



City of Lawton

City Council

Minutes

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

Tuesday, June 24, 2025

6:00 PM

Lawton City Hall
Wayne Gilley Auditorium

EMERGENCY MEETING

“Emergency meeting” means any meeting called for the purpose of dealing with an emergency. For purposes of the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, an emergency is defined as a situation involving injury to persons or injury and damage to public or personal property or immediate financial loss when the time requirements for public notice of a special meeting would make such procedure impractical and increase the likelihood of injury or damage or immediate financial loss. — 25 O.S. § 304(5)

Tim Wilson, City Attorney, stated that the emergency meeting was called after Councilmember Warren contacted staff regarding an urgent issue that arose late the previous day. After discussion with the City Manager, it was determined that immediate action was necessary.

Wilson explained that, under the Oklahoma Open Meeting Act, an emergency meeting is defined as a meeting called to address a situation involving injury to persons, injury or damage to public or personal property, or immediate financial loss when the notice requirements of a special meeting would be impractical and would increase the likelihood of harm or loss.

Present:

Councilwoman- Ward 1 Mary Ann Hankins
Councilman- Ward 2 RL Smith
Councilwoman- Ward 3 Linda Chapman
Councilman- Ward 4 George Gill
Councilman - Ward 5 Allan Hampton
Councilwoman - Ward 7 Sherene L Williams
Councilman - Ward 8 Randy Warren

Absent:

Councilman- Ward 6 Bob Weger

Also Present:

Stanley Booker, Mayor
John Ratliff, City Manager
Timothy Wilson, Interim City Attorney
Donalynn Blazek-Scherler, City Clerk
Julia Sibilla, Fort Sill

New Business

"New Business" is defined as "Any matter not known about or which could not have been reasonably foreseen prior to the time of posting the agenda."

1. Discuss and take immediate action, if necessary, regarding fiber optic companies and the ongoing installation of fiber in public rights-of-way and residential areas throughout the City of Lawton. Specifically address and provide direction to staff concerning an urgent public safety issue in Eisenhower Village caused by the actions of these companies or their third-party contractors.

John Ratliff, City Manager, stated that on the previous evening, Councilmember Warren contacted him regarding multiple complaints in the Eisenhower Village neighborhood related to fiber optic installation work.

Ratliff stated that several deep holes, including one estimated at approximately 11 feet, had been left open along Inglewood Drive, creating a serious public safety hazard.

Ratliff stated that earlier that day he contacted AT&T, the company responsible for the fiber installation in the area. AT&T assured the City that:

All remaining work in the area would be completed within two weeks;

Some holes had already been filled;

Remaining holes would be filled as work progressed;

Safety measures would be implemented immediately, including barricades, safety fencing, and hard surface covers where applicable.

Ratliff stated that AT&T indicated that sod and dirt were currently on back order due to recent flooding but reiterated their commitment to completing repairs within the stated timeframe.

Christine James, Planning Director, presented a detailed overview of the City's experience with fiber optic installation complaints.

James stated that over the past two years, the Planning Department has logged over 200 fiber-related complaints, coinciding with fiber providers expanding service throughout the city. She identified the three primary providers as Bluepeak, Dobson, and AT&T.

James explained the City's complaint response process, including:

Receipt of complaint by Planning;

Coordination with Public Utilities;

On-site inspection by a utility inspector to identify the responsible company;

Notification to the responsible provider and the affected resident;

Tracking of complaints via a centralized spreadsheet.

James stated that in the last three weeks alone, the City received 21 complaints related to AT&T installations, noting that the issue was not isolated to Eisenhower Village. She identified additional affected areas across the city and displayed photographic evidence of:

- Damaged water meters;
- Broken water lines;
- Open and water-filled holes;
- Temporary fencing left in place for extended periods;
- Sidewalk obstructions;
- Incomplete or unsafe repairs.

James stated that in Eisenhower Village alone, staff identified approximately ten large holes and provided an estimate of the cost to the City if emergency repairs were required.

Warren stated that while earlier complaints involved debris and minor issues, the situation had escalated into dangerous conditions, including alleged damage to a water main that washed out sub-grade beneath the roadway.

Warren stated that subcontractors appeared inadequately qualified and emphasized the need for stronger enforcement tools. He urged Council to direct staff to take all necessary actions, including injunctions or legal remedies, to protect public safety and City property.

James staff explained that the City does not receive advance notice or plans from franchise fiber providers regarding installation locations.

Rusty Whisenhunt, Public Utilities Director, stated that the City has limited authority over the providers themselves due to state law, but the City can regulate subcontractors through permitting, bonding, and enforcement requirements.

Whisenhunt confirmed that Lawton does not currently require boring contractors to be permitted or bonded, identifying this as a key enforcement gap.

James' presentation is available for view in the City Clerk's Office.

Motion by Randy Warren, Second by RL Smith, to direct City Manager to cause staff to begin working on a solution with contractors; look at any other means to help safeguard the citizens and city property; and authorize legal action if necessary.

City Manager Ratliff stated that AT&T had issued a formal apology to the City, and AT&T terminated its relationship with the subcontractor responsible for the unsafe conditions. He stated AT&T committed to hiring a new contractor and correcting all outstanding issues. Ratliff stated that, based on these developments, immediate legal action did not appear necessary at that time.

Gill noted that requiring contractors to obtain a bond would be the way to address this problem.

VOTE ON MOTION: AYE: Mary Ann Hankins, Linda Chapman, RL Smith, George Gill, Allan Hampton, Sherene L Williams, Randy Warren. NAY: None. Motion Passed.

Motion by George Gill, Second by Allan Hampton, to adjourn the Emergency Meeting. AYE: Mary Ann Hankins, Linda Chapman, RL Smith, George Gill, Allan Hampton, Sherene L Williams, Randy Warren. NAY: None. Motion Passed.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:19PM.