



City of Carthage, Missouri **SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL**

April 17, 2024 - 6:30 PM
CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS

MINUTES

To hear the full comments and discussions, please refer to the recorded Youtube video of this meeting.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H6zjRFgrq7k>

The Carthage City Council met in a special session on the above date in the Council Chambers at 06:30 PM with Mayor Dan Rife presiding. Fire Chief Ryan Huntley gave the invocation. Police Chief Bill Hawkins led the flag salute.

The following Council Members answered roll call: Derek Peterson, Lori Leece, Terri Heckmaster, Dustin Edge, Alan Snow, Tom Barlow, Tiffany Cossey, Jana Schramm. Council Member Chris Taylor was absent. City Administrator Greg Dagnan and City Attorney Nate Dally were also present.

The following Department Heads were present: Police Chief Bill Hawkins, Fire Chief Ryan Huntley, Public Works Director Zeb Carney, Parks & Recreation Director Abi Almandinger, Assistant City Administrator Traci Cox, and City Clerk Miranda Deal.

Mr. Snow made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cossey to approve the minutes of the April 9 and 11, 2024 Council Meeting's.

Ms. Leece made a motion, seconded by Mr. Peterson, to amend the minutes from April 9 that were presented. She stated that on page 7 of 13, the names in the motion with the one abstaining were incorrect. The Ayes still included Mr. Peterson who abstained and Leece was not listed. Motion carried.

Motion carried to amend the minutes as amended.

During Citizens Participation, Michael Miller, HR Coordinator for the City of Carthage, read a letter that a majority of City employees signed expressing their support for current administration. The employees trust the current administration, but do not trust the new council due to them attempting to remove employees without cause. The City has been operating more efficiently and productively over the last few years with the current administration in place, and there are fears that the new council is going to affect that in a negative way.

Chelsea Cholley, 1707 Grand and also a City employee, spoke to the council about their actions and attempts at removing employees without justification and without following the proper procedures. She wants the council members to seek out information to make well informed decisions, treat city staff with respect and dignity, and adhere to all policies and procedures related to staff employment.

Bill Smith, 10137 Fir Road, Public Works employee, spoke on the City employees and how they are the engine that keeps the City running. He stated that employees will leave and parts of the City departments will fail.

Jen Kirby, Tourism Director, spoke on current employees and how great of a team they are. They have done many great things that help grow Carthage. She asked the new council what their vision for the City was, and what happens after they dismantle the administration. She stated that she does her job well, but she doesn't feel safe. She encourages everyone to get involved and get information straight from the source.

Abi Almandinger, Parks and Recreation Director, spoke on past administration and current administration and how she has experienced working with both. She feels the current administration is more open and honest and does not try to hide things. She brought up the CVB audit and the statements made by Mr. Snow at a prior meeting regarding the charges against the former CVB director. She fully trusts Greg and would not have taken her job if she didn't trust him.

Michael Keith, 1502 S Garrison, and City employee, expressed concerns similar to the others who have spoke. He thanked Ms. Leece for asking the questions she has, and many others thank her as well. He also thanked Mr. Taylor, who was not in attendance, for his support of City employees and his kindness. He also condemned the actions of the other 7 council members.

Dene Sardella, Court Clerk, recently moved here and has worked in the City for just under 10 years. She expressed her support for Mr. Dally and thanks him for his expertise and service. She feels lucky to have her job and work for the current administration. She expects Council to vote how they truly believe instead of being afraid to vote how they believe. If they vote because they are afraid of something, they don't deserve to represent the citizens. She also thinks it is a great thing that the meetings are recorded and streamed so that people who are unable to attend, can still watch and know what is going on. She hopes that the City can truly move forward and get back to improving the City.

Karen Trotter, 615 Euclid Blvd, gave some population statistics. She thanked all the departments for all of their work they have done. She wished Nate the best and wished that he was staying. She also offered her continued support to Mayor Rife who has been elected three times to Council and twice as Mayor. She also thanked Mr. Dagnan for his over 16 years of service to the City. She does not agree with Mayor being removed from office, and does not believe this is being handled properly. She also addressed Dr. Barlow and his education experience. She said he hopes he can help the other council members work together with the other departments to support many of the kids that are living below the poverty level within the City.

Heather Orscheln, owner of Revel Boutique, spoke about how the current issues are affecting her business. She chose to build her business in Carthage rather than Joplin because she believes in community over competition. She wants everyone to give the new council members a chance, shames both sides for what is happening, and wants to see something positive from everyone.

Bill Putnam, 624 Belle Air, congratulated the new council members on the election. He also cleared up some statements that have been made about the Carthage Citizens United group.

He stated that their mission is to find qualified council members and City officials. They plan to be active in next years elections, and many more to come.

Mayor Rife reported that budget meetings will begin again soon.

During reports from Council Members, Mr. Peterson stated that he appreciates the public discussion, he has not been influenced by others, he is not the CCU and he is not his father. He intended to run for city council long before he moved back from Arkansas. He also stated that he has no adverse inclination towards city employees, the recent storm showed the great staff the City has and the great work they do.

Ms. Leece thanked everyone for their thoughts. She also stated that the reason she has voted the way she has is because she still has not seen any proof of why certain people need to be removed from their positions. She wants to press restart and start over on everything and continue the great work to make the city better.

Ms. Heckmaster thanked all who spoke tonight, she thanked the employees for their view and she will carefully consider it. She asked that as we move forward, everyone is treated with respect, is courteous and kind. She also added later that she wished Nate well.

Mr. Edge thanked all who spoke, he also reminded everyone that he ran for council back in 2020 and was unsuccessful. His desire is to serve the citizens of ward 3 and wants to improve Carthage in whatever way he can. He has no personal agenda and no opportunities for gain, he is here as a servant and looks forward to serving his ward. He also thanked Nate, he asked for some information and Nate was quick to respond.

Mr. Snow said that everyone has a right to speak and say what they said. He is concerned with how they move forward now, because he heard that the employees don't trust this body and they are getting ready to go through the budget process. He said things are going to have to get cut and he is going to make decisions based on what is best for the people he represents. He doesn't want anyone questioning why he decides what he does, he will not budget things out of fear of someone coming to the microphone and speaking.

Ms. Cossey stated that she apologized to Ms. Leece for comments that were made. She also referred to the CWEP employees almost a year ago and what they did after the threat of salaries being frozen came up. She respects everyone's right to speak and doesn't want any employees to be afraid for their jobs. Employees can't lose job without cause but the City Administrator position is different.

Ms. Schramm said she wants this term to be one of the best things she has ever done whenever her term is up.

Mr. Dally reported on the complaints that were filed with the State Auditor's office. Some of the complaints were the hiring of Mr. Dagnan as Assistant City Administrator and City Administrator appointment process, his residence, his salary, CA supervision of department heads. He read the auditor's response which stated that the City followed proper procedures for all the items listed above. Another complaint filed was the lack of approval by Mayor for a grant to purchase property within the City. The Mayor did not approve the grant because the matching funds that were proposed came from a local grant, in which the council voted that only state and federal grants could be used. He also mentioned that he asked other municipal attorneys their opinions on the code and charter language relating to the City Administrator.

Other attorneys agreed with Nate's interpretation of the code and that the council and the Mayor must agree to remove the City Administrator.

Police Chief Bill Hawkins reported that he hopes that we can all move forward and work together to make our City great.

Assistant City Administrator Traci Cox admitted that these have been some troubling times and that the City really does have a great team. She stated that she works on the budget a lot and she understands what Mr. Snow is saying regarding the cuts that will need to be made. She stated that there has been a change to the budget process in which the department heads prioritize their projects. The prioritization is kept in mind while making cuts. She knows there are tough decisions to make and she feels that the department heads will respect and understand what has to happened. She agreed with Ms. Leece, and that she wants to restore the trust and wants the council to know that she will never mislead anyone, she wants there to be transparency and wants to help everyone do things the correct way.

City Administrator Greg Dagnan stated that there were many people who voiced their support via letters or by speaking. He doesn't take credit for anything, the credit should be given to the employees who have accomplished everything they have. The employees serve and work hard and have voiced their concerns and stated what is best for Carthage. He encourages that the council listen to them so that way things can move forward and people can get back to work serving the community.

Under new business, discuss law firm options for opinion on City Administrator removal. Ms. Cossey stated that she believed this item should be for the 26th where the council was supposed to discuss the options. She believed that tonight they were supposed to look at the contract for litigation services of Paul Martin who will be handling the impeachment process. She stated that she brought many copies of the contract for the council members. It was not on the agenda so it could not be presented. Ms. Cossey made a motion, seconded by Ms. Schramm to suspend the rules on going through the Council Bill request process to have this on the agenda for Tuesday's meeting. She believes that going through the process of Council Bill requests will slow things down. Mr. Dagnan mentioned that MML had given advice that the City follow the normal procedures for council bills and no city staff impede on the impeachment process. Ms. Leece mentioned that she still has not seen proof of wrongdoings for this impeachment process. Mr. Dagnan stated that MML also advised that articles of impeachment must be discussed in open council session. They have to be discussed out loud and agreed upon. Mr. Edge asked about doing two readings on Tuesday evening, Ms. Cox stated that the rules could be suspended and language be put into the council bill to allow for that. Ms. Cossey withdrew her motion, with the promise that there would be a council bill ready for Tuesday, without interference from City staff.

Ms. Cossey made a motion, seconded by Mr. Peterson to table the discussion of law firm options for opinion of City Administrator removal until Tuesday's meeting. Motion carried.

There were discussions about sending RFQ's out for the attorney opinions. Mr. Dally stated that the RFQ's would be to get a quote, we would just have to send a list of what we were looking for.

Discuss special counsel options for City Attorney assistance. Ms. Cossey made a motion, seconded by Mr. Snow to table this until Tuesday nights meeting until Ms. Cossey could reach out to MML. Motion carried.

During closing comments, Mr. Peterson made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cossey to amend the agenda to allow council members to speak as long as they wish and to make as many motions as they wish. Motion carried with a vote of 7 yeas and 1 nay. Ayes: Peterson, Heckmaster, Edge, Snow, Barlow, Cossey, and Schramm. Nay: Leece
He also mentioned that anything that comes up regarding his father or the case against him, he has abstained or removed himself from the conversation. He also mentioned that he has not heard from anyone in his ward yet, and looks forward to hearing from them.

Ms. Leece stated that she would like to see the city move forward in a different way, and save money by not doing the impeachment process. She believes that everyone could work together if they just reset and start over.

Mr. Snow stated that he had heard from 6 constituents that are opposed to what is happening, and over 50 that are in favor of what is happening.

Ms. Cossey also mentioned that she has heard from 1 who is opposed to what is happening and around 20 who are in favor of what is happening and that has needed to happen for quite some time.

Ms. Cossey made a motion, seconded by Mr. Peterson, to go into closed session according to section 610.021(14) the agenda includes the possibility of a vote to close part of the meeting to discuss records which are protected from disclosure by law. Motion carried at 8:16 pm with a show of hands vote of 7 yeas and 1 nay. Ayes: Peterson, Leece, Heckmaster, Edge, Barlow, Cossey, and Schramm. Nay: Snow.

CLOSED SESSION

Mr. Snow made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cossey, to return to open session at 8:42 pm. Motion carried with a show of hands vote of 8 yeas and 0 nays. Ayes: Peterson, Leece, Heckmaster, Edge, Snow, Barlow, Cossey, and Schramm.

Mr. Snow made a motion, seconded by Mr. Edge, to adjourn the regular session of the Council meeting. Motion carried and meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.

CLOSED SESSION
MINUTES OF THE SPECIAL MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF CARTHAGE, MISSOURI
April 17, 2024

The Carthage City Council met in special session on the above date in City Hall Council Chambers at 6:30 p.m. with Mayor Dan Rife presiding.

Ms. Cossey made a motion, seconded by Mr. Peterson to close the meeting according to Section 610.021 (14) the Agenda includes the possibility of a vote to close part of the meeting to discuss records which are protected from disclosure by law, followed by a roll call vote of 7 yeas and 1 nay. Ayes: Peterson, Leece, Heckmaster, Edge, Barlow, Cossey, and Schramm. Nays: Snow. Motion carried at 8:16 p.m.

There was a short recess before the closed session started. Council went into closed session at 8:30 p.m.

The following Council Members answered roll call: Derek Peterson, Lori Leece, Terri Heckmaster, Dustin Edge, Alan Snow, Tom Barlow, Tiffany Cossey, and Jana Schramm.

City Clerk Miranda Deal, Police Chief Bill Hawkins and Officers Pinnell, Swinehart, Hinojoza, Richards, and Barahona were also present

Ms. Leece made a motion to allow the City Attorney and City Administrator into the closed session. Motion died due to lack of second.

Mr. Hawkins reviewed the statistics that were asked for regarding hit and run accidents with no injuries.

There were questions for Chief Hawkins regarding the processes and procedures that are followed when a leave the scene accident occurs and what constitutes an arrest.

Mr. Snow made a motion, seconded by Ms. Cossey, to return to the regular session of the Council Meeting at 8:42 p.m. followed by a roll call vote of 8 yeas and no nays. Ayes: Peterson, Leece, Heckmaster, Edge, Snow, Barlow, Cossey, and Schramm. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Miranda Deal
City Clerk