

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF DIRECTORS
OF THE CITY OF TEXARKANA, ARKANSAS
MAY 15, 2017**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

The Board of Directors of the City of Texarkana, Arkansas, convened in regular session at 6:00 PM on Monday, May 15, 2017.

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Ruth Penney Bell asked the Clerk to call the roll and the following Board Members were present: Mayor Bell, Assistant Mayor Barbara S. Miner, and Directors Laney J. Harris, Travis Odom, Terri Peavy and Linda Teeters. Also present were City Manager Kenny Haskin, City Attorney George M. Matteson and City Clerk Heather Soyars. Director Tim Johnson was absent.

Mayor Bell asked it be duly noted there was a quorum present for tonight's meeting. Director Tim Johnson was absent.

INVOCATION:

The invocation was given by Assistant Mayor Barbara Miner.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Assistant Mayor led everyone in the Pledge of Allegiance.

[Director Laney Harris arrived at 6:03]

COMMENTS FROM THE MAYOR:

Welcome:

Mayor Bell welcomed everyone to tonight's meeting.

Board Meeting Procedure:

Mayor Bell briefly reviewed the board meeting procedures and pointed out the Agenda Item Cards, Citizens' Communication Cards, and agendas along the rail for tonight's Board meeting. The Mayor asked any audience member interested in speaking at tonight's Board meeting to complete one of the cards and turn the card in to the City

Clerk. She said this would help run an organized meeting and allowed the Clerk to have the necessary information for the meeting minutes. She stated any citizen may comment on any item on the agenda and express their desires, but would be limited to five minutes.

RailFest:

Mayor Bell said RailFest was held this past weekend. She apologized to RailFest volunteer/promoter Deanna O'Malley and her volunteers because there were a few mix-ups that kept the Mayor from realizing the RailFest was this past weekend. She said last year the RailFest was well attended. Mayor Bell said the City had Mardi Gras this year and it was also well attended. She said she was not sure the RailFest was going to happen this year because of all the conflicts. She commended Mrs. O'Malley and all her volunteers who helped get the RailFest organized in just three weeks. Mayor Bell said there were a lot of people in the downtown area this weekend moving from one thing to the next: Old Town Museum, the antique car show, and Main Street Texarkana Director Ina McDowell took a group of people to look through vacant buildings downtown. She asked if Mrs. O'Malley would like to come and speak to the Board to let them know how the event went.

Mrs. O'Malley said it was a challenge this year to put on the RailFest within the few short weeks she had. She said she called Mark Shoptaw and Jimmy "Smitty" Smith to ask what their reasoning was behind starting the RailFest and they told her it was to educate the citizens about the history of Texarkana. Mrs. O'Malley said she planned for many local and out of town events to take place at the RailFest but unfortunately it did not work out the way she had hoped. She said it was a loss for the people who did not know about the event but the people who came had fun. She said one performers' mother from Nashville, Tennessee said it was a joy to see all the people coming downtown. Mrs. O'Malley said this was a great statement to hear. She said it was a successful event, no one ended up in the hospital, there were no fights, no one went to jail and they had beautiful weather. She thanked the Board for giving her the opportunity to be the volunteer/promoter. Mrs. O'Malley introduced some of the other volunteers who helped at RailFest: Jimmy Smith, Tommy O'Malley, James Zoonwalt, and Susan Houser. She said there were many more volunteers that stepped up to the plate and helped when asked but they were not able to attend tonight's meeting.

Director Peavy asked Mrs. O'Malley what was the motivation as to why RailFest began.

Mrs. O'Malley said it was to bring back the history of Texarkana. She said a festival was supposed to be fun, lively and have entertainment. She said she wanted to have different avenues to showcase the old downtown trains and to show how Texarkana was built. Mrs. O'Malley said it was not only going to be a fun event but an educational event as well. She wanted to say thank you to Director Peavy for coming to the event. Mrs. O'Malley said she never had her own Ward Director participate in an event before.

Director Peavy said, "you are welcome."

Mayor Bell said she was there also and she attended Mardi Gras too. She said this event was free and brought the surrounding towns to downtown. Mayor Bell said the citizens could spend a little and have a lot of fun.

Mrs. O'Malley said there were people from six different states in attendance at the RailFest this year.

Freedom of Information Act Fees:

Mayor Bell said in working with the City Clerk, one Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) was over 1,700 pages and the other one was over 700 pages. She said this was costing the City. Mayor Bell said the printing, the paper, and the City could not charge for the man hours but the state was allowing us to charge 7 cents per sheet. She said this would go into effect now. Mayor Bell said she found out charging was allowed and we would now charge per page. She said we want to respond to FOIAs but we do not want to stop the regular business of City Hall.

QUESTIONS FROM DIRECTORS AND OTHER BUSINESS:

Mayor Bell asked if the Directors had any questions or comments.

Director Odom said he wanted to thank some of the City's Department Heads who were there tonight: Fire Chief Fletcher, Charles Lokey with the Animal Care and Adoption Center, Jeff Whitten with the Public Works Department, Police Chief Bob Harrison, Mary Beck with the Planning and Zoning Department, TyRhonda Henderson with the Finance Department, and the City Manager Dr. Kenny Haskin, for their

dedication and the job they did for the City. He said the City had an abundance of dedicated City employees and he appreciated them all very much.

Mayor Bell said we had the best employees of any city.

Mayor Bell said she met with a railroad official who said he felt like a guest while he was at City Hall. He said Administrative Assistant Linda Matthews and Receptionist Nancy Cherry made him feel welcome. Mayor Bell the City was blessed to have such good people working here.

No one else came forward.

PRESENTATION(S):

Public Works Week:

Mayor Bell read a proclamation for “Public Works Week” and presented the proclamation to Public Works Director Jeff Whitten.

Citywide Cleanup Day:

Mayor Bell introduced Rick Hall and Nedra Turney of the City Beautiful Commission (CBC).

Mr. Hall said the CBC had been in existence for 20 years and had done many things for the City including the “Welcome to Texarkana” signs, signs at City parks and landscaping on Stateline Avenue. He said the economic health of the City was directly tied to the quality of life of the City. An unkempt, rundown city did not have a high quality of life. He said it was important the Mayor and Directors supported programs and policies promoting anti-litter and beautification efforts for public spaces that aid citizens in the upkeep of private properties.

Mr. Hall said some proposals were to work with local schools to develop a strong anti-litter campaign. He said the CBC would like funding for signage and trash receptacles throughout the City. Another proposal was to utilize the Department of Community Punishment to focus efforts of inmates on cleanup and grooming of the City. The CBC would like City ordinances strongly enforced regarding the upkeep of property including weed lots, dilapidated buildings, trash and signs. The CBC would also propose to restore the program to provide curbside pickup of large items. Mr. Hall said the CBC would like to join the Tree City Program which promoted tree planting and landscaping

revisions to the zoning ordinance. The CBC would like to reduce sign clutter and create uniformity of signage and support efforts to beautify Stateline Avenue.

Mr. Hall announced the Spring Cleanup Day would be on Saturday, May 20, 2017. The Cleanup Day was in connection with Keep Arkansas Beautiful. Dumpsters would be located at Bramble Park, the Sandflat Center, and at the County Market on Jefferson Avenue. He said anyone could come out and volunteer and supplies would be given out along with T-shirts, while they lasted.

Mayor Bell said she had lunch with the Warden Dexter Holmes, and he said they had responsibilities to Miller County and asked the Public Works Director Jeff Whitten if he had any explanation as to what was happening and how often the prisoners were used by the City.

The Public Works Director Jeff Whitten said the Arkansas Department of Corrections (ADC) workers were used regularly but there were some days and weeks they got out more than others to help. He said he had a really good Street Superintendent who had all the answers to Mayor Bell's questions.

Mayor Bell asked Mr. Whitten for his Street Superintendent to give the Board a report on the ADC workers. She asked what the other side of workers were called.

Mr. Whitten said the other side of workers were the Department of Community Corrections (DCC) the yellow suits. He said DCC workers had a different set of responsibilities and they were not out with the Public Works crews on a regular basis. He said they did some trash pick-up and clearing of the right-of-way but they had a different role than the ADC workers.

Mayor Bell asked if the City utilized them to mow the vacant lots.

Mr. Whitten said he thought both crews did some work but did not want to speak out of turn. He said he would speak with the Street Superintendent and then he would be able to answer Mayor Bell's questions at the next meeting.

Mayor Bell said she went to the Superintendent of the Schools and spoke to her about this issue. She said this was something that needed to be taught, and she encouraged the teachers to put a focus on being vigilant about picking up trash. Mayor Bell said she asked the Superintendent if she would be willing to partner with the City and encourage the teachers. She said she would remind her before the school year began

next year to make this a focus. Mayor Bell said we could make a difference if the children were taught early.

Director Harris asked Mr. Hall what items were not accepted in this City clean up, like batteries and tires.

Mr. Hall said the dumpsters were provided by Richardson Waste and he assumed they were not allowed to take those items.

Director Harris asked Mr. Hall if he knew what the list was.

Ms. Turney said the Facebook page had the list of items not accepted at the City clean-up dumpsters.

Director Harris asked Mr. Whitten, what happened to the one Saturday of every month when the citizens could bring anything to the dump. He asked whether the City might bring it back to maybe one Saturday every quarter.

Mr. Whitten said he would speak with the Recycling Department and the Environmental Department to see what the City could do, but he thought the City did this already.

Director Harris said he was talking about when the City used to open the City Barn on the first Saturday of every month and could dump almost anything after showing your water bill.

Mr. Whitten said it was still open but the hours were early in the morning. He said the City Barn was open 45 hours a week.

Mayor Bell said she thought Director Harris was talking about objects like tires and mattresses. She said she thought the dumping was curtailed because of the City's finances.

City Manager Kenny Haskin said yes that was correct.

Assistant Mayor Miner said those items could be taken down to the transfer station.

Director Teeters said she thought the citizens had to pay.

Mr. Whitten said there was a charge for the items based on the weight.

Assistant Mayor Miner said if the citizen wanted to get rid of items like tires, then the citizen needed to pay. She said she would have paid if she had anything like that to get rid of. Assistant Mayor Miner said she thought Tommy O'Malley and his crew were

doing a wonderful job and they were out all the time. She said Mr. O'Malley worked with the ADC crews.

Mr. Hall said he thought the help from the schools was very important and he wanted to work with the schools to come up with an anti-litter slogan.

Mayor Bell said people coming into the City judged the City on how it looked. She said people looked to see how clean and attractive the City was before locating a business here. Mayor Bell said this was a critical area and the City needed to be aware of this.

Mr. Hall said he believed the economic health of the City was greatly affected by how the City looked, and unless we make a good presentation to people, we will not attract businesses for the City. He asked the Board to please look and see what they could do to help the CBC.

Mayor Bell said the Board were the elected officials of the City, and if they did not consider this, how could she expect anyone else to. She said she hoped someone on the CBC would go to the Superintendent of the Schools and speak with her and let her know what the schools could do for them also. Mayor Bell asked Mr. O'Malley of the Department of Corrections Community Crew to speak before the Board.

Mr. O'Malley said he worked for the Department of Corrections for 18 years, and he and one other man took the Community Crew out during the day to work in the fields. He said they cleaned the ditches, the streets, and tore down houses. Mr. O'Malley said his crew did the tough labor in the City. He said the other crew was the Department of Community Corrections; they were first time non-violent offenders and the ones in the yellow suits. Mr. O'Malley said these guys were the ones who helped the City Beautiful Commission pick up the trash. He said he thought the Community Corrections was on lock-down and maybe this was why there had not been a lot of work done. He said his crew had been laid off lately because he had been off with a shoulder injury for about five weeks.

Assistant Mayor Miner told Mr. O'Malley thank you for his work.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Director Odom moved to approve the consent agenda. The motion was seconded by Director Peavy and carried unanimously. The items approved by consent were:

MINUTES:

The minutes approved were of the regular meeting May 1, 2017.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATION:

Mayor Bell asked if anyone in the audience would like to speak, on any subject up to a total of five minutes.

- Jimmy Smith, 322 Pecan Street said he had an empty lot right next to his house with an absentee landlord. There was a car lot on Hickory Street right behind him and they used the empty lot. He said he had complained to the Public Works Department because the lot was not zoned for that, and the Public Works Department came out and issued them a citation stating they had 30 days to remove the car. He said all they had to do was pull the car off the lot and bring it back, and then they would have 30 more days. Mr. Smith said he would like to see the City crack down on the people who had a little house, and then filled up all the neighbor's yard with used cars. He asked that the City make the people provide proof they owned the land or had a rental agreement that would agree with the City zoning. He said if they did, he would not have any trouble with these guys anymore.

Mayor Bell said this was noted, and she was going to give the information to the City Manager and the Public Works Department, and they could delegate from there.

No one else came forward.

EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Mayor Bell announced the Board would recess into Executive Session at 6:48 PM.

[Director Harris left the Board meeting at 7:02 PM]

MEETING RECONVENED:

The meeting was reconvened by the Mayor following the Executive Session at 7:16 PM.

RESOLUTION NO. 2017-23:

Resolution No. 2017-23 was read in its entirety. Said resolution made appointments to various committees:

<u>Board/Commission:</u>	<u>Appointee:</u>
Airport Authority	Holmes Morel
Airport Authority	Don Ruggles
Housing Authority	Ross Morgan
Personnel Policy Committee	Media Manager Eric Ethridge
Personnel Policy Committee	Fire Secretary Marian Holder
Personnel Policy Committee	Administrative Assistant Linda Matthews
Personnel Policy Committee	Deputy Clerk Jenny Narens
Planning Commission	Bertha Dunn
Planning Commission	Boots Thomas
Plumbing Board of Review	Director Travis Odom

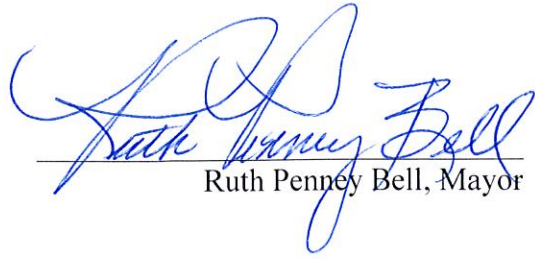
Director Odom, seconded by Director Teeters, moved to adopt the resolution. The Clerk called the roll and the following vote resulted: Directors Miner, Odom, Peavy, Teeters, and Bell voted aye. The Mayor declared the resolution passed, as there were five ayes and no nays.

Mayor Bell read from the Arkansas FOI handbook under Arkansas statute 25-19-106, on open public meetings. *The specific purpose of the executive session shall be announced in public before going into executive session. She said in the next executive session meeting the Board would consider these options, appointment, promotion, demotion, disciplining, or resignation of any public officer or employee.*

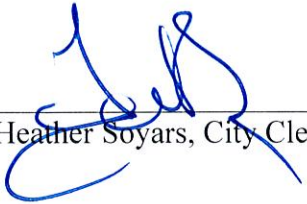
ADJOURNMENT:

Assistant Mayor Miner, seconded by Director Odom, moved to adjourn the meeting. The Clerk called the roll and the following vote resulted: Directors Miner, Odom, Peavy, Teeters, and Bell voted aye. The Mayor declared the meeting adjourned, as there were five ayes and no nays.

The meeting adjourned at 7:20 PM.


Ruth Penney Bell, Mayor

ATTEST:


Heather Soyars, City Clerk