

**Meeting of the Vilonia City Council
July 16, 2024**

Members present: Jim King, Joe Maxwell, Mike Matos, James Firestone, and Steven Craig.

Meeting Prayer: Led by Preston Scroggin

Pledge of Allegiance: By all.

Meeting called to order by Mayor Preston Scroggin.

Established quorum.

Approval of June 18, 2024, Minutes: Motion of approval made by Joe Maxwell, seconded by Jim King, correction requested by Mike Matos, approved by all, motion passed.

Approval of Financial Statement for June 2024: Motion of approval made by Jim King, seconded by James Firestone, approved by all, motion passed.

Reports of City Departments:

- (A) Fire Department:** Jimmy Hoofman stated there have 627 runs. Recent training was Forcible Entry Training, upcoming training will be EMR (Emergency Medical Responder). Upcoming on July 26 and 27 is Basic Auto-Extraction Training. Recently participated in the Fourth of July event and a Little Rock Fire Captain funeral. Building permits 57 this year, 9 for June, 7 so far for July, one being the main building for Harbor Home. Code Enforcement is working on contacting residents to clean up properties with overgrown grass. Reminded citizens it is summertime, cut your grass.
- (B) Planning Commission:** Brady Zweifel stated the PC last met on June 27, 2024, and gave a variance to the Landmark Baptist Church Family Life Center (gym/worship facility). They also discussed mobile home zoning, moving forward with the UDO, and the next meeting will be July 25, 2024, at 7PM, and there will be public hearing before the meeting starts. They will discuss amendments to the Highway Mixed Use Zoning to remove the mini-storage buildings as permitted use and change to conditional use.
- (C) Police Department:** Brad McNew stated they are working on applying for new grants, specifically the grant we received a few years ago for new radios has opened back up and we are applying for it. Also applied for a grant for vests to replace our old ones. Today, there was a burglary at Mood Swings Vape. They broke in and we have recovered a gun and stolen vehicle; the county is working the vehicle and a couple of guns.
- (D) Sewer Department:** Joe Maxwell bragged on Brandon Betts, who presented. Blowers were put in Friday, but we're waiting on VFD to come in to bring the third one online. The headworks will be in at the end of August and that will be the last update at the plant right now, though we will be doing some updates to some lift stations. Maxwell mentioned the Sewer Committee will discuss what the next expansion will be at their next meeting.

(E) Street Department: Mayor Scroggin stated there are only two men, trying to keep grass off the roadways and ditch work and cleaning drains. We are being inundated with requests on the drainage ditches. We get to those as we can. We expect to have a company in mid-August come through and clear those ditches. That's always been a courtesy the Street Department works hard to offer, but they may be behind for awhile.

- a. Dove Creek Subdivision has no underground drainage and we have had problems around there for awhile. We've identified with our engineer a few years back and he's going to go in and work those intersections, starting next week, and get them taken care of. When we get the money, estimates say \$1.2 million, we'll build up the streets to help get water out. The crew working Church Street will be moving to Saddle Creek to do concrete work on the manhole drain covers. Church Street should be finished by mid-September. That was all paid with grant money from Federal DOT and ARDOT.
- b. The Naylor Road project, also funded with ARDOT grant money, is planned to be done at the same time. Asphalt prices have risen so the 1.1 mile Naylor Road project, with no milling, came in at \$245,000. The county is using a company from Missouri to cape seal their portion of Naylor Road. The Street Department has an annual budget of about \$200,000 and two employees. We've identified about \$8-10 million in overlay projects we could do and we're going to continue to search and apply for grants.
- c. We've received lots of calls about decorative street lights, night watchers, and light poles – those all belong to and are maintained by Entergy, we only pay the bills and report the outages. If you see lights out, let us know and we'll report them to Entergy.
- d. Looking forward, we have the two bridges in Saddle Creek on North Beryl and Graddy Loop pre-engineered and we're looking for grant money to fund those. We are also on the lookout for grants to fund the sidewalks out by the high school. The mayor and engineer are working on applying for a Safe School Program grant to fund extending the sidewalk all the way down to South Bailey. That may be part of the Metroplan money. They will be putting in a turn lane on South Church off the bypass. Currently funded projects have been primarily funded through DOT grant money with a little ARP funds.

(F) Park & Rec: Terry Shannon presented. Co-ed softball started last week with 15 teams signed up to play. Season will run to August 1 with a post-season tournament the week of August 5th. We've started Sandlot Baseball again on Friday nights for the month of July, with the first game last week. Over 60 kids showed up. This week, we're opening up the field to 13u and 16u. This is a free event and Concessions is open for it. Currently working on budgets for field renovations at the softball complex. Fall baseball and softball is going to start in September with sign-ups in August. Planning to start a monthly "Movies the Park" event – first one will be July 26 at the Baseball Complex; we're going to show Sandlot. This is also a free event. Currently have the screen, working on getting the projector.

Public Comment:

(A) Saddle Creek Residents-Street issues:

- a. 5 residents of Saddle Creek attended the meeting to discuss their concerns about the streets in their subdivision. They state the street has cracks and floods when it rains. There are holes along the culvert line. The mayor stated the streets were designed to flood during rains to transport water. Councilman Craig stated the culvert makes two 90-degree turns that significantly slows water drainage and that needs to be fixed. Craig also mentioned the Beryl bridge has an outdated culvert style. Residents mentioned the street itself is sinking and when it rains, waters can take hours to recede from the street. Firestone confirmed he has noticed water damage along the sides of the road. One resident mentioned the waters can be up to his hip, making the street hazardous or impossible to navigate for residents and emergency personnel. Mayor Scroggin and Councilman Craig both stated replacing the Beryl bridge should alleviate much of that issue. That replacement has been planned but has not yet been funded – the engineer mentioned the next funding cycle will open in August. Mayor Scroggin mentioned the land Saddle Creek was built on was a very flat watershed field prior to the subdivision's construction. One resident mentioned he has lived on Appaloosa for 9 years and there was no flooding issue for the first 4 years, but then has progressively gotten worse.
- b. City engineer Trey Foster spoke, stating the design of the Saddle Creek subdivision was very poor. "It's flat, there is no drainage to speak of, and the city inherited a massive problem that is going to take a substantial amount of money to fix. . . . As the road gets inundated with water, it seeps in, it eats the subgrade out from underneath it." As the pipe network fails, it allows dirt to fall in, and while a sinkhole is unlikely, holes above the pipes are very possible. "It was designed for the streets to be the drainage system." As we replace the bridges, we will reshape and try to channelize that ditch/creek between the two bridges to allow the water to flow more efficiently, which will reduce the flooding on the streets. Residents asked if the pipes could be cleaned out, Foster explained those options, then reminded them it still comes down to money. The city "does the best we can with the money we got." He then mentioned there are not a lot of grant sources for street repair.
- c. The mayor stated the city has looked at Saddle Creek, Dove Creek, and Alli Paige; the sewer department has 25 lift stations to get water out of Vilonia; Vilonia is just flat.
- d. One resident asked why Saddle Creek was annexed. Noone present had that information. Residents expressed their belief that the issues would have already been resolved by the county if they had not been annexed into city limits. The mayor reiterated the city is listening and constantly trying to find funding to resolve issues. The mayor also stated that city projects are primarily funded through Sales and Use Tax. Property taxes primarily go to the school district. Support local businesses to help "grow revenue here." He mentioned the city operates on a budget of around \$2.9 million (Councilman Matos joked "Not enough" which garnered a round of laughter and agreement.)
- e. A resident asked how the city determines the order of projects. The mayor responded the city mostly decides upgrades chronologically based on subdivision age, but the projects are reviewed on a case-by-case basis for urgency.
- f. The mayor stated there is a state law that states the city can only go 25 feet from the middle of the road. The water issue requires the city to go through the Corps of Engineers.

- g. A resident asked what grants the city is currently looking at that could cover this project. Mayor Scroggin responded the bridge program will be through the Arkansas Department of Emergency Management (ADEM) Hazard Mitigation Grant. We've had that help fund 8-12 bridges in the last few years. There are also FEMA Hazard Mitigation funds, but they are harder to get. Road repair work can qualify for City Aid Program, but they like to focus on through roads with high traffic. There aren't a lot of rehabilitation grants for subdivision streets. The mayor said he plans to slow down and focus on the Saddle Creek bridges and the citywide sidewalk grants to see where we're at.
- h. Street Department Superintendent Matt Rust notified the Mayor he would take a track-hoe to Saddle Creek to clean out the end of the culverts.

Announcements:

- **Per the City:** The City of Vilonia contributed to the Fourth of July Fireworks show out of Parks Fund. They cooked over 2200 hot dogs. Matos voiced his support and wish that the city take over the show.
 - **New business** – Poppy's Pig Out is reopening on Main Street across from Kieth's.
 - **Reminder the city has an app.** Search "ConnectVilonia" on the Apple App or Google Play Store. This app will allow you to receive notifications from the city on your phone.
 - **Spirit of Vilonia update:** Have not heard back from them yet. Their contact person is currently recovering from illness. Mayor advised Matos to share his questions and concerns with the council, that per the city lawyer they are less a legal issue and more one the council should discuss together. Matos suggested that be saved for another time.
- (A) **Department recognition by Council person Beene:** Beene was not present. Mayor spoke on her behalf to thank the Vilonia Planning Commission. They spend long hours with no pay and we want to thank them for their service.
- (B) **Chamber of Commerce:** On behalf of the Vilonia Chamber of Commerce, Will Atkins of Conway Bounce Houses
 - Thank you to the City of Vilonia, Vilonia Fire Department, and Junior Firefighters for your help with the US Flags display. Our goal is to add another 6 flags next year along 64-B.
 - VACC holds a monthly luncheon on the third Thursday of each month at Simple Simon's. The monthly luncheons are open to the public, both members and non-members. This is a great way to network meet others and enjoy a delicious meal and beverage for a low price of \$8.75 (reduced price for VACC luncheon, covers pizza and salad bar and a beverage)
 - guest speakers:
 - July - Brooke with Rausch Coleman
 - August - Central AR Karting

- Our next event will be Fall Fest. Fall Fest is set for: Saturday October 12th 10am-4pm at the Veterans Museum. Booth fees are \$25.00 for members and \$35.00 nonmembers, more details will be posted on our website and social media closer to the event. Fall Fest is open to the public and free to attend.
- In November, we are looking for new VACC board members for the 2025-26 year.

(C) Vilonia Community Development Corporation: Councilman Craig spoke. The VCDC will be hosting the 2024 Vilonia Teacher Business Fair at the Vilonia High School Gym, August 13, 12-2PM. It is a chance for local businesses to show nearly 500 educators and Pathway that work at the school, which is our largest employer here in the city, what businesses are around and what they offer, to help them know what services are available and help them shop local. That is going to be free for members to set up a table space and \$100 for non-members to set up, which will include a VCDC membership for the remainder of the year. If any business have questions or would like to be involved, check out details on the website at developvilonia.org or on Facebook.

(D) Planning Commission: next meeting is July 25, 2024, at 7 PM. There will be a public hearing regarding Mini-Storage Units moving from Permitted Use to Conditional Use prior to the meeting.

(E) UCA CDI Advanced year class will be touring Vilonia on July 29, 2024. We were chosen out of the entire state.

Old Business:

(A) Spirit of Vilonia: Have not heard back yet. Mike requested the council meet and discuss. Mayor offered to call a work session. No decision was made.

New business:

(A) Audit for 2022 completed and submitted to Legislative Audit. There were no findings.

(B) Discussion on Playground equipment for Parkwood Meadows City Park (Remembrance Park) and the Softball Complex. As the Church Street Project nears completion, there are some ARP funds remaining, so the city suggests using this to replace the equipment at Remembrance Park (which was removed due to its age and deterioration) and add playground equipment to the Softball Complex. The proposed equipment purchase would be approximately \$86,000 out of ARP money with 40% off and free shipping, saving us about \$20,000. This includes installation, drainage, and curb. Firestone mentioned and Scroggin agreed the donation from the Wassom Family should be noted on the new equipment. Planning Commission member Brady Zweifel mentioned there is an annual grant through the Arkansas Department of Parks, Heritage and Tourism for up to \$100,000 that could fund parks and park equipment. The mayor responded the city has

applied for that grant repeatedly but is at a disadvantage due to the median income of Vilonia being rather high. King stated "In Central Arkansas, Maumelle is the only area that shows a higher average income than Vilonia." Matos brought the discussion back to the budget numbers, stating the city had allocated \$851,033.11 for the Church Street improvement project and sewer improvements. The mayor stated that the efforts of city staff, particularly Matt Rust and Brandon Betts, has saved the city enough money on these projects to fund the new playground equipment.

Maxwell asked if the proposed equipment was handicap accessible. Mayor Scroggins and member Craig stated they were uncertain but did not think so. Matos mentioned he believed there were grants available exclusively for accessible equipment. Maxwell restated he thought the city should keep accessibility for children in mind for future purchases. Craig mentioned the Remembrance Park equipment has built in security lighting. Motion made to spend \$86,886.88 out of ARP money to pay for the playground renovations by Craig, seconded by Maxwell; all in favor, motion passed.

(C) Annexation update – presented by Brandon Betts

The annexation has been delayed for the last year and a half due to trying to get one signature from a land-owner who has been out of the country and difficult to contact. We removed him from the annexation process but added another plot of land in the meantime, which everyone has signed, and it is currently at the county judge and the council will be seeing it shortly. What was taken in was three or four of the lots where there was sewer, straightened up the intersections at South Mount Olive, South Church, and Stanley, and squared up the bypass coming into the city. The next step after dropping off at the county is going before the judge, and then it comes back to us. Betts stated for residents behind Saddle Creek to get sewer, they would need to be in the city, so they would need to annex in at their cost. Matos stated his understanding of the residents' upset, Betts responded septic tanks added more water to the problem, while sewer would be the best option for everyone. Matos questioned where would we have the sewer where we're proposing to annex. Betts responded it will be annexed. As the annexation is voluntary, there will not be a public hearing. A short discussion on annexation law in Arkansas was held. Betts specified if the area behind Saddle Creek decides to annex in, they will need to go through the process themselves, going through the judge before going to the city.

Motion to adjourn made by King, stand adjourned.

Date: 9/17/24

Mayor: 

Recorder: 