

A regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Iola was held on February 22, 2016, at 6:00 p.m., at the Riverside Park Community Building, 510 Park Avenue, Iola, Kansas.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Council Member Wells called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council Members, Ford, Wells, A. Franklin, Zornes and B. Franklin (via phone) were present. Also present were Administrator Slaugh, Assistant Administrator Schinstock, and City Clerk Hutton. Absent were Mayor Wicoff, Council Members Becker, Shaughnessy and Sigg.

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Council Member Ford and seconded by Council Member Zornes to approve the agenda as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Donna Houser informed the council that the See, Hear, Iola program is this Friday. Jaime Ellis will be speaking on general health and massage therapy.

CONSENT AGENDA

A. Minutes Approval

- February 4, 2016
- February 8, 2016

B. Appropriations Approval – 2016-04

C. Personnel Action

- **Lyndon Kern – Water Production – Twelve Month**
- **Patrick Wilson – Parks & Cemetery – Annual**
- **Charlotte Sexton – Clerk’s Office – Twelve Month**
- **Andy Chester- Electric Distribution – Six Month**
- **Larry Gilmore – Electric Generation – Annual**
- **Gregg Hutton – Code Enforcement – New Hire**

Motion made by Council Member B. Franklin to approve the consent agenda as presented. Motion seconded by Council Member Ford. All in favor. Motion carried.

ROUNDTABLE

A. Connectors Group – Angela Murphy – The group is making a request for the city to follow the Kansas Corporation Commission “Cold Weather Rule”.

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Angela Murphy, Allen County Connectors Member, spoke about the possible effects of living in a home without utilities. She noted that having a home without utilities is one factor of homelessness standards according to HUD. Residents also fear being reported to Department of Children and Family Services if their utilities are disconnected.

Dorothy, a resident of Iola, stated that she had had her utilities shut off in the past. Her child was made fun of at school for being sick due to being cold.

Angela Murphy stated that if the city checks the temperature before shutting off why not make an official policy to have consistency and make it clear.

Council Member Ford stated that having the policy would be a good idea for cold weather.

Council Member A. Franklin stated that allowing payment options could create a snowball effect of payments due.

Council Member Wells wondered how payment arrangements would affect the system and tax the employees in the department. Maybe we could have a one-time per year free of penalty payment saving the individual the \$25.00.

Administrator Slauch stated that the length of time that an individual has to pay the bill is at least 40 days. Other cities and organizations in the state have shorter time limits. With the 40-day time limit the customer has incurred over two full bills with the city. Westar has a shorter time limit and also requires two monthly bill amounts for a deposit in case the customer doesn't pay the bill.

Council Member B. Franklin stated that the connect fee should be increased.

It was noted that Westar offers an application of the deposit to the bill if the bill is paid on time for the first 22 months of service.

A resident that is on a heart machine stated that she was told that she would be one of the first to be reconnected if there was a storm that caused an outage to her home. This does not keep her from having utilities shut off for non-payment. She stated that sometimes it is hard to come up with the amount of the bill and the reconnect fee.

Council Member Ford stated that the 40 days should be ample time to pay the bill.

The total amount of bad debt was discussed and what surrounding communities do to collect the bad debt.

City Clerk Hutton stated that the city does indeed collect the bad debt through the Kansas Set off program like other cities. The amount collected is almost equal to the amount that is being put into bad debt each year so the number remains close to the same amount.

Donna Houser stated that the city council has had many discussions about being broke. Taking on payment plans will affect that amount of money coming into the coffers.

Donna stated that she grew up poor and they learned to live on what they had but they always knew that the utility bill had to be paid even if that meant going without a meal.

Council Member B. Franklin stated that she would like to see other city's policies and postpone a decision until the full council is present.

Bobbi Bonds, Thrive Employee, stated that increasing the deposit amount would only hinder individuals that have all of the other moving expenses.

A resident spoke stating she had her utilities shut off in the past. She stated that the lower connect fees are better. The city should be willing to work with individuals.

Council Member Wells made a motion to table this item until more information is received about other cities disconnect policies. Motion seconded by Council Member Ford. All in favor. Motion carried.

Angela Murphy asked that the council pass a policy tonight about cold weather shut offs. Council Member Wells stated that the weather forecast doesn't show any freezing weather for the next few weeks.

B. Safe Base Request – Safe Base program provides beneficial after-school and summer time programs for K-6 youth.

Angela Henry stated that on average they serve 176 students. Of those students 76% of them qualify for free or reduced meals.

She stated that she and Mayor Wicoff were invited to attend and speak at a mayoral summit about the partnership between cities and schools.

This current grant that they are applying for will be the most competitive yet.

The group is requesting the city donate \$5,000 per year over a five-year period. The money will be contingent upon award of the grant.

Council Member Wells asked Ms. Henry how much Safe Base has brought into the community in the form of grants. Ms. Henry stated that the program has brought in \$40 million dollars over the 16 years they have been in existence. They always try to spend the money locally.

Council Member Wells asked what percentage of the budget were salaries. Ms. Henry stated that the majority of the expenses are salaries.

Ms. Henry stated that they have had great success with programs through Safe Base including the dental program.

Council Member Ford stated that she has dealt with the program on a personal level. Her youngest daughter participated in the after school program and then worked for the program when she was older. She thinks the program cultivates the kids in the community to become productive members of our community.

Council Member B. Franklin feels that it is a great program.

Administrator Slaugh stated that supporting these programs benefits the schools that have had funding cuts, however, the city has to find a way to fund them.

Council Member A. Franklin asked if the \$5,000 budgeted for special projects is the only funding budgeted for these types of items. Administrator Slaugh stated that is the entire amount budgeted for special projects.

Ms. Henry stated that previous grant money was used to support a part time staff member of the City of Iola Recreation Department.

Motion made by Council Member B. Franklin and seconded by Council Member A. Franklin to provide a letter of support for the Safe Base grant application pledging the \$5,000 per year for five years as matching funds contingent upon the group receiving the grant. All in favor. Motion carried.

C. Election Terms of Office – With the passing of House Bill 2104 by the Kansas Legislature the terms of office for the council members and the mayor must be changed in order to meet the fall election dates.

The proposed ordinance change would extend the term of the current members. Motion made by Council Member Wells to have staff prepare an implementing ordinance for review by the city attorney that would extend the terms of the current members. Motion seconded by Council Member B. Franklin. All in favor. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. EMC Insurance Renewal – Debbie Taiclet, Iola Insurance Associates Agent, informed the council that the premium has increased by 3% over last year due in part to

workman comp claims and general increase nationwide for property value replacement. The workman comp mod factor increased from .97 to 1.06.

The city received a dividend check last April in the amount of \$59,725.60.

Motion made by Council Member Ford to approve renewal of the policy and authorizing payment in the amount of \$379,810 to Iola Insurance for the policy period April 1, 2016 – March 31, 2017. Motion seconded by Council Member Wells. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Elm Creek Community Garden Request – Elm Creek Community Garden is again making a request for the city to provide free water for their organization. The amount of water cost to the garden in 2014 was \$1,196.55. The amount of free water given by the council in 2015 was \$937.84.

Val McLean stated that he along with two gardeners, John Richards and Gary Garver, are present to request \$1,000 in free water for the 2016 gardening season.

Mr. McLean noted that Tracy Keagle will be using 10 plots to grow vegetables to hand out to those in need.

Donna Houser stated that the garden is a good thing for the town.

Council Member A. Franklin stated that the special project funds were just dedicated to the school.

Council Member A. Franklin stated that he will lead a charge to come up the funding through donations.

Motion made by Council Member Wells and seconded by Council Member Zornes to table this item until the March 28th meeting giving council members time to privately raise the funds. All in favor. Motion carried.

C. Portland Alley Pedalfest Request– The group is making several requests again this year for the annual Pedalfest.

1. Allow camping along the north and south side of the recreation building.
2. Right to use water at the building for camping.
3. Grant access to the recreation building for use of showers and restroom facilities during the event.
4. Requesting permission for a beer garden at the event.

Jessica McGinnis of Thrive was present to ask for the requests.

Council Member B. Franklin stated that last year there were some noise issues and the council discussed shutting down the music earlier.

Council Member Ford noted that they had discussed lowering the volume and decreasing the time.

Motion made by Council Member Ford and seconded by Council Member to have staff approve the requests with further discussion on the ending time of the music and have staff bring back a resolution for the beer garden. All in favor. Motion carried.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. "Tobacco 21" Health Initiative – Ordinance - At the February 8, 2016 council meeting a proposal was approved to change the legal age to purchase tobacco products within the city limits of Iola from 18-21. This proposal does not change the legal age for possession of tobacco products which remains at 18.

The City of Iola has adopted the Uniform Public Offense Code for Kansas Cities (UPOC). To implement the change in age, an amendment has been prepared to the UPOC, 31st Edition.

Motion made by Council Member Wells to approve Ordinance 3455 to change the legal age required to purchase tobacco products within the City of Iola from 18-21. Motion seconded by Council Member Ford. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Electric & Water Rate Discussions – Administrator Slaugh stated that after having Scott Shreve and members of his staff review the water rates, the end result is that the rate is currently large enough if money is not transferred to the general fund to help pay for overhead and the reserve balance is not at the required minimum of 25-50% of operating expenses.

It will take 3% to build up the reserve over an eight-year period and include in the increase an ECA which will help keep the fund solvent. Over the three-year period from 2009-2012 the fund was in the red over \$1 million.

Council Member Wells stated that just to be clear we are addressing the water and electric not gas like the agenda form reads. Administrator Slaugh stated that it was the electric fund.

Council Member Wells stated that in 2013 over \$2.5 million was returned to the customers through lower bills since the city aligned with the other cities to form the Southwind Energy Group.

For 2013 and 2014 \$1 million was set aside each year for future generation.

Administrator Slauch stated that for 2006-2013 the city paid an average of \$2.2 million per year for capacity. In 2013-2014 it was approximately \$1 million. Since the city aligned with the Southwind Energy Group in 2014 the cost was \$158,000 or \$2.00 per kwh. In 2015 that amount dropped to \$1.00 per kwh or approximately \$56,000. In 2016 the cost will be \$2.00 per kwh.

Council Member Wells stated that he is looking at 5-10 years in the future when energy prices increase. The city needs to set aside the funds for future generation.

Council Member Ford wondered if we couldn't do a 1.5% increase and then a few months later add the other 1.5% increase. Council Member Wells stated that it would be better to make the increases during the lower usage months so it is not as much of an increase on the residents.

Council Member B. Franklin has some concerns about the increase on the industries.

Council Member A. Franklin wondered if the decision should wait until the full council is present.

Council Member Wells stated that it needs to be done. Not really what we want to do, but we need to do something that will help fund future generation.

Council Member Wells reminded the council that the lower electric rates are expected with the new forms of power and working with the Southwind Energy Group.

Council would like to see the two industries past and current utility bills.

Motion made by Council Member Ford and seconded by Council Member B. Franklin to table making a decision on the electric and water rate increase until the next meeting. Voting in favor of the motion were Council Members Ford, Zornes, B. Franklin and A. Franklin. Voting against the motion was Council Member Wells. Motion passed by a majority vote. (Council Member Wells stated he voted against the motion because he felt the increase needed to be implemented as soon as possible.)

COUNCIL & ADMINISTRATOR REPORT

A. Mayor Wicoff –

- Absent

B. Council Member Wells –

- Stated he would donate \$50 to the community garden water fundraiser.

C. Council Member Ford –

- Stated she would help with the community garden water fundraiser.
- Had two individuals inquire about the current city ordinance that states that a new owner of a property is responsible for an outstanding utility bill. City Clerk Hutton stated that normally a realtor calls the utility office about outstanding bills on a property and the amount is withheld from the seller's part of the sell.

D. Council Member B. Franklin–

- None

E. Council Member Shaughnessy –

- Absent

F. Council Member Becker –

- Absent

G. Council Member Sigg –

- Absent

H. Council Member Zornes –

- Will help with the community garden water fundraiser.

I. Council Member A. Franklin –

- None

J. Administrator Slauch –

- There is a request for a special called meeting on Monday, February 29th to discuss economic development. The meeting will be held at 5:15 at the Park Community Building.
- Wanted to address a myth about tax abatement not costing the city money. Currently the city is not collecting the tax, however, when the business moves into town they use the services that are supported by the tax money. There is a cost for these services that are being provided.
- There was a request to look into the reimbursement of ADA detectable warning pads on the sidewalk replacement program. The amount seems reasonable with the current cost of the pads. The city will advertise the program more.

DATE / TIME OF NEXT MEETING

City Council Meeting 6:00 p.m. Monday, March 14th, 2016

ADJOURNMENT

7:26 p.m. Motion made by Council Member Wells and seconded by Council Member Ford to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Motion carried.

Approved by the City Council of the City of Iola, Kansas this 14th day of March, 2016.

Mayor, Joel Wicoff

City Clerk, Roxanne Hutton