Regular City Council Meeting

Minutes

Monday, July 13, 2026 at 5:45 pm

1. **Call to Order**

Minutes:
Mayor Jeremy Moore called the meeting to order at 5:45 p.m.
Council Members Present: Jay Kessler, Sheri Parker, Dr. James Ratzlaff, Dave Whitcomb, and Ryan Durst Staff Present:
City Administrator Jeremy Johnson, City Clerk Stephanie Lopez, Assistant City Clerk Frances Sparks, Street Supervisor Jeff Wedel, Mike Strausz, and Police Chief Jared Kaufman
Guests Present: Phil McKinney, Jamie Goering, Mark Bucholtz, Faith Fields, Cheryl Bishop, Craig Voth, Kelly Voth, Todd Vogts, Jason Jordon

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

Minutes:
Mayor Moore led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. **Consent Agenda**

Minutes:
Following review of the bills, minutes, and fund balances. It was accepted as is. Motion: Council Member Parker moved to approve the Consent Agenda. Second: Council Member Kessler Vote: Ayes: 5 / Nays: 0 / Abstained: 0 Motion Passed.

   a. **Approval of Minutes**
   b. **Approval of Bills**
   c. **Fund Balance**

4. **Public Comments**

Minutes:
None.

5. **2025 Audit Presentation**

Cheryl Bishop, CPA

Minutes:
The Council received the presentation of the City's 2025 annual audit. Cheryl Bishop of Knudsen Monroe & Company reviewed the required governance communication,

noting that: • The audit was completed as planned and in accordance with the engagement. • There were no changes in accounting policies. • Significant transactions were properly recorded in the correct accounting period. • There were no disagreements with management or consultations with other accountants. The auditor explained that the financial statements received: • An adverse opinion under Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) because the City prepares its financial statements using the Kansas regulatory basis of accounting rather than GAAP. • An unmodified (clean) opinion on the regulatory basis financial statements. The auditor reviewed management's responsibilities for maintaining internal controls and preparing the financial statements, as well as the auditor's responsibilities. The financial statements showed: • Positive cash balances in all funds except one ongoing capital project. • No cash or budget violations during 2025. • Compliance with applicable Kansas statutes. The auditor summarized the notes to the financial statements, including: • Regulatory basis of accounting and budget process. • Compliance with state statutes. • Deposits and investments. • Interfund transfers. • Long-term debt and debt maturities. • Capital projects. • KPERS retirement plan. • Deferred compensation plan. • Employee benefits. • Risk management and insurance coverage. The auditor reviewed fund activity, highlighting: • Increased employee benefit expenditures and a higher ending cash balance in the General Fund. • Higher revenues and expenditures in the Street Maintenance Fund due to additional projects. • Completion of several street projects, reducing the Street Projects Fund balance. • No significant changes in the Airport, Municipal Court, Parks, or other operating funds. • Increased revenues and fuel purchases in the Gas Fund. • Increased revenues in the Water and Sewer Funds. • An additional principal payment made on the City's low-interest utility loan, increasing Sewer Fund expenditures for the year. • A transfer to the Sewer Reserve Fund. • The Law Enforcement Trust Fund was fully expended during the year.
The auditor also reviewed the financial statements for the Library, Public Building Commission, and agency funds, including meter deposits, ambulance escrow funds, and sales tax collections. The management letter noted no significant concerns and stated that City staff and the governing body possess the knowledge necessary to accept responsibility for the City's financial statements. The auditor also commended City staff for their cooperation and assistance throughout the audit process. Staff explained that the City made an additional $200,000 principal payment on the State Revolving Fund utility loan to reduce future interest costs. Approximately $735,000 remains outstanding, with a goal of making additional principal payments in future years to retire the loan ahead of its scheduled 2031 maturity. Staff also noted the City has $100,000 invested in a certificate of deposit (CD) to help offset future loan costs.
Motion: Council Member Parker moved to accept the 2025 Audit Presentation.
Second: Council Member Kessler Vote: Ayes: 5 / Nays: 0 / Abstained: 0 Motion Passed.

6. **Project Update: Drucilla**

Jamie Goering, Michal Strausz

Minutes:

City staff presented the results of the North Drucilla drainage study completed by Schwab-Eaton. The study was initiated following concerns from residents regarding recurring flooding and standing water in the area. Staff noted that drainage issues in this portion of town have existed for decades and have been the subject of multiple previous studies, but no long-term solution has been identified. The engineering team explained that four separate drainage watersheds contribute runoff to the North Drucilla area. After surveying the site and analyzing multiple storm events, they developed three potential improvement options: • Option 1: Replace or clean the existing culvert pipe at the south end of the drainage area and widen and improve the field drainage ditch, including a concrete-lined channel to improve water flow and reduce maintenance. Estimated contractor cost: approximately $290,000, plus approximately $30,000 for the culvert replacement. • Option 2: Construct a new 7-foot by 3-foot concrete box culvert to divert runoff from the northern watersheds directly toward Sand Creek, bypassing the railroad ditch. This option would add approximately $390,000 to the project and was identified as the most effective solution for reducing flooding. • Option 3: Reconstruct and raise portions of North Drucilla Street to improve drainage. Engineers estimated this option would cost between $780,000 and $900,000 and would require extensive street, driveway, and yard modifications. Engineers explained that the existing railroad ditch has become increasingly difficult to maintain because the railroad has not allowed the City access for maintenance despite repeated requests. As a result, bypassing the railroad ditch with a new drainage pipe was viewed as the most practical long-term solution. Council discussed: • The likelihood that each option would reduce flooding. • The estimated costs and potential funding opportunities. • The possibility of completing portions of the project using City staff to reduce construction costs. • Concerns regarding impacts to adjacent farmland if the drainage ditch is widened. • Whether the project could be completed in phases if funding is limited. Engineers stated that combining the improved field ditch with the new drainage pipe would provide the greatest reduction in standing water and significantly improve drainage during both common and larger storm events. They also noted that a phased approach could be considered if the City chooses to spread the project over multiple years. No action was taken. Staff will review project costs using City labor and equipment where feasible and return to the Council with refined cost estimates and recommendations.

7. **Electric Scooter**

Discussion Item

Minutes:

Council held a discussion with residents regarding the increasing use of electric scooters, electric bicycles, and similar devices throughout the community. Residents expressed concerns that while the current ordinance requires scooters to be operated on sidewalks, many sidewalks are incomplete, overgrown, or unsuitable for riding, resulting in users traveling on streets instead. Several residents noted that electric bikes and scooters are becoming increasingly common among both youth and older adults and emphasized the need to develop a long-term solution rather than relying solely on enforcement. Residents suggested: • Reviewing how other Kansas communities regulate electric scooters and e-bikes. • Considering designated bicycle routes or bike paths. • Forming a committee to study the issue and recommend ordinance updates. • Developing a community education program for parents and children regarding safe operation and applicable traffic laws. The Police Chief explained that: • The City's current ordinance prohibits electric scooters and pocket bikes from operating on city streets, while electric bicycles are generally permitted except on state highways. • Many surrounding communities currently do not have ordinances addressing electric scooters and are also evaluating potential regulations. • Other Kansas cities have adopted requirements such as minimum age limits, helmet use, and speed restrictions. • The Police Department has focused on educating riders rather than issuing citations while increasing public awareness of the ordinance. • Officers have stopped several riders to explain the current regulations but have not issued citations, preferring an educational approach before enforcement. Council and residents also discussed: • Safety concerns involving riders traveling on both sidewalks and streets. • The lack of sidewalks in several neighborhoods. • The responsibility of parents to educate children on safe riding practices. • The need for clearer state and local regulations as new electric transportation devices continue to become more common. • The importance of preventing serious accidents before they occur. Staff noted that the school had previously been asked to remind students about bicycle and scooter safety before the end of the school year. No action was taken. Council agreed additional research is needed and directed staff to continue evaluating possible ordinance revisions and safety measures for future discussion.

8. Utility Minimums

Minutes:
Staff presented a discussion regarding minimum utility charges after a landlord questioned being billed the full minimum utility charge during a short vacancy between tenants. The property had been vacant for approximately one week between a move-out and move-in, resulting in the account temporarily reverting to the landlord's name and receiving a minimum bill. Staff noted they were unable to locate a City ordinance addressing the issue and believe the practice is based on utility billing policy. Staff explained that minimum utility charges help offset the costs associated with meter reading, maintaining infrastructure, and ensuring utility service remains available to the property. Staff presented two possible approaches for Council consideration: • Continue charging the full minimum utility charge during vacancy periods. • Prorate the minimum charge based on the number of days the property remains in the landlord's name, while still charging for any actual utility usage. Council discussed the advantages and disadvantages of prorating minimum charges. Concerns included: • Additional manual billing adjustments and increased administrative workload. • The potential for billing errors if prorated accounts are not restored correctly. • Fairness to landlords paying a full month's minimum for only a few days of vacancy. • The City's need to recover costs associated with maintaining utility service availability. Council also discussed the possibility of disconnecting utility service during vacant periods at the landlord's request, allowing landlords to choose between paying minimum utility charges or paying applicable disconnect and reconnect fees when service is restored. Staff noted this approach would require additional operational considerations and could vary depending on the utility involved. No action was taken. Staff will review possible administrative solutions and return to the Council with recommendations for a simpler and more consistent utility billing policy.

9. Lease Purchase 2026

Street Sweeper

Minutes:
Staff explained that during the 2026 budget process, the Council had agreed to purchase a new 2026 Global Street Sweeper through a lease-purchase agreement. As the sweeper is expected to arrive in late August, financing arrangements are now being

finalized. Staff noted that Kansas law requires the Council minutes to specifically document approval of the lease-purchase agreement. Although the purchase had been discussed and agreed upon during budget work sessions, no formal motion approving the financing could be found in the official minutes. Staff requested Council approval of a lease-purchase agreement with Citizens State Bank for an amount not to exceed $325,000 with a five-year term, and authorization for the Mayor and City Administrator to execute all documents necessary to complete the transaction. Motion: Council Member Kessler moved to approve the lease-purchase financing with Citizens State Bank pursuant to K.S.A. 10-1116c for the purchase of one 2026 Global Street Sweeper in an amount not to exceed $325,000, and to authorize the Mayor and City Administrator to execute all documents necessary to complete the transaction. Second: Council Member Whitcomb Vote: Ayes: 5 / Nays: 0 / Abstained: 0 Motion Passed.

10. Report of City Officers

a. City Administrator

Discussion items

Minutes:

Tree Trimming / Alley Access • Jeremy updated the Council regarding the City's upcoming tree trimming efforts. Property owners along Route 1 have received notices requesting that vegetation extending into alleyways be trimmed back. • The City is allowing residents 30 days to complete trimming before City crews begin addressing remaining areas. • Jeremy explained that overgrown vegetation has made it difficult for City trucks, including utility bucket trucks, to access alleys during emergencies. During the July 4th storm outage between Chestnut and Maple, crews had difficulty accessing lines due to tree branches, creating concerns about damaging property, gas meters, and landscaping while attempting repairs. • The City's plan is to work through alleyways using the route books, trimming only what is necessary to maintain access and provide proper clearance around utility lines. • Council discussed concerns regarding communication with property owners before trimming. Jeremy stated he would ensure staff speaks with residents when possible to explain what needs to be trimmed. • Council members agreed that communication with residents will help prevent misunderstandings and unnecessary trimming. Greer Sewer Project Update • Jeremy reported that the Greer sewer project has been completed. • The parking lot restoration is progressing and is approximately 75–95% complete. Additional rock may still be needed, but the area is leveling out well. Employee Update – Mike Strausz Retirement • Jeremy informed the Council that Mike Strausz will be leaving the City after 26 years of service. • Mike explained that he and his brother purchased a portion of Heartland Irrigation approximately two years ago, and the business has grown to the point where additional personnel are needed. After discussions with City staff, the decision was made that the transition was the best option moving forward. • Mike thanked the City, Council members, administrators, and employees for the opportunity to serve the community. He expressed appreciation for the support he has received over the years and stated he has enjoyed working for the City. • Mike noted that the City has prepared for this transition. Jeff Wedel has stepped into the street responsibilities, and Andrew Hernmstein has completed his wastewater certification, allowing him to operate the wastewater plant. • Mike stated he plans to maintain his wastewater license and will remain available to assist if needed. • Council members thanked Mike for his many years of service and dedication to the City. Mike stated his anticipated last day with the City will be September 1, 2026, unless an earlier transition date is determined. Delinquent Utility Account • Jeremy updated the Council regarding a delinquent account. The customer previously met with staff and established a payment plan; however, only one payment has been made, and the account is currently past due again. • Council discussed the City's history of working with businesses on delinquent accounts and the importance of balancing collections with the ability of businesses to continue operating. • Staff noted that the customer has been encouraged to communicate with the City if they are unable to make payments so an alternative arrangement can be discussed.

b. City Clerk

Minutes:
Budget Work Session • Stephanie reminded the Council of the scheduled budget work sessions in the upcoming week.
Utility Account Write-Off Policy Discussion – Assistant City Clerk • Frances requested Council guidance regarding inactive utility accounts that remain on the books. She explained that some accounts have been inactive for several years, with balances ranging from small amounts to several thousand dollars. • Staff has attempted collection efforts, including sending notices and submitting accounts to collections; however, some accounts are returned because the cost of collection exceeds the amount owed. • Council discussed creating a written policy establishing guidelines for when accounts may be written off. • Frances reported that the collection agency recommended considering a thresholds due to the staff time and court costs involved with pursuing smaller balances. • Council discussed concerns that a public write-off threshold could encourage customers to leave unpaid balances and agreed that any write-offs should remain an internal process based on individual circumstances. • Council discussed holding accounts for a period of time before writing them off, similar to past practices, and reviewing each situation individually. • Council noted that factors such as returned mail, unsuccessful collection attempts, death of the account holder, or lack of responsible parties should be considered when determining whether an account should be written off.
Utility Payment Processing Fees • Council discussed the fees associated with utility payments made by credit card and debit card. • Staff confirmed that credit and debit card payments currently include a processing fee of approximately 2.5%. • Staff explained that customers may also use an electronic check (E-check) option, which has a flat $1.50 processing fee. • Council asked about fees associated with automatic payments. Staff confirmed that there is currently no charge for customers using auto pay. • Staff noted that with the upcoming utility billing system changes, the City will be absorbing some of the payment processing fees.

11. Adjourn Meeting

Minutes:

Motion: Council Member Kessler moved to adjourn meeting @ 7:40 pm Second: Council Member Parker Vote: Ayes: 5 / Nays: 0 / Abstained: 0 Motion Passed