

MINUTES
North Newton City Council – Regular Meeting
May 11, 2020 – 7:00 P.M.
Meeting via Zoom

Mayor Braun welcomed everyone to the Zoom meeting. He thanked everyone for the steps being taken to re-open City Hall and hopes this transition goes smoothly.

1. Call to Order

Mayor Ron Braun called the meeting to order. Those present and constituting a quorum were:

COUNCIL: Dennis Campbell, Gregg Dick, Kurt Friesen, Jim Goering and Ron Ratzlaff

STAFF: John Torline, Danny Entz, Greg Nye, Randy Jordan, Cindy Hiebert, Jim Bethards and Pat Redding

OTHERS: Grace Wild and Wendy Nugent

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the April 13, 2020 meeting were presented.

MOTION: Goering moved, Dick seconded, to approve the April 13, 2020 minutes. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Citizen Comments

No one spoke

4. Consider the Mayor's appointment to fill expired terms on the Newton/North Newton Planning Commission and the Harvey County Economic Development Council

Mayor Braun recommended Joe Slechta be re-appointed to a three year term on the Newton/North Newton Planning Commission.

MOTION: Friesen moved, Ratzlaff seconded, to approve Joe Slechta to serve another three year term on the Newton/North Newton Planning Commission. Motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Braun recommended Joel Gaeddert be re-appointed to a three year term on the Newton/North Newton Economic Development Council.

MOTION: Dick moved, Campbell seconded, to approve Joel Gaeddert to serve a three year term on the Harvey County Economic Development Council. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Receive and discuss a memorandum from the City Administrator regarding the Public Wholesale Water District #17.

Torline reviewed his memo regarding the history of the Public Wholesale Water District (PWWD) and some current and future issues. Debt service has been paid and North Newton hasn't been

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getting water from the PWWD since we drilled new water wells and built the water tower in 2015. Mayor Braun is the chair of the PWWD and the next PWWD Board meeting is scheduled for May 20. Braun and Torline will be present at this meeting and recommend discussing North Newton's intent to retrieve water in the future directly from a PWWD well. This action would benefit the City of North Newton in the following ways: secure an increased water supply, ease the pumping load on our current pumps and help lower nitrates as our water is mixed with the PWWD water. It would benefit the PWWD by pumping more water which would help perfect the wells. Torline has had some preliminary conversations about this issue with Suzanne Loomis who is the General Manager of the PWWD.

MOTION: Campbell moved, Goering seconded, to authorize Braun and Torline to pursue discussions regarding retrieving water directly from a PWWD well. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Consider revisions to the North Newton Personnel Policy

Torline stated the Personnel Policy is reviewed and revised periodically and the last time this was done was December 2015. Since that time we have kept a list of necessary and recommended changes and these are presented in the edited policy. Torline highlighted two substantive changes. The first one is an Administrative Assistant position on the pay plan. For succession planning of administrative staff we anticipate hiring a part time employee sometime in the future. This person would perform highly skilled tasks as payroll, accounts payable, utility bill or court clerk duties. A temporary employee may be hired and trained to fill in when an extended leave is anticipated by existing staff. Currently there is no position or pay scale to cover this position. The second significant change is a provision to recognize and compensate employees with special and needed skills. There are employees that are providing services that aren't in their job description that we would otherwise have to hire an outside entity to complete. Examples of these tasks are information technology technician and/or graphic art skills. There was discussion about the details of this compensation and so was tabled until the Council Work Session next Monday, May 18th. There was also discussion about the addition of Presidents Day as a paid holiday. This will also be discussed at the Council Work Session.

7. Consider the recommendations of the North Newton Community Foundation for 2020 Grant Awards

Torline reported that the NNCF has five funds established that the City of North Newton matches donations if certain criteria is met. These funds stipulate that the grant awards from these endowments must benefit the citizens of North Newton. It is a provision of the Sher Klassen Neufeld Endowment Fund, the Jim and Shirley Goering Community Development Fund, the Jacob D. and Beth E. Goering Charitable Fund, the John G. and Diana C. Torline Endowment for North Newton Fund and the North Newton Cultural Enhancement Fund that the NNCF recommend awards to be given. The North Newton City Council then considers the recommendation for approval. The NNCF is recommending granting \$6,810 from the above named funds.

MOTION: Dick moved, Ratzlaff seconded, to approve the awards as recommended by the NNCF. Motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Braun thanked the NNCF Board and the Grant Selection Committee for their diligent work.

8. Reports

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a. Mayor/Council. Mayor Braun reported the Council Work Session has been postponed until May 18 at 7:00 at City Hall. Braun asked for COVID-19 updates from any of the council members. Councilman Dick reported that most employees are working from home at Bethel College. Bethel College plans to open in August for the fall semester. The graduation ceremony will happen on May 17th as originally scheduled but will be a virtual event. Councilman Ratzlaff stated that Kidron Bethel has a group that meets daily to assess the COVID-19 situation and makes changes as needed to keep the campus free of the virus.

Councilman Goering reported the NNCF asset balance is \$447,394. There will not be an awards ceremony this summer due to the current pandemic situation. The awardees will be notified and then highlighted on Facebook with stories and videos.

b. Staff Update. Torline reported that this morning City Hall opened up for business from 8 am -12 pm only. We will continue this schedule until the end of the month and then re-evaluate at that time. Staff has installed plexiglass at the front desk and put signs on a marquee in the lobby and on the front door encouraging social distancing and wearing a mask. Torline will prepare an agenda for the Council Work Session on Monday which will include a report from Chuck Regier or George Krievens on the progress of the entrance sign project. The KDOT walking trail is in progress and as of now the bridge over Kidron Creek will be put in place on May 21st. Torline stated there might be some field changes that would add working days to the project.

Entz reported that he and Justin have spent a lot of time this past month cleaning out debris from the 30th Street sewer pump. The pump has been clogged and stopped working 3-4 times in a short time span. These clogs are rags and other items that shouldn't be flushed down the toilet. This sewer pump services Campus Woods, Lakewood Circle, MCC and North Woods Plaza. The City is working on a plan to inform residents of these issues that live in these neighborhoods. To have the pumps lifted out, unclogged and then reset is time intensive and costly so Entz is eager to get this issue resolved. Spring Clean-Up Week is scheduled for June 1-5. Entz has been working with Chuck Regier to locate utilities at possible entrance sign locations.

Police Chief Jordan reported that there were twelve vehicles that used the electric charging station in April. This compares to eighteen charges in March, sixteen charges in February and eleven charges in January. The Police Department purchased the Honda Clarity in May 2019 and Jordan has put fuel in it four times this past year. The Clarity has been running primarily on electricity which has provided substantial savings on fuel costs. Jordan reported that the Police Department was running out of storage space for their in-car videos. A new storage system was purchased and Deputy Bethards installed the system and transferred all the videos to the new system. There have been a couple of police chases in and around North Newton in the last week. The first chase was kept out of North Newton due in part to the work of Deputy Chief Bethards. The other chase came through North Newton and the suspect threw out drugs and a North Newton officer recovered the drugs. Officer Lowe discovered a stolen truck over the week-end and the driver had drugs in the vehicle. Jordan reported that his department is concerned about the domestic violence cases and child abuse cases that are going undetected due to the pandemic. Places of employment and schools are often places that this behavior is noticed and reported. With the loss of jobs and school cancelled there is a heightened concern for those suffering from these behaviors. Mayor Braun thanked Jordan and his officers for their good work.

Jordan also stated that Trish Stoner, an employee at the Post Office, acted quickly and saved a North Newton resident thousands of dollars. Trish contacted North Newton Police Department and

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Jordan and Bethards worked diligently to recover all the money involved in the scam. Mayor Braun thanked Chief Jordan and Deputy Chief Bethards for the work on this case.

Attorney Nye reported that Harvey County has followed Governor Kelly's guidelines for reopening in Phase One. Counties can have stricter guidelines but Nye anticipates Harvey County will continue to follow Governor Kelly's recommendation.

- c. Clerk/Treasurer. Redding presented accounts payable and payroll for consideration.

MOTION: Ratzlaff moved, Campbell seconded, to receive the May accounts payable and miscellaneous checks report in the amount of \$129,153.14 and April/May payroll report in the amount of \$27,461.45. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Non-Agenda Items

None presented

10. Adjournment.

There being no further business Mayor Braun declared the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Patricia Pettig
City Clerk

Ronald A Braun
Mayor

June 8, 2020
Date Approved