

LEWISTOWN WATER COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday June 13, 2023 at 6:16 p.m.

CHAIRMAN Kendall Miller called the Lewistown Water Committee meeting to order at 6:15 in the Council Chambers.

PRESENT: Chairman Kendall Miller, Jim Long, Sally Clark, Brad Ward, Dave Levingston, Mayor Doug Lafary, City Clerk Cindy Goddard and Treasurer Deb Brown.

The Business to discuss is Bryant water usage after the April 5th tornado. To discuss the bill before tornado in April is was \$2,342.47, in June it was \$2,3335.94, in May it was \$3478.81.

Recommended by Kendall Miller to take the April bill and the June bill the average to maybe adjust off or credit to the next month bill. Bryant did not complain or ask for any adjustment. There was an increase because of all the damage to the houses. Alderperson Levingston said he feels that they still got the water, we still sent them the water, and it still cost us the same, so it is a risk they take from getting the water from Lewistown, it is a part of doing business.

Motion by Alderperson Long to do the neighborly thing and to apply the difference between April and May to the Bryant water bill, second by Alderperson Clark to vote on this in the council meeting.

Motion to adjourn water committee meeting by Alderperson Long, second by Alderperson Clark at 6:23 p.m.

LEWISTOWN CITY COUNCIL MEETING
DATE June 13, 2023

The Lewistown City Council met in regular session in the council chambers. Mayor Douglas Lafary called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Invocation: Pastor Walmsley

ROLL CALL: PRESENT: Alderperson Sally Clark, Jim Long, Brad Ward, Kendall Miller, David Levingston, and Mayor Doug Lafary. Also present: City Clerk Cindy Goddard, City Treasurer Debby Brown, Public Works Director Evinn Palmer, Police Chief Jim Tunney and City Attorney Nathan Collins. **ABSENT:** Alderperson John Spotloe.

DECLARATION OF QUORUM by Mayor Doug Lafary

CLERKS REPORT/MINUTES: Cindy Goddard.

Alderperson Long made a motion to approve the minutes of May 23, 2023, second by Alderperson Clark, the motion carried all ayes.

City Clerk Report- Nothing at this time.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Debbie Brown. Nothing at this time.

ATTORNEY'S REPORT: Attorney Nathan Collins. Nothing, thank you.

ENGINEER'S REPORT: Keith Plavec. No Engineer present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND PETITIONS: Bill Bradley, said that Rambo (Negley) is still hauling stuff in, it not healthy. George Cox feels the city is spending to much time on the flowers and should be cleaning up that property. There is probably rats, bugs and such worried about the children. Carolyn Hitchcock says there are ordinances and why don't we follow them. Why don't we give out more citations? Burning is not suppose to be after 5:00 p.m. Call the fire department. Negley is out there after 5:00 p.m. burning. Billy Ward, what about the people that can't breathe? We know this is a problem! Mayor Lafary ask the audience how much force do we do to someone?

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Finance/Insurance/Zoning – Alderperson Clark: Nothing to report.

Sewer – Alderperson Spotloe: Nothing to report. Absent.

Streets & Allies – Alderperson Levingston: Nothing to report.

Police/ESDA – Alderperson Ward: Later in meeting.

Water – Alderperson Miller: In unfinished business.

Utilities/Publications – Alderperson Long: Nothing to report.

Public Buildings & Grounds – Alderperson Long: Summer help are now working. Mowing and trimming.

Tourism – Alderman Miller: Music in the Park has done great so far. Community coming out it is fantastic. Working on getting vendors selling crafts or fresh produce to set up at Music in the Park.

Tax Increment Financing – Alderperson Spotloe: Absent.

Citizens Committee – Amanda Smith submitted for the City a cost share waiver for the Municipal water supply grant. Matched 4 out of 5 of the criteria for a disadvantaged community. Has not heard anything on housing grant recently. City Clerk added that she heard back and the Lead Line Location Grant was approved for \$40,000.00.

Christmas Committee - Kenny Haacke nothing tonight.

WORKS DIRECTOR'S REPORT – Evinn Palmer Director working on a water main break on Broadway. Also, in the second phase of lead line grant of \$40,000.00.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

1. Discuss/Act Upon Bryant water usage after the April 5, 2023 tornado – A Water Committee meeting regarding the water bill was before the Council Meeting. Regarding the water usage, after the tornado it went up \$1,136.44 from homes that had been hit by the tornado before they could shut the water off, recommendation from the water committee that we credit back the \$1,136.44 that was the extra on the May bill to the next bill. Motion by Alderperson Miller to credit Bryant water department the amount of \$1,136.44 that was caused by the April 5, 2023 tornado, second by Alderperson Clark, roll call vote Alderperson Clark yes, Long yes, Ward no, Miller yes and Levingston no, motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Discuss Vendors and Music in the Park Activities in Porter Park during the Scenic Drive – City Clerk explained that the city wants to use Porter Park this year instead of the Scenic Drive. Hope to have it kid oriented with a bouncy house and things for them to do along with vendors. Also, Dan Kumer had requested we do a resolution to make him Scenic Drive representative for Lewistown but we have never done that before and all agreed that it is The Scenic Drive that should do that not the city. The Scenic Drive already has the Visitors Center and the Fulton County Fairgrounds. Alderperson Miller said they can request a street be closed if they have enough vendors.
2. Discuss/Act Upon Resolution for The Rocket Tap parking by the outdoor area – Alderperson Miller wanted to discuss the parking by the outdoor area to put a no parking sign and paint curb, also contact the state to relocate the stop sign. Alderperson Levingston said that he thinks that the stop sign is the State of Illinois and we need to contact them. Needs to be no parking zone in front of the outdoor area. Billie Simmons is going to paint the steel post to help make them more visible. Alderperson Ward suggested maybe have a sign put up that says no parking from here to corner. Table at this time to check for ordinance that says no parking if so need to write up new ordinance.
3. Discuss/Act Upon closing the 100 Block of West Euclid for outdoor event for The Rocket on July 8 – Billie Simmons said the stage is built, and the outdoor area is going great. Planning on having music from 8:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m., 3 bands, would like to close the street at 4:00 p.m. Motion by Alderperson Miller, to close 100 block of West Euclid for outdoor event on July 8, from 4:00 p.m. to midnight, second by Alderperson Long, all agree.
4. Discuss/Act Upon Lewistown Police Department – Statement read by Mayor Lafary (see attached). Alderperson Ward does not want to make an agreement with Fulton County. Alderperson Miller agreed with Ward, get the person trained that is in PTI. Fulton County part-timers should not have quit. All agree they do not want to pay Fulton County to patrol for the city. A Code Enforcement officer is needed not leave that on the police department. Alderperson Long agrees he does not want to pay Fulton County and does not want to shut down the police department, and pay the Fulton County \$108,000.00 a year, need someone at night to patrol and they will only be here when they want and does not want to raise taxes. No one said we were disbanding the police department, whoever started that needs to be corrected. Alderperson Clark agrees she wants to keep police department we need to protect our community our way. Levingston stated that the Mayor, Brad Ward and Jim Tunney can make the correct decisions, a lot of experience and knowledge between the three of them and could also get help from Kenny Haacke that was a previous deputy. It will take time. Someone asked if all the instructions that was given Merrill was documented, answer was no. She also asked how much was budgeted for the police department, answer was \$357,000.00. Motion by

Aldersperson Ward to take applications for a Chief of Police, full time, part time and code enforcement part-time officer, second by Aldersperson Levingston, roll call vote, motion carried all ayes. Someone asked what the yearly salary is around \$44,000.00. Chief makes around \$30,24 an hour about \$60,000.00 a year. Discussion about training and experience. Have to be over 21 years of age. Bill Ward said he called in January and county showed up but not city, does he take matters into his own hands if no police department? Mayor said if you do then you better be in fear of your life. Previous Chief Frank Merrill asked to speak regarding membership of Peoria Athletic Club, it was training and part-timers, he felt he did nothing wrong but try to help the community. He feels it was getting better that is all he tried to do. The money he spent was in the budget. The accountant told him as long as budget was ok'd, he could spend it. Ordinances are supposed to be followed. He had 9 part-timers signed on to work within 9 months. Mayor said he should have come to the last meeting to avoid all this. Aldersperson Levingston said the ordnance regarding the \$1,000.00 spending needs to be explained and it states if over \$1,000.00 it needs to be approved by the council even if it is in the budget. The Mayor said if listening to County employees it is different with the city, they can spend how they want, with the city it needs to be approved.

PRESENTATION OF BILLS:

Aldersperson Miller made a motion to approve all bills properly endorsed; Seconded by Aldersperson Long roll call vote, the motion carried with all ayes.

CLOSED SESSION: No closed session

ADJOURNMENT:

Aldersperson Long made a motion to adjourn at 7:29 p.m.; Seconded by Aldersperson Miller motion carried all ayes.


Cindy Goddard, City Clerk

Next order of business is Police operations:

Less than a year ago our long-time Police Chief retired. The application process brought us only one candidate from the Chicago area who I felt would not be a good fit for the residents of Lewistown. At the time Mr. Merrill was a recent hire of LPD and had completed his basic requirements to be a certified police officer. Mr. Merrill had no prior police experience, but he was in his 30s and I felt his maturity level would be sufficient to give him a chance. With 30 years of police experience, I have known several chiefs who held only basic credentials with varying results of success, so I decided to take the chance, and after all, he was my only option to keep the police department operating. Unfortunately for the past months, the police department has not gone in the direction that neither I nor the city council had hoped it would go.

I pride myself on being a good steward of the city finances and attempting to operate in a fiscally responsible way with the money of the taxpayers of Lewistown. Unfortunately, Mr. Merrill did not adhere to the same philosophy and made several purchases without prior approval by the city council in violation of City Ordinance '81 Code, 3.18 - 34.03 titled Purchases. This included the purchase of sidearms and accessories for approximately \$2500.00 and memberships to the Peoria Athletic Club at a cost of \$1900 over a 7 month period for himself and part time officers. A city owned weapon was also sold to a part time officer for \$300.00 with no receipt given, nor any money from the sale deposited into the city treasury.

It was for these and other reasons that I did not re-appoint Mr. Merrill as chief.

It was also for these and other reasons that I referred the matter to the Sheriff for further investigation.

My appointed temporary Chief is Jim Tunney. Chief Tunney is a retired Illinois Fire Marshal Investigator and is more than qualified to be Chief but he is not interested in a full-time position.

As a result of my not appointing Mr. Merrill and appointing Chief Tunney, 5 of 7 part time police officers resigned their positions leaving us with a Temporary Chief, 1 part time officer and a full time officer who is currently in the police academy in Belleville with approximately half of his training completed. My request to the council regarding this young man in the academy is that we do everything within our power to insure that he completes his training and receives his certification as a police officer. I believe that is the right thing to do as he has been caught up in a situation that is beyond his control.

This leaves us in the same position as we were a year ago with a lack of qualified candidates

wanting the position. It has come time to make tough decisions.

That being said, I would like to talk about our needs and our wants. It is a fact that Lewistown has not had a full-time police department since 2016 when it consisted of 3 full time officers and a chief. Right now, we operate with part-time officers coming in at random times as their full-time employment allows.

The Nation, as a whole, is facing a policing crisis as fewer and fewer people want to put on the uniform and serve their communities. And to be frank we do not have the population base to financially support a full-time Police Department even if we had the manpower to staff it. Our population has been in decline for decades. Our businesses are closing and those that remain are struggling to survive. We no longer have the good paying jobs of International Harvester or the many coal mines that once supported hundreds in our town. Now we have an aging population of retirees struggling to survive on a fixed income.

If we were to talk about wants, I would like to see good-paying jobs of International and the coal mines return. I would not want to see people in their cars, lined up out of the fairgrounds, and north on main street to get food just trying to make ends meet.

I ask you what am I supposed to do, institute additional taxation and fees to support a police department that would be part-time at best? I find it morally objectional to even consider raising taxes and fees on struggling people so part-time officers can have free gym memberships and the Police Department can spend exorbitant amounts on equipment that was still serviceable without prior authorization from the council.

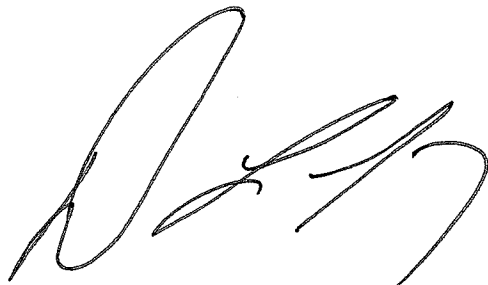
Now let's talk about needs, the way I see it we have three options moving forward.

1. Continue to operate as a part-time department with non-emergency calls being placed on hold until the next officer comes on duty. Emergency calls will be handled by the FCSO but non-emergency calls will have no estimate of a response time. Although not ideal we would be able to keep the police department assuming we could find candidates to fill the positions available.
2. We could contract with the Sheriff's office for a fee. The cost of that service as quoted by the Sheriff would be \$108,284 per year based on 40 hours of patrol a week. This patrol would be at random times chosen by the Fulton County Sheriff's department which as you know is located here in Lewistown.
3. We could suspend the operations of the police department until such a time that a fiscally responsible solution could be arranged. In this option, all emergency and non-emergency calls for service would be handled by the FCSO, which I say again is already located in Lewistown.

I tell you that now is the time for us to separate our needs from our wants and make a decision that is responsible and in the best interest of the citizens of Lewistown, keeping in mind that

doing what is right is not always easy or popular.

I now open the floor to the council members for their thoughts, discussion and possible solutions on this matter.



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