

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL, CITY OF CONWAY, ARKANSAS

Conway, Arkansas
Tuesday, 6:00 pm
June 24, 2025

On this date the City Council of the City of Conway, Arkansas met in regular session. The following members being a quorum were present and acting: Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Spurgers, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Hawks, Councilman Jones, and Councilwoman Isby. Also, present and acting: Mayor Bart Castleberry, City Clerk Denise Hurd, and City Attorney Charles Finkenbinder.

Call to Order: Mayor Bart Castleberry

Roll Call: Denise Hurd, City Clerk

Minutes: May 27, 2025

Councilwoman Isby made a motion to approve the minutes of the City Council meeting on May 27, 2025, as submitted. Councilwoman Mehl seconded the motion. The motion carried 8-0.

Monthly Financial Report ending May 31, 2025

Tyler Winningham addressed the Council stating that sales tax in May was down 1.7% resulting in 3.2% year to date. He added that today's report shows that sales tax is up 4.7%, so the year to date would now be 1.9%. He told them that the first Ad Valorem check was received this month which added to the recovery. He pointed out the Street fund had a net revenue for the year due to a \$900,000 payment for overlays. He called their attention to a \$209,000 federal grant line item in the street fund and said that the City is starting to collect reimbursements on the Connect Conway grant money. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to approve the monthly financial report and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The motion to approve carried 8-0.

Report of Standing Committees:

A. Community Development Committee (Airport, Community Development, Code Enforcement, Permits & Inspections, Transportation, & Planning & Development)

1. Consideration to approve waiving all three readings for the ordinances on the June 24, 2025 City Council Agenda.

Councilwoman Isby made a motion to waive all three readings for the ordinances on the June 24, 2025 agenda and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called and the motion carried 8-0.

2. Resolution authorizing Conway Corporation to condemn certain property to construct a water treatment facility and dual voltage substation in the eastern part of the City.

R-25-18

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A2 to the Council. Brett Carroll of Conway Corporation told the Council that this is long term water supply project. He said that in the near future Lake Brewer will not be big enough to serve the community, and by 2037 we will need a new water source. He said that Conway Corp has been working on a way to get water from Greers Ferry Lake to the city of Conway, to supply over 140,000 residents who will need the water supply. He added that plans are underway and the Corp of Engineers as well as others are involved but that certain things must happen before action can be taken. He said that the property in question has been identified as a possible location for a new water treatment plant, and a possible electrical substation as well. He told the Council that they have been in negotiations with the seller of the property and have made offers above the appraised value,

but due to circumstances the process has come to a standstill, making the condemnation process necessary, as time is of the essence. He added negotiations on this property began last August and that there is still an offer on the table that the seller could accept and time has not run out on that, but he is asking for authority to condemn if that becomes the only option. Councilman Spurgers confirmed that the property owners would be paid their asking price, and Councilman Jones pointed out that the City of Conway would not be paying for the purchase of the property, but that responsibility would be on Conway Corporation. There was no one else present to speak for or against this matter. Councilman Grimes made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilman Ledbetter seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution passed 8-0.

3. Consideration to approve Jose Castro for a full term (4-year term) on the Advertising & Promotion Commission.

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A3 to the Council. Councilman Hawkins made a motion to approve the nomination and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The motion carried 8-0.

4. Resolution to grant a license to Blue Sky Transportation to operate a taxi service with the City of Conway.

R-25-19

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A4 to the Council. Councilman Spurgers made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

5. Resolution to approve the low bid for the Runway 4 Extension Project at the Conway Airport.

R-25-20

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A5 to the Council. Mason Brinkley addressed the Council stating that the low bid was received from Weaver Bailey Contractors in the amount of \$4,366,646.95. He added that the funding for the project would come from 90% FAA and 10% ADA. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

6. Resolution to approve applying for the Surface Transportation Block Grant for the College Avenue Bridge Project for the Transportation Department.

R-25-21

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A6 to the Council. Kurt Jones told the Council that this project is the bridge over Tucker Creek on College Avenue which is too small and also has the Kinley Trail pedestrian crossing at the same location. He added that this project will allow the Kinley Trail crossing to become an underpass. He said that a grant was received for the design of the project which is about 60% complete, and that this application is for an 80/20 match grant for the construction with a maximum amount of 3.25 million. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

7. Resolution to authorize the purchase of property located at 959 Farris Road to allow for improvements within this area for cross access and traffic improvements for the Transportation Department.

R-25-22

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A7 to the Council. Kurt Jones told the Council that this is the property on the corner of Prince and Farris where there is much development going

on. He said that this project would allow secondary and cross access across all of those properties back onto Farris to reduce turning movement off of Prince Street. Councilman Spurgers made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Isby seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

8. Ordinance to rezone property located a 332 S. East German Lane from A-1 to S-1.

O-25-53

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A8 to the Council. Anne Tucker addressed the Council stating that the application was seeking rezoning to operate a daycare for children under the age of 2 for the Conway Christian School staff. She said that a daycare is allowed with a conditional use in the A-1 zone but this property is going to be part of the larger Conway Christian School campus, so staff advised that rezoning was appropriate. Emily Farris, applicant addressed the Council and further expounded on the plans for the school daycare. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Jones, Councilman Hawks, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Spurgers, Councilman Hawkins and Councilwoman Isby. The Ordinance passed 8-0.

B. Public Service Committee (Physical Plant, Parks & Recreation, & Sanitation)

1. Resolution to accept grant funding from the Best Friends Animal Society for Conway Animal Services.

R-25-23

Mayor Castleberry presented Item B1 to the Council. Spencer Clawson explained that Conway Animal Services, headed by David Mitchell, participated in a nationwide program to relocate animals which resulted in saving over 2100 animals. He told them that the Department was awarded a \$1,000 grant for their participation. Councilman Grimes made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

2. Ordinance accepting and appropriating grant funds for Conway Animal Services.

O-25-54

Mayor Castleberry presented Item B2 to the Council. Spencer Clawson reminded the Council that they had approved participation in the community cat and kitten intake diversion programming and that this \$7,000 is the first payment on the \$20,000 grant. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Grimes, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Spurgers, Councilwoman Isby, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Jones, and Councilman Hawks. The Ordinance passed 8-0.

3. Consideration to dispose of certain equipment for the Department of Sanitation.

Mayor Castleberry presented Item B3 to the Council. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to approve the disposal and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The motion carried 8-0.

4. Resolution to approve the purchase of a crawler dozer for the Department of Sanitation.

R-25-24

Mayor Castleberry presented Item B4 to the Council. Joe Hopper told the Council that this machine had over 10,000 hours on it. He added that it is being purchased through the Sourcewell contract since it is much needed and can be delivered within a week. He said it

was the highest bid, but only by \$5,000 and still came in under what was budgeted. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

5. Resolution to approve the purchase of a front-load, side-load, and service truck for the Department of Sanitation.

R-25-25

Mayor Castleberry presented Item B5 to the Council. Joe Hopper told the Council that these items also would be purchased from the Sourcewell contract and that they also came in under what was budgeted. Councilman Grimes made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilman Ledbetter seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

C. Public Safety Committee (Police, Fire, District Court, IT, CEOC, City Attorney)

1. Ordinance appropriating funds for the purchase of computer equipment for the Conway Police Department.

This item was tabled until the next City Council meeting.

2. Resolution to apply for a non-matching grant from the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation Grant for the Conway Fire Department.

R-25-26

Mayor Castleberry presented Item C2 to the Council. Chief Winter told the Council that this was a grant to supply airbags for the Fire Department and that a non-matching grant application was successful in the amount of \$21,000. Councilman Grimes made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Isby seconded it. A vote was called, and the Resolution was passed 8-0.

3. Ordinance to approve the five-year financing for the Conway Fire Department and Conway Emergency Operations Center.

O-25-55

Mayor Castleberry presented Item C3 to the Council. Sean Canady told the Council that the radio system has reached the seven-year service mark, and was in need of upgrading. He said the upgrade would include a redundant core offsite at Conway Corp's data center. Chief Winter told the Council that the financing also included the mid-mount aerial apparatus that was approved a few months ago. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Ordinance with the emergency clause and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Jones, Councilwoman Isby, Councilman Hawks, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Spurgers, and Councilman Grimes. The Ordinance with the emergency clause passed 8-0.

D. Old Business

1. Discussion of Conway Fire Department Salary Adjustments.

Councilman Grimes presented to the Council a four-scenario plan which he stressed was a beginning step in the process of creating adjustments to the salaries of the City's firefighters. He reminded the Council that there was a committee that worked closely with the Fire Department to create a new salary structure that would serve well into the future. He went over the scale and each scenario in detail, and the dollar amounts each would add to the present budget. There was much discussion among the Council as to which scenario or parts of scenarios would be feasible at this time. There were comparisons given between Conway

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and other similar sized cities. Several Councilmembers stated a desire to do something immediately to increase firefighter salaries, as only a first step in the process. There was discussion among the Councilmembers as to whether other cities were dealing with the same issues with regards to firefighter salaries. Mayor Castleberry said that it is a nationwide struggle with some cities enlisting help from supplemental volunteer firefighters. Council members and Chief Winter agreed that the tier grid presented, and the incentive pays discussed were a good starting point. It was asked of Mr. Winningham, given the City's current economic standing if adding the increases was feasible. Mr. Winningham replied that it could be done but would be difficult to increase salaries while asking all departments to cut their budgets, adding that the actual results would depend on sales tax revenues. Councilman Grimes detailed the pay scale laid out in Scenario #4: To adopt the new pay scale as presented by Chief Winter and his staff, creating a new Firefighter Senior Engineer, and a new Fire Captain Senior, and creating various levels of certificate pay. He said the new positions would add about \$90,000 to the budget; a 4% raise for the new Fire Captain Senior, education pay at \$25,000, language pay and additional \$7,440, certificate pay \$81,000. He added that taking out the Firefighter Basic and Firefighter General and new positions, everyone else receives 2% at \$82,000 including LOPFI for a grand total of around \$288,000. He explained that it would be necessary to add an additional \$1,000 to the salaries for two of the levels to spread the range of salaries, which would add another \$38,000 to the total. Again, it was stressed that this is the first step, and the matter would be revisited. Mayor Castleberry asked the Council to suspend the rules to take a vote. Councilman Grimes made a motion to suspend the rules, and Councilman Spurgers seconded it. The motion carried 8-0. Councilman Grimes made a motion to adopt the new pay scale, Scenario #4, with these changes: No raise in base pay for Firefighter Intermediate or Advanced. Firefighter Engineer Senior salary would be \$65,000. Firefighter Captain Senior would be \$79,000. In addition, no longevity pay, 2% pay increase across the board, excepting Firefighter Basic and General, or new positions with new base salaries. He added to his motion that these changes are the starting point for future adjustments. Changes would be effective July 1, 2025. Councilman Spurgers seconded the motion. Mr. Winningham added that there would be an Ordinance forthcoming to appropriate the funding for the changes. A vote was called and the motion carried 8-0.

Adjournment-----

PASSED this 24th day of June 2025

APPROVED:

Mayor, Bart Castleberry

City Clerk, Denise Hurd