



BOARD OF DIRECTORS CITY OF TEXARKANA, ARKANSAS

MONDAY, JULY 2, 2018 – 6:00 PM

Regular Meeting of the Board of Directors City of Texarkana, Arkansas City Hall – East Third and Walnut Streets

1. Mayor Ruth Penney Bell called the meeting to order.
2. Present: Mayor Ruth Penney Bell Ward 1 Director Linda Teeters
 Ward 2 Director Laney J. Harris Ward 3 Director Tim Johnson
 Ward 4 Director Travis Odom Ward 5 Assistant Mayor Barbara S. Miner
 Ward 6 Terri Peavy City Manager Dr. Kenny Haskin
 City Attorney George Matteson City Clerk Heather Soyars

Absent: Deputy City Clerk Jenny Narens

3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance given by Director Travis Odom

*Director Laney Harris arrived at 6:03 PM.

4. Comments from the Mayor:

- **Sparks in the Park** – Mayor Bell said Sparks in the Park was a huge success, with a new stage and lots of games and activities for the children. She applauded the Marines for presenting the Colors to start the event.
- **Liberty Eylau Youth Leadership** – Mayor Bell said she attended a meeting with area teenagers to discuss what was to celebrate about Texarkana.
- **Softball Showcase** -Mayor Bell said the showcase was a great hit and brought many people and their dollars to the area.

CONSENT:

5. The minutes of the regular meeting June 18, 2018, and the called meeting June 23, 2018. (CCD)

- Motion to adopt Consent Agenda made by: Director Teeters
 Motion seconded by: Director Odom

Motion carried unanimously

REGULAR:

6. **Resolution No. 2018-24**: A resolution supporting the efforts of AR-TX Regional Economic Development Incorporated (REDI) and its mission statement to create a strong regional effort to attract business and industry to the Texarkana, Arkansas – Texarkana, Texas Metropolitan Statistical Area (Texarkana MSA). (ADMIN)

Sonja Yates Hubbard representing AR-TX REDI said this was a not-for-profit organization to create jobs and attract business to the area. She said existing entities such as the City, would continue to make their own decisions regarding their services and tax incentives. She said this organization and its director would be funded entirely by donations and foundations. She said there would be a big kick-off for AR-TX REDI on September 4, 2018, on the state line and both Arkansas and Texas governors would be in attendance.

Director Harris asked what was AR-TEX REDI bringing to the table and he wanted to make sure steps the Chamber of Commerce was taking were not duplicated.

Mrs. Hubbard said she knew of the budget constraints across the state line and this would be a regional agnostic effort.

City Manager Kenny Haskin said the Texas-side recently passed a similar resolution in support of AR-TX REDI.

Steve Ledwell, President of Ledwell and Sons and board member of AR-TX REDI said Texarkana was a treasure and there were a lot of positives in this area.

Director Harris said there was a recent ruling that cities could not give funds to the Chamber of Commerce and asked if funds could be used for this not-for-profit.

City Attorney George Matteson said this resolution was not intended to obligate any city funds or set up an account.

- Motion to adopt the resolution made by: Director Harris
- Motion seconded by: Director Johnson

Motion carried unanimously.

7. Citizen Communication

- David Anthony, 2121 Union Road, spoke against the renaming of Hobo Jungle Park and said the Board went about it the wrong way by holding a special meeting on a Saturday with no opposition and having the signs already made.
- LaMesha Huntley, 1907 Jefferson Avenue, said changing the name of a park did not change her memories. She said she lived in the community and it deserved something nice and it was time to move forward. She also said she was opening Care House for homeless veterans.
- Vickie Lacy, 1108 Ash Street, said change was going to happen and change was good. She praised Ermer Pondexter for giving of herself to the community and

we were making Texarkana better by honoring her.

- David Watkins, 28 Lanshire Drive, Texarkana, Texas, said he supported the renaming of Hobo Jungle Park to the Ermer Dansby Pondexter Sports Complex. He said the City needed to change for the better to move forward and we needed to keep the new name as a symbol of hope and pride in the community.
- Oval Morgason, 5224 Yespee Lane, said he was raised on the west side of East Street known as Hobo Jungle. He said the hobos made this history and he was proud of where he lived. He said the Board changed history.
- Anne Crowell, 714 Genoa Road, said she was not happy with the way this was handled. She said this park did not need to be renamed and that Ermer Pondexter deserved something of her own.
- John Reed, 714 Genoa Road, said the Board's renaming of the park was deceptive and morally wrong. He said this was about changing history. He said the signs were made before the vote was taken.
- Tammy Call, 700 S. Mosely Road, said she felt like the name change was done behind her back without any citizen input. She said this was not just history but a staple. She said she could go on and on about people she knew personally that put time into this park.
- Dr. Roslyn Price, 43 Preston Heights Circle, said the notice of the called meeting was listed in the newspaper and those on Facebook failed to voice their opinions at the meeting. She said she understood the history of Hobo Jungle Park and said no one could erase that history. She said she liked the idea of a monument at Hobo Jungle to show where it came from, what it was, and where it could be.
- April Starnes, 4509 Blackman Ferry Road, said her concern was how the grant money would be used at the park. She said scoreboards did not work, the bathrooms and concessions needed repair. She said the notice in the paper was not clear what facility was being renamed.
- Anderson Neal, 59 Meadowview Lane, said he was aware of the notice in the paper and on the website and since he retired, he tried to stay aware of things that happened in his community. He said attended that meeting support what he felt was a worthy recognition for Ermer Pondexter.
- Lisa McDermott, 1517 Linden Avenue, said everyone who was upset about the name change of the park should have attended the June 23, 2018 called meeting. The meeting was held on a Saturday which gave everyone a better chance to attend. The process of renaming the park was more than fair and the City went about it legally and appropriately.
- Milton Glass, 18 Webster Place, said he remembered Hobo Jungle Park before it was a park. It was nothing but a wasteland. He remembered the people that lived in shot gun houses adjacent to the railroad tracks that were forced to move. He said he and his brother spoke with hobos and learned a lot about different parts of

the country. He said he could not remember the name of any of those hobos, but he did remember the name Ermer Pondexter.

- Logan Wilhite, 547 Birch Street, Maud, Texas, said he grew up in the College Hill area and the neighborhood became a part of him. He said he did not see this a black or white issue. He said it was a community. He said hobos would come to his grandparent's house and they would feed them, and the hobos did various jobs for them. He said during this time, it was the greatest downturn in our history and hobos would hop the trains to find work.
- Anthony Ware, 1320 Ray Street, said he was proud of what the City had done. He said he heard so many things today and Mayor Bell said something that brought it home to him, being civil. He said Texarkana was a wonderful place, but we had problems and issues. He said it was funny that we pick and choose what history to hold onto.
- Linda Sheets, 1306 Locust Street, said she agreed that we need change. She said the Board had caused a lot of race tension with the way they handled changing the name of the park. She said the Board needed to be more open and up front with the people that loved this park
- David Morgason said he lived in Genoa, Arkansas, and grew up in the College Hill area. He said he played in Hobo Jungle before it was a park and he had a lot of respect for it. He said he disagreed with renaming the park and wanted it to remain Hobo Jungle Park.
- Erin Rogers, 614 Beech Street, said she worked for TXK Today and it was talked about online, on the radio and in the Texarkana Gazette newspaper. She said if the Board tried to pull a swift one, the media would be all over it. She said process and awareness was not the issue. She said she did her research and went to the Museum of Regional History and she found nothing about Hobo Jungle. She said we were not trying to erase history, but to writing our future.
- Greg Mills, 2328 Garland Street, said Hobo Jungle Park meant a lot to him because he grew up in the College Hill and Carmichael area. He said one of the five fields could have been named after Ermer Pondexter. He wanted more people recognized instead of just one person.
- Mayor Bell apologized for having caused something that could potentially become a racial issue was never her intention. She said the Board did everything legally and checked with the City Attorney. She said we could have done a better job of being transparent. She said in no way should this reflect badly on Ermer Pondexter.
- Director Harris said he had the First Amendment Right to speak at the meeting. He said he did not know what was going on prior to the Board meeting on Saturday.

8. Executive Session – Board did not enter Executive Session.

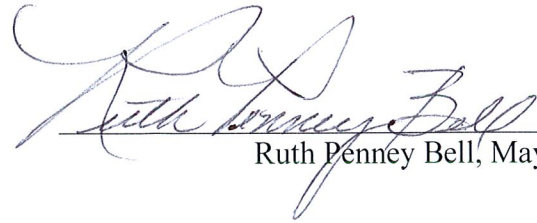
9. Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn made by:
Motion seconded by:

Director Odom
Director Peavy

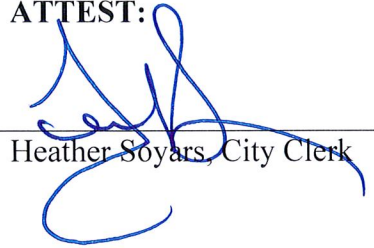
Motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 8:01 PM.



Ruth Penney Bell, Mayor

ATTEST:



Heather Soyars, City Clerk