

CLARKSTON CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
July 11, 2016

ROLL CALL: Terry Beadles, Skate Pierce, Belinda Campbell, Kelly Blackmon, Monika Beauchamp, John Murray, Brian Kolstad

STAFF:

Chief Cooper, Chief Hastings, PWD Martin, City Attorney Richardson, Clerk Storey

AGENDA CHANGES:

APPROVAL OF: Minutes of the June 27, 2016, Regular Meeting were approved as presented.

COMMUNICATIONS:

A. From the Public:

Tom Martin, 421 11th Street, Clarkston.
Alice White, 742 13th Street, Clarkston.
Jennifer Haddock, 631 3rd Street, Clarkston.
Lynn Thompson, 540 8th Street, Clarkston.
Rose Marie Granlund.
Amy Kelly, 500 Sycamore, Clarkston.
James Evans, 1115 Highland Ave, Clarkston.
Stacy Wolfenbarger, 712 2nd Street, Clarkston.
Rose Marie Bunch, 2519 Solar Hill Drive, Clarkston.

B. From Mayor:

Mayor Lawrence reported that she wrote letters of recommendation to two Clarkston High School students who are applying for scholarships.

Mayor Lawrence announced that there will be a free food distribution on July 15 at the Lutheran Church.

Mayor Lawrence said she provided some copies from the Washington Administrative Code regarding staffing for fire response to structure fires. Mayor Lawrence said that the EMS Levy that is voted on each year is used to fund the ambulance budget, not the fire department. There are separate budgets for fire and ambulance. The fire department budget comes from current expense as does the police budget. Mayor Lawrence commented that last year there were 8 structure fires, which is good news.

C. From Staff:

Dan Sokoloski said the Fire/EMS department is a team, not separate departments. He commented on the many tasks the department does and said that all employees take part in these activities and are cross trained. Sokoloski said Clarkston voters approved \$1.35 on a \$100,000 house to support EMS. He said it is impossible to draw a line and separate fire from EMS. He said at the current rate the department will respond to about 2,200 calls this year. Back to back calls are inevitable. He said the budget was adopted with the understanding that there would be 12 full time employees. He explained the circumstances when a fire rescue can be made with fewer than four staff on site. He said there have been six fire related deaths in the time he has been employed.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Finance: Councilmember Beadles reported the bills were reviewed and approved for payment. Total expenditures for June 30, 2016 of \$3,280.85 and for July 11, 2016 of \$403,443.99. MOTION BY BEADLES/PIERCE to approve the bills. Motion carried.

Public Safety: Councilmember Beadles reported on the July 5 meeting. Chief Cooper discussed the mechanical issues with the utility truck. The repairs might be more than the value of the truck. Chief is

also exploring options regarding ongoing oil leaks with the 2008 ambulance. Testing to promote for an open captain position is scheduled.

Effective July 11 staffing of the fire department will return to 3 per shift as staffed in 2011. Jared Lutes stated his concerns about safety. Rolin Heytvelt suggested contacting the legislature about funding assistance for LEOFF I liabilities.

Chief Hastings reported the number of fireworks related calls.

Chief Hastings is reviewing a proposed ordinance that would allow chickens in the city.

Public Works: Councilmember Pierce reported on the July 5 meeting. Committee had extensive discussion about recycling. A feasibility study should be the first step.

A plan to add public restrooms and parking at Vernon Park with lodging tax funds will require some planning to show it is tourism related.

WWCC would like to place someone as a summer intern at the WWTP. We will look at that for 2017.

The alley acquisition is complete. PWD Martin is looking for funding options for Bridge Street improvements.

Admin Committee: Councilmember Blackmon reported on the July 11 meeting. Committee discussed the 2017 EMS levy with Chief Cooper. Cooper said he needs to have the budget ready for council approval at the July 25 meeting. Committee discussed an increase to the card room tax rate and recommend no changes at this time.

Community Development: Councilmember Campbell reported on the July 5 meeting. Committee reviewed a draft of the chicken ordinance. Language to address unsanitary conditions needs to be added. It should also include that commercial sales of eggs will not be allowed.

Outside Organizations:

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

NEW BUSINESS:

A. Holly Tietz, re: Fire Department Staffing.

Holly Tietz, 414 7th Street, said that apparently communication has been cut off between the council and the fire department on the recommendation of the city attorney. She stated that it seems the council is not concerned with the safety of the fire employees. Tietz spoke about safety concerns for residents and firefighters and the possible impacts that could result from reduced staffing. She said she votes for the EMS levy with the expectation that it funds 12 full time positions. She accused the mayor and council of not holding the safety of the residents and firefighters in highest regard. She questioned the legality of using levy monies for something other than what it was intended for. Tietz asked the council to reconsider and direct the fire chief to fill the two vacant positions.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Councilmember Beauchamp said she wondered why a new SAFER grant, which funded two positions in the fire department, was not applied for in 2014. Chief Cooper explained the grant is for added personnel or if you are seeking a way not to reduce force. At the application time there was not a staffing issue. She said there is a trend nationally that fire departments have become primarily EMS services and it is very expensive nationwide. She said we don't want to put a price on people's lives. She said it is not us against them and not all components that make up a decision can be discussed. She said until she became a councilmember, she did not understand what all would be involved in making decisions. She said the city is not spending EMS funds on other things. She thanked the audience for coming and speaking out. She commented that Clarkston is almost the only city our size in the state with a career department and an ambulance service. Most are consolidating services. It doesn't make sense to be redundant.

Councilmember Campbell said her concern and dedication to the safety of the residents has not changed and will not. She said there was an incident at the Port recently and the fire department provided

outstanding service.

Councilmember Beadles thanked Councilmember Beauchamp for her comments. He said sometimes the process of union negotiations can make coming together difficult and the process can be slow. He said the total budget for Fire/EMS is about \$2 million. Beadles said the City has been spending more than it receives in revenue and that has to stop or there won't be enough to operate at some future point. He said long term sustainability is the issue.

Councilmember Pierce commented that this is about sustainability and council is looking at ways to make it work. Some council members are looking at a possible sales tax increase. He said he appreciates the work done by the fire department. Council is the steward of Clarkston's financial future. MOTION BY PIERCE/KOLSTAD for the Public Safety Committee to come up with some viable solutions to the continuing financial sustainability of the City to present to council by August 22. Motion carried.

Councilmember Kolstad gave kudos to the police department for assisting when a neighbor's dog was hit by a car.

Chief Cooper commented that this has been an interesting discussion and it appears that there is no change in direction for staffing. He asked that council recognize that the employees are highly committed to their jobs. He said the potential savings from reducing two personnel is about \$160,000. But there will be additional overtime costs as a result that will reduce actual savings to just over \$100,000. He said he is sad that staffing will be reduced, but the department will continue to provide excellent service.

MOTION BY BLACKMON/PIERCE to maintain staffing at twelve firefighter/EMS positions until the August 22nd recommendation can be presented. Councilmember Campbell asked what the current staffing level is. Cooper said there are ten career positions that has been augmented by reserves. An agreement with the union that allows for the use of reserves to replace shifts for those vacant positions ends on July 12 when staffing will be reduced to 10 with three man crews. He said it might be possible to negotiate an extension of the agreement. Cooper said council could authorize hiring two employees, but the city would have to give 90 day notice to reduce staff. Cooper said the motion could be amended to negotiate with the union to continue to use reserves until the council report is made on August 22.

Blackmon amended his motion to negotiate with the union to allow continued use of reserves until August 22. Second by Pierce. Motion to amend carried 6-1, Murray opposed.

Amended motion carried, 6-1, Murray opposed.

Councilmember Beauchamp commented that the current budget was approved by the prior council. She commented that there has not been a union contract since the end of 2014. Attorney Richardson commented that negotiations have been ongoing since 2014, it just has not been resolved yet. Richardson also explained that when a budget is adopted there is discretion over whether budgeted funds are actually spent. Beauchamp commented that when comparing wages, you need to look at a span of time, not necessarily just the most recent change since some positions, such as the city attorney don't receive an adjustment every year.

Beadles said the budget sets the parameters that the city will not exceed. It doesn't mean it is necessarily an open checkbook to spend everything.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: Council went into Executive Session at 8:33 p.m. to discuss union negotiations. No decisions are anticipated as a result of the session. Expected duration is 30 minutes. Council returned to open session at 9:03 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT:

Meeting adjourned at 9:03 p.m.

Vickie Storey, City Clerk

Monika Lawrence, Mayor

Total Fund Expenditures, 6/30/16	Ck #61944-46, 20160602-04	\$3,280.85
Total Fund Expenditures, 7/11/16	Ck #61991-62069	\$121,969.03
Payroll, 6/30/16	Ck #61947-90	\$281,474.96