

City of Cottonwood Falls Council Minutes
January 15, 2024

The regular meeting of the City of Cottonwood Falls was called to order at 6:00 in the Municipal meeting room. Those present were Mayor Buddy Sisson, Council members Bill Kewley, Mike Hastings, Greg Campbell, Chris Carathers, and Ryan Spinden, Utilities Supervisor Scott Gumfory, and City Clerk Bree Larkin. City Attorney Stuart Symmonds was not present.

Agenda

Hastings made a motion to approve the agenda. Carathers seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Minutes

Kewley made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 5, 2024, meeting as they read. Hastings seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote.

Special Address:

Councilmember Hastings asked to make a statement to the guests and council prior to moving forward. Hastings made a motion to enter the statement into the official minutes. Spinden seconded the motion. Motion carried by unanimous vote. The contents of this statement are attached to these minutes.

Visitors

Terry Porter presented the council to discuss some issues he has noticed with the way the city is being run. He expressed that he was upset at the way a previous written complaint was handled. He offered that the city employees are not using their time appropriately and that the council members have not visited the city shop or talked to those employees. Mayor Sisson and Councilmember Hastings, who are on the Staff Policy and Relations committee both noted that they have been to the shop and met with the employees. Porter also posited that during the recent snows Utilities Supervisor Gumfory ran the snow truck without the blade down. Gumfory stated that this was not the case. Porter then complained about speeding cars around the high school. City Clerk Larkin presented him with the findings of the most recent traffic study done in 2021. Sheriff Welsh agreed that with the cooperation of the county Road and Bridge Department we would do another speed study, but that he has not witnessed significant speeding during his patrols around the high school. Council thanked Porter for his input and his concerns.

City Clerk Report:

City Clerk Larkin presented a Special Event Request from Rebekah Green for a graduation street dance to be held on Broadway in front of their home. Request was approved.

Staff Policy and Relations

City Clerk Larkin presented a pay matrix for potential raises for city staff. Mayor Sisson requested we revisit at another meeting once we have health benefit renewal information. No action was taken.

Timecards

Hastings made a motion to approve timecards and payroll checks 32769-32771, 6 Direct Deposits, 3 Electronic Payments. Kewley seconded the motion. Motion carried.


Hastings made a motion to approve overtime for 16 hours. Campbell seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Consideration of Bills


Hastings made a motion to approve checks 32773-32793 for accounts payable. Carathers seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Adjournment

Hastings made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:30 p.m. Kewley seconded the motion. Motion carried.



William C Sisson, Mayor



Brianna Larkin, City Clerk

Special Statement given by Councilmember Mike Hastings

Before we get too far into tonight's agenda, I want to welcome Terry Porter and also make a couple of observations. In particular, I want to go on the record responding to recent Facebook posts and associated comments. I absolutely recognize the right of any citizen to have an opinion. I, too, have opinions. What I'm about to relate to you is my opinion and should not be viewed as the opinion of any other person as I'm only speaking for myself. I'm going to make every effort to be respectful and not let my emotions rule my logic. So...here goes!

First, it is obvious from Facebook posts that Terry Porter has an issue with the mayor and apparently the entire City Council with the exception of Ryan Spinden who was just sworn in January 2, 2024. Secondly, when I read these posts, I wasn't sure if I should be disappointed or angry or both. The insinuation made is that this Council, including myself, is lazy, that we don't give a F, have neglected many things, have no clue or don't care, have been appointed vs actually being elected, etc.

For the record, I took the initiative to go to the Chase County Clerk's office, pay my fee, and place my name on the ballot, receiving 111 votes from the citizens of the city. Lazy? I don't think so! On November 14, 2023, in response to the County Clerk's 2023 Official Election Results post of Facebook I posted the following comment,

Thank you for the results. To those that voted for me thank you for your vote and for your confidence. To all within Cottonwood Falls, I seek to serve everyone and promise to be a listening ear. Let's work together to make our community even better than it is now and it's darned great now!

Now I ask you, am I an insincere person or a liar or was I, in fact, attempting to encourage people to get involved?

Realizing that a few of these comments that I'm referencing came from Travis Fleshman, I can't realistically expect an answer from you, Terry. However, since you did not post anything to the contrary, one can make a pretty good assumption that you're in agreement with those comments.

What specifically have we as a governing body neglected? That's one of the things that was referenced. I've already addressed the "don't care" part for myself and I can only speak for myself but am I clueless? Well, that's probably the closest true statement that I read in these posts. You see, I'm just a citizen willing to serve my community relying on a group of professionals such as CPAs, engineers, and consultants to provide me with the information to make an informed decision that I believe best for those I serve. I hope that you can understand that I'm not an expert on streets, water and sewer, landscaping, nor a host of other specialties. Thus, I must rely on others' expertise. If you're looking for a good meal, that's MY expertise.

As for being appointed, everyone on this council, with the exception of Ryan, was initially appointed to serve per statute. As well, everyone on this council has subsequently been elected to their position. It's really easy to run for a position on the council. Anyone can go to the County Clerk and get an application, pay the fee or get a petition and the required signatures and get put on the ballot. I encourage people to get involved including running for elected office. I wish more people would show up for our meetings regularly, not just when they have a complaint or need Council approval for something. Perhaps then people would understand why we do what we do and it's certainly not for the money.

In conclusion, I am disappointed that this is being played out on social media. All of the negativity is not good for our community especially when insinuations are made that are not grounded in fact. Specifically, the email to which you refer, was, in fact, discussed during an executive session and at the conclusion the decision was made for the Mayor to have a conversation with the subject of the email. When we came out of executive session and back into regular session, that was announced as the recommendation of the executive session.. It is part of the official record of that meeting. Surely you realize what a serious violation it would be for us to discuss a personnel issue in a public meeting.

Again, speaking only for myself, I do not appreciate my integrity, character or honesty being questioned on social media nor will I be bullied nor intimidated by anyone. If anyone has specific allegations of where I've done anything improper or illegal as a member of this City Council that I've been a part of for these past 6+ years, produce the evidence in writing or choose your words very carefully on social media.