



WATONGA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES FOR SEPTEMBER 20, 2022

*In accordance with the Oklahoma Open Meeting Law, this Agenda was posted
September 16, 2022, Prior to 5:00 PM at the Main Street Entrance of Watonga City Hall,
located at 410 West Main Street, Watonga, Oklahoma.*

**The City Council of the City of Watonga did meet at 6:00 PM on Tuesday, September 20, 2022
in the Large Meeting Room of Watonga City Hall, located at 410 W. Main Street, Watonga, Oklahoma
for a scheduled meeting.**

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance:

Council Present: Mayor Bill Seitter, Travis Bradt, Allen Cowan and Ladina Willis. Also present, City Manager Karrie Beth Little, City Attorney Jared Harrison and City Clerk Verlen Bills. Adam Tock absent.

Declaration of a Quorum: At 6:00 PM.

AGENDA

1. **Approve the Minutes** of the previous Council Meeting held August 16, 2022.

Motion to approve the Minutes of the previous Council Meeting held August 16, 2022 was made by Allen Cowan and seconded by Ladina Willis.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

2. **Acknowledge the Monthly Reports** from EMS, Fire Department, City Treasurer, Library, Police Department, Municipal Court, Community Development, Park's Department, Light & Water Department, Street & Alley Department, and the Airport.

Mr. Cowan: I want to thank Rodney Jacks for the Treasurer's Report. He does an excellent job.

Mr. Cowan continued: I save back the previous monthly report and compare month to month. We are showing a current balance of \$6.3 million and just a month ago our balance was \$6.1 million. Some of the things we are trying to do to save money is showing up on paper in black and white.

Mr. Jacks: Most of the credit goes to City Manager Karrie Beth Little.

Mr. Cowan: I appreciate Ms. Little's frugal handling of City Business.

Mayor Seitter: I could add, at this time last year we were at \$4.8 million and this year we have a balance of \$6.316 million.

Mr. Jacks noted that there are several big projects in the works that will cut in to this some.

Mayor Seitter: We are able to do these projects, in a big part, because of Ms. Little's prudence with the finances.

Mayor Seitter: Last month we talked about property cleanup. In the Court Report, how many of those court cases are property cleanup issues?

Ms. Little replied, 19. She continued, for a more complete breakdown I would suggest you look at the Code Enforcement Report. There were 58 courtesy letters mailed out and 19 of those received citations for failure to clean up the property.

Mayor Seitter asked, how many of those actually went to Court?

Ms. Little: All 19 will be in Court or have been in Court, depending on Court dates.

Mayor Seitter pointed out, it's not that we are not doing things. Code Enforcement is getting a lot done. Those that do not respond to the letters are the ones in Court?

Ms. Little agreed.

Ms. Willis: What happens to this in Court? Who is liable for the cost?

Ms. Little: That is up to the Judge, he can order the City to do the cleanup and hold the property owner responsible for the cost or the Judge might give the property owner an X number of days to get into compliance or they could potentially receive a daily citation or another civil citation. But that is why it is in front of a Judge because he decides how this needs to proceed.

Mayor Seitter commented, I do not think we could expect much more from Code Enforcement, there is only about 20 working days in the month for this along with the other duties they perform.

Council acknowledge the Monthly Reports from EMS, Fire Department, City Treasurer, Library, Police Department, Municipal Court, Community Development, Park's Department, Light & Water Department, Street & Alley Department, and the Airport.

3. **Review and accept the list of Claims** against the City of Watonga for the month of August 2022.

Mr. Bradt asked about the mobile phone account with AT&T?

Ms. Little: Most of our mobile phones are with Pioneer. That is for a mobile hot spot needed for EMS equipment.

Travis Brat made the motion to accept the list of Claims against the City of Watonga for the month of August 2022. Motion was seconded by Allen Cowan.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

4. **Approve the Monthly Financial Report** for August 2022 from RS Meacham.

Ms. Daica Phillips with RS Meacham: We are two months into the Fiscal Year and we would like revenues to be at 16.67 percent or higher and expenditures to be at 16.67 percent or lower. Our total income through August 31 is at \$444,923. This is an increase of \$56,292 over last year at this time and this can be attributed to Oil and Gas Income, we have received \$61,712 more this year than last year.

We did have some Grant Revenue this month. We received \$6,072 in FEMA funds for expenditures of an event six years ago. We also collected \$2,425 for the Library Summer Programs Grant.

All of our major sources of revenue are at or exceed budget. Overall our Total Income is at 21 percent of projected budget.

In Non-operating Income, which are transfers that total \$269,673. The main difference from this time last year is the additional funds that were budgeted to support the General Fund activities.

And then expenditures were at \$666,539 year to date through August. That is an increase of \$129,542 due primarily to Street Expenditures. There were expenditures of \$112,973 for August that included \$77,402 for Stan's Asphalt. And, that's an expense that will benefit the City for several years.

There were several other expenditures more than expected in August, NODA dues were \$3,100. Fire Expenditures were up some, and several other departments required various equipment repairs. Overall we are right at budget of 17 percent for the year.

The other transfer to note is the \$50,000 for W.E.D.A. start up budget so our Total Expenditures are \$716,539. This will put us close to break even for the year. We spent \$1,943 more than we have received this fiscal year. (The first two months of the fiscal year.) But again, we also spent the entire budgeted funds for the needed street repairs.

Next in the report is the Light and Water. This is also at 16.67 percent for the year. There is direct revenue and direct expenditures for each department. The Electric Operating Income is at \$571,419. That is at 29 percent of our projected budget, but included some very hot summer months and the increases in our wholesale cost.

Operating Income for Water is \$93,133. The Sewer Operating Income is at a loss of \$15,445. This was due to Parkhill and Garver invoices paid in July. This will even out over the year. Garbage Operating Income is at \$21,856.

After Administrative and Capital Improvement fees and transfers, our net income year today is \$433,906. Last year at this time we were at \$225,538. The biggest part of this difference was of course Electric Income due to the very hot weather.

Ms. Phillips continued, There is little activity in the Grant Fund. There was a \$200 donation to the Fire Department and they also spent \$4,626 for equipment purchase.

In PWA there was an income of \$822,298. Of that, \$816,632 was from the FAA for an expenditure of \$816,632. (Runway Project) So, there was a Net Income year-to-date of \$5,776 in PWA.

In the Sales Tax Fund we deposited \$38,383 and did not pay out any expenditures.

In the Street and Alley Fund, we have collected \$3,281 year-to-date and expended \$263 for a Net Income of \$3,047 which compares to August of last year.

In sales tax collections, the City's portion year-to-date is \$335,376.32. That is an increase of \$10,840.93 or an increase of 4.97 percent in our Sales Tax. Not quite keeping up with inflation, but we are almost keeping up.

We do show a decrease of \$17,909.21 in Use Tax from last year because there were some abnormal one time spikes last year at this time in Use Tax.

Ms. Phillips asked for questions.

Mayor Seitter: Does the Hospital pay there utilities or does the City?

Ms. Little replied, the Hospital pays their own utilities.

Allen Cowan made the motion to approve the Monthly Financial Report for August 2022 from RS Meacham presented by Ms. Daica Phillips. Motion was seconded by Travis Bradt.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

5. **Consideration, Discussion and Action:** To declare Monday October 31, 2022, for the observance of Halloween activities from 6 PM to 9 PM.

Motion was made by Ladina Willis to declare Monday October 31, 2022 for the observance of Halloween activities from 6:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Motion was seconded by Travis Bradt.

Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;

T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye

Motion carried.

6. **Consideration, Discussion and Action:** To accept the North 80 feet of Lots One (1) and Two (2), in Block Twenty (20), in the City of Watonga, Blaine County, Oklahoma also known as 319 N. Weigle, from the Watonga Christian Church, Inc.

Travis Bradt and City Attorney Jared Harrison mentioned that they had worked this out with the Christian Church.

Mr. Harrison: At Ms. Little's suggestion we added the restrictions to the terms of the Warranty Deed.

Mayor Seitter for clarity: The plan is that the City will use this property through W.E.D.A. to build a new home with assistance from NODA. The proceeds from this will be used to build another home. Theoretically, this is not costing the City anything.

This is a start and this is just one of the ideas to encourage new residences in Watonga.

Ladina Willis made the motion to accept the North 80 feet of Lots One (1) and Two (2), in Block Twenty (20), in the City of Watonga, Blaine County, Oklahoma also known as 319 N. Weigle, from the Watonga Christian Church, Inc. Motion was seconded by Travis Bradt. Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;
T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye
Motion carried.

7. **Discussion:** The Friends of the Ferguson Museum contract status.

Ms. Little: I have been in conversation with the Friends of the Ferguson and they have notified the City that they are going to disband the organization. The Contract between the Friends of the Ferguson and the City was up for renewal, but they do not have the funding or the membership to continue.

Mrs. Louise Dunn discussed how membership has drifted away. We do not have enough active members for a three member board required by our bylaws. Even the volunteer carpenter has moved on. We no longer have the resources to support him.

This situation is not something that developed just yesterday. People and support have just drifted away with time. We appreciate the support that we have received, but it is no enough to continue on.

Mrs. Dunn noted that we are required to contact anyone that has had anything to do with the Ferguson Museum in the past and we have done so. She went on to describe the property and inventory involved and how it might be dispersed, some will go back to the original owners.

Ms. Little: Part of this discussion is that the City owns the building and the things that are physically part of the building and the property like the old jail.

There was communication of a Five Year Plan and what is needed for property maintenance. One of the major concerns is a new roof.

Mrs. Dunn described some of the needed painting and woodwork repairs.

Mayor Seitter noted problems with support and membership in other organizations City wide. This is why the City has taken on the responsibility for the Chamber of Commerce.

This same problem is being faced by the National Historical Society. Our situation in Watonga is probably just one instance.

There was discussion of the complications of keeping a non-profit organization legal with State and Federal filings.

It was noted that there are plans to keep the Museum open for the 50 Year Anniversary.

Joe Bryan: Expressed gratitude to those working to keep the Museum and the Organization going. He explained his family involvement with the Museum in past years and some of his recent involvement. The history of the Ferguson Home is really an amazing story and I am excited to see that there are activities planned for the 50th Anniversary.

Mr. Bryan continued, I do not completely understand the relationship between the City of Watonga and the Friends of the Ferguson, but it seems like a good handshake.

I really hate to see this disband and the reasons behind this are not totally clear to me. They do have some finances, money is not the total problem.

There have been many great Curators of the Museum. I have not meet the Curator that is there now, but I can see she is doing a great job.

I think we should use this 50th Commemoration as a way to reinvigorate this. I know it has been a tough two and a half to three years with COVID and this recent intolerable summer. I do not have an answer, but I would like to see a different solution.

I asked Mrs. Louise Griffin, the President of the Friends of the Ferguson Museum, what would you like to see? Her response, I would like to see more members. Okay, maybe we just need to shake some trees and find some members. This is a worthwhile organization.

Mr. Bryan noted his involvement with non-profit 501(C)(3) organizations and suggested we take our time dissolving the Friends of the Ferguson to allow time for people to react to this.

He allowed that he does not have an answer but thinks that the planned Commemoration is a good starting place. We should invite anyone and everyone we can. Local officials to Senators, Tribal Leaders to National Park Service management. He suggested inviting the Lieutenant Governor, he is the one that oversees filming in Oklahoma.

Mr. Bryan suggested that we have technology to do virtual tours of the Museum and we have knowledgeable people that could make it an interesting experience.

Over the years, many of our visitors to the Museum are not just from our area, many have been from out of state and some from other countries. The Europeans are very interested in our Western Culture. He advised that we try to promote the Museum through Travel Sites.

I think the best solution is to simply reinvigorate the membership and the principal purpose of the Friends of the Ferguson and charge forward. Those are some of my suggestions.

Mrs. Dunn: We appreciate new ideas and we have tried to do what we can with what we have. Unfortunately the Museum needs major repairs that require funds we do not have. There are still some people in the Community that support the Museum and the Friends Organization, but fund raisers are not what they used to be.

Ms. Little: Can you give us an idea of what your expenses are?

Mrs. Dunn described some of the needed repairs included some that are becoming safety issues.

The City does pay our electric bill but in the winter it cost us about \$300.00 a month in gas to keep that three story building warm.

Mr. Bryan asked, in the agreement between the City and the Friends of the Ferguson, who is responsible for building maintenance? Would it not be similar to the Theater, the Armory and the Hospital?

Mr. Harrison: Generally speaking it depends on the function being housed at a location. If it is a City function, then the City will maintain the facility. Otherwise it is up to the entity using the facility. The Armory houses the EMS, the City maintains the Armory. The Hospital building is used by Mercy and they maintain the building.

(Mr. Bryan was provided a copy of the agreement.)

Ms. Willis and Mrs. Dunn discussed the idea of virtual tours and how this could be tied into the School. The idea of sponsorship was mentioned. There was more discussion of the complications, trying to teach local history through the School with class requirements of today and the priorities of today's young people.

Mayor Seitter: I know teachers are doing all they can when they can in the classroom, they have a lot to cover with little time available. But I should state, when the City assumed the responsibility for the property from the State, the State had not kept the building maintained. The City was taking on another piece of property that needs a lot of money for repairs.

It seems to me, since I've been on the Council, any organization or any property that can no longer be kept or maintained, like the old Lumberyard situation, it gets donated to the City. Then the City spends thousands of dollars to resolve a problem that does little to benefit the City. We spent more than \$30,000 to get the old Lumberyard building removed and we end up with a few vacant lots worth maybe \$5,000. The City can not continue to put money out for projects like this with nothing coming back, it is just not going to work financially to continue down this route.

The City has taken on the responsibility of the Chamber of Commerce because there are not enough people to volunteer for this and to raise the needed funds. This is going to cost the City, but we can not be without a Chamber.

I agree with everything Mr. Bryan has said but at some point people are going to have to "step up" and take on the responsibilities for their own community benefits.

The City has other responsibilities also, such as infrastructure. We have estimated that to bring our basic infrastructure up to date will cost about \$21 million.

Mr. Bradt: I do not want to see our Western Heritage disappear. We need to hold onto this and to teach this to others. It is a big deal that others do not understand our heritage. I know it is dying but we should do what we can to hold on to it.

Mr. Bradt asked Mrs. Dunn how much was the estimate for repairs to the Museum?

Mrs. Dunn replied, about \$145,000 over five years.

Most agreed that was a very conservative number.

Mayor Seitter pointed out that anytime we start to renovate an old building, it always runs into more expense than expected.

Mr. Bradt: Tourism is one of the things that help to keep Watonga alive. We have Roman Nose Park and the Casino, the Ferguson Home is part of this also.

Several talked that the Ferguson Home is poorly listed on the Internet as a destination or tourist attraction for Watonga.

Mrs. Dunn came back to the problems of maintenance and repair and noted some recent major expenses. A new A/C unit and a new gas line were noted.

At this point, Mr. Bryan had reviewed the contract and suggested that this contract does not really state who is responsible for maintenance and repairs.

Mr. Harrison: At the time, we had only discussed helping to pay for part-time help to keep the doors open.

There was discussion of financial aid from other sources in the past.

Mr. Bryan commented that money should be available for this, but we need to define who is responsible for the property.

The group decided that we need to raise public awareness to this problem. There will be a lot of unhappy people if we let this go.

Mayor Seitter: Hearing no further comment moved to Agenda Item 8.

8. **Council Comments:**

(None)

9. **Mayor Comments:**

Mayor Seitter: Ms. Little, Mr. Harrison and I have talked of changes to the agenda. Mr. Harrison has suggested and I agree that we need to do away Comments listed as an Agenda item and add a Reports Agenda item. This is where Ms. Little could give us the City Manager's Report. In my training, the Agenda is supposed to show everything that is going to be discussed and nothing else can really be discussed. Sometimes, under Comments, we tend to get off on the wrong topics. I am asking that we start putting "Reports" as an Agenda Item and then under Reports, the individual reports would be listed. This would include the Monthly Department Reports, project updates and other items the City Manager needs inform Council of. Council Members can request an item to be listed in the Reports. Give your request to the City Manager, then she can decide if it needs to be a Report or an Action Item.

Another change I am asking for is to add "New Business" to the Agenda. New Business is defined in the Open Meetings and Open Records Act as any item that could not be reasonably perceived to be put on the Agenda before the Agenda is posted. The final Agenda is posted 24 hours before the Meeting and can not be changed. If something does come up in that 24 hour time frame then it might be considered New Business. In 21 years as a School Superintendent I could probably could count on one hand, the number of times this was needed. But this gives us the opportunity to deal with last minute issues.

The fourth item I am asking for is to bring back the “Consent Agenda” We did have a Consent Agenda in the past, but the reason for a Consent Agenda is to allow a vote on several items at one time. Regular monthly routine items are put under the Consent Agenda and then voted on as a group. The List of Claims, Meeting Minutes and the Financial Report are items that would be included in the Consent Agenda. Previously, we had included Consent Items on the Agenda, but we were voting on each item separately. That is not the intent of the Consent Agenda. It is intended to be a single motion and a single vote to help move a meeting along. If need be, a single item can be removed from a Consent Agenda by a statement asking to vote on an individual item separately. The motion for the Consent Agenda would then exclude that item and another motion would be needed to vote for the excluded item.

Those are four items that I would like to see changing the way we present our Agendas. If anyone has any other ideas or questions, we can talk before the next meeting.

I know our people are out in this heat working every day. It is tough. There are things coming up on the Public Works Agenda that I hope will eventually help these employees. And I know we are short handed in several areas.

10. City Manager Comments:

Ms. Little: I have a couple of items, we are hosting a retirement party at the Library, Friday from 2:00 PM to 4:0 PM. We have several deserving people retiring.

In the Council Packet there is a letter stating that we have been nominated for the Great American Cleanup Best Overall Award. This is a State wide award, part of the Keep Oklahoma Beautiful Program and we are a Finalist so we will be attending.

11. Adjourn:

Motion to adjourn was made by Allen Cowan and seconded by Travis Bradt.
Mayor Seitter, hearing no further comment, called for a vote;
T. Bradt aye A. Cowan aye L. Willis aye B. Seitter aye
Motion carried at 7:09 PM.

Mayor Bill Seitter

City Clerk, Verlen Bills