releasing the remaining \$1,465 in funds previously encumbered for the City Hall Lighting Project.

The Authority was unable to consider this item due to losing a quorum at 3:54PM.

No action was taken on this item.

Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Rabon said since Johnny Owens had to leave, we'll be adjourning the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 3:55PM.