

**CITY OF JACKSONVILLE  
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JUNE 17, 2021  
6:00 P.M. - 6:53 P.M.**

**REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING - CITY HALL - #1 MUNICIPAL DRIVE**

The City Council of the City of Jacksonville, Arkansas met in a regular session on June 17, 2021 at the regular meeting place of the City Council. Mayor Johnson led a standing audience in the "Pledge of Allegiance" to the flag.

**ROLL CALL:** City Council Members: Dietz, Blevins, Sansing, Mashburn, Traylor, Smith, and Rains answered ROLL CALL. Mayor Johnson also answered ROLL CALL declaring a quorum. PRESENT TEN (7) ABSENT (3). Council Members Bolden, Ray, and Twitty were absent.

Others present for the meeting and by Zoom were: City Attorney Stephanie Friedman, Fire Chief Alan Laughy, Police Chief Brett Hibbs, Finance Director Cheryl Erkel, Parks and Recreation Director Kevin House, CDBG Director Theresa Watson, IT Director Emily Osment, and Leader Newspaper Reporter Rick Kron.

**PRESENTATION OF MINUTES:**

**APPROVAL AND/OR CORRECTION OF MINUTES:**

**Statement from Council Member Blevins:**

Soaring hiring is the motto of the City, everything that defines us points to the fact that the sky is the limit. We have an Air Force Base with planes flying constantly overhead, we have eagle statues in front of City Hall and the Police Department depicting them mid-flight. This City Council is comprised of citizens voted in by the people for the people and our goal is to improve this City with every decision we make. We cannot afford to stay stagnate, we need to be continuously moving forward so we can keep up and not fall behind. Jacksonville use to be on the cutting edge, other cities come here to find out what we were doing to be successful; not anymore. It seems like the newly adopted main underlying theme is - if it's not broke don't fix it. If at any time throughout history, if anyone adopted the idea of if it's not broke don't fix it; we would not be where we are today. We would still be riding horses, we would not have electricity, lights, phones or even internet. Here is the hard to hear truth; there are things that are broken, we need to do something different so we can again continue to move forward because the complacent mentality has us at a standstill; which is why everyone and everything is passing us by. There is nothing wrong with adopting ideas and best practices that work from other successful surrounding cities to make us better. There is nothing wrong with thinking outside the box, there is nothing wrong with change. We cannot be afraid, we need to find our wings again, we need to soar higher; you must risk falling if you ever want to fly.

**CONSENT AGENDA: REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/FIRE DEPARTMENT**

Council Member Traylor moved, seconded by Council Member Sansing to approve the regular monthly report for May 2021 from the Jacksonville Fire Department, reflecting a fire loss of \$167,000.00 and a savings total of \$313,000.00.

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**REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/POLICE DEPARTMENT**

Council Member Traylor moved, seconded by Council Member Sansing to approve the Regular Monthly Report for May 2021 regarding annual crime statistical comparisons.

**REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/CODE ENFORCEMENT**

Council Member Traylor moved, seconded by Council Member Sansing to approve the regular monthly report as presented for May 2021.

Assigned Calls	42
Self-Initiated Calls	49

Follow ups	136	Structures Inspected	14
Meetings/Court Hearings	0	Rentals Inspected	0
Tickets Issued	0	Properties Red Tagged	0
Three Day Notice	67	Search Warrants Served	0
Seven Day Letter	93	Structures Rehabbed	0
Vehicles Tagged	10	Structures Condemned	7
Vehicles Towed	2	Houses Demolished by City	0
Lots posted	6	Houses Demolished by Owner	0
Signs removed	0	Parking Violations	0
Trash cans tagged	1	Grass Mowed	21
Basketball Goals	1		

**REGULAR MONTHLY REPORT/ANIMAL CONTROL**

Council Member Traylor moved, seconded by Council Member Sansing to approve the regular monthly report for May 2021.

ADOPTION FEES/FINES	\$ 215.00
CONTRIBUTIONS	0.00
TOTALS	\$ 215.00

**ROLL CALL: Council Member: Dietz, Blevins, Sansing, Mashburn, Traylor, Smith and Rains voted AYE. MOTION CARRIED.**

- WATER DEPARTMENT:**
- WASTEWATER DEPARTMENTS:**
- FIRE DEPARTMENT:**
- POLICE DEPARTMENT:**
- STREET DEPARTMENT:**
- SANITATION DEPARTMENT:**
- PARKS & RECREATION:**
- PLANNING COMMISSION:**
- COMMITTEE(S):**

**GENERAL: a. 2020 CDBG CAPER Report**

Council Member Blevins questioned a statement in the report that read "CDBG funds are not allocated geographically within the City", pointing out that

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the Sunnyside addition is the targeted area and homeowners and potential homeowners in that area have priority on the waiting list. He asked how many people are currently on the waiting list.

Director Watson replied that there are none on the waiting list that have requested assistance and qualified. She then answered that there are not a lot of people that have requested but not qualified. She stated that last year there were not very much, saying that most of the time they do not have a lot of requests. She stated that most of those denied are because they are over the income requirement, which is established by HUD regarding family size. She stated that everyone who qualified last year was assisted, which included all the categories including homebuyer's assistance to rehab. She then noted that a lot of applications were sent out for homebuyer's assistance but they did not get a lot back in, but last year there was one.

Council Member Blevins recalled talking with Ms. Watson last year, citing he had discussed with her that he had a lot of people tell him that when they approached CDBG for funds they were told there wasn't any money. He recounted that Ms. Watson had addressed the issue saying that she did not have any complaints of that nature. He noted that in the report it reflects that we got an entitlement grant for \$210,000; saying that he is aware that the City is only allowed to have 20% go to general admin; which includes all admin costs and salary. He explained that he had contacted Finance Director Cheryl Erkel to ask about how the salary is paid if only 20% comes from the grant. Finance Director Cheryl Erkel had told him that the rest was coming out of rehab administration. He related that he researched and according to this there was only \$6,800.00 spent on rehab projects and \$2,000.00 worth of homebuyer's assistance but we paid \$55,000.00 to admin. He asked for clarification.

Ms. Watson stated that admin does not just consist of salary, it consists of everything else such as telephones, adding that she is not sure exactly what year it was but it was when Mayor Swaim was here; he signed and wrote a letter to HUD where her salary, 30%, is taken out of general admin and 70% is out of rehab admin, and that is the formula that we have always used. She added at that time it depended on what staff person it is, what they work on because how it works is, if you work strictly in rehab that is where your salary comes from because it is program delivery.

Council Member Blevins stated that he was told that the rehab admin also had a 20% cost. He stated that he is just trying to figure out the numbers. He related that he had talk to HUD and it was met with confusion regarding the 70% going to pay the salary. He stated that regarding the contract, the grant was \$200,000.00 and we are looking to pay \$95,000 which only leaves \$105,000 for the residents that need it. He stated that HUD did mention that there is a pot of money that isn't on any of these reports, that is only available on IDIS for past years. He then questioned if any of this money for admin or any of this stuff, is it pulled from those funds as well and maybe not pulled out of the grant to pay the 70%.

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Ms. Watson replied no, but then explained that every grant year, the maximum you can use for general admin is 20%, it does not carry over. She added that if it is not all used, it can be used in a different area, just not admin. Also, in public service; it has a cap of 15%. All other activities have no cap, you can use whatever amount that you want.

Council Member Blevins stated that he is trying to figure out paying \$55,000 from rehab admin for \$8,000 in rehab activities. He reiterated that the whole reason he had contract Ms. Watson in the first place was because people were saying that they did not get money. He stated that when you look at the numbers; paying almost half of the money to manage the monies... He continued saying that he was told only 20% could be done, and no one at HUD was aware of the Mayor Swaim email or whatever that was done. He stated that he would do further research.

Council Member Sansing stated that the report looks good and confirmed with Ms. Watson that she has been doing this for 20 years. He stated that he feels that with 20 years he is sure Ms. Watson knows how the system works and how the finances work, where things come from and how they go. He stated that he trusts the head of finance to understand how the finances work and make sure that everything is done above board, thanking Ms. Watson.

Council Member Dietz stated that he is astonished that the money is available and there are not more people using it to help purchase homes. He recalled that the money was widely used in the past, adding the he believes we need to get back to letting people know about that program. He stated that as a realtor that is something that needs to be taken advantage of, because it is a big help getting people in housing in Jacksonville.

Ms. Watson stated that one reason was because people were opting to go for the Addie grant because it was a higher amount being \$5,000.00 and \$7,500.00 while we only give up to \$3,000.00.

Council Member Dietz noted that they were also given an additional tax credit if they used Addie money.

Council Member Rains questioned if there is any needed assistance to make sure that these funds are available. She noted the large gap between the money used and the grant amount awarded.

Ms. Watson explained that they actually did use more money but it was not counted during the reported year of 2020. She stated that she has conducted several kinds of events, had flyers distributed and conducted mailings to get the word out.

Discussion ensued as to the reason why citizens may choose not to take advantage of the programs regarding homebuyer's assistance and how we could provide more citizen information, as well as, COVID hindrance regarding help from Habitat for Humanity who had said if given land they would build housing, which would be sold at fair market value with 0% interest.

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Ms. Watson clarified regarding a question from Council Member Blevins that the assistance with utilities and rent because of COVID took place in 2021 and is not reflected in the current report. She noted that a little over \$16,000.00 was spent. She stated that there were criteria for the program, citing that they would only allow five past due and one current and it was a one-time assistance and it had to be directly related to COVID, as well as, being for low-income while providing full documentation. She then explained the restrictions regarding the new business programs. She then explained that the backpack program is where they provided breakfast, lunch, dinner, and a snack to 55 youths for 10 weeks coming from CDBG COVID monies.

**Council Member Rains moved, seconded by Council Member Dietz to accept the 2020 CDBG CAPER Report as presented. MOTION CARRIED.**

**b. DISCUSSION: Bus Plan for City of Jacksonville**

Council Member Blevins stated that as a result of having been contacted by citizens missing having any kind of transit in the City; he designed a bus program without the City having to go to a third party. He related that it consists of the City having three 12-passenger buses, roughly costing \$60,000.00 each, for a total of \$180,000.00. He related that he had spoken with Parks and Recreation Director House who had mentioned that it is about time for them to up the price of using the Community Center, adding that he was thinking that if it was increased to about what the price of riding the bus would be, what we could do is tie it in tandem with Parks and Recreation and give this over to them. He explained that when someone signs up for a membership, they also get to ride the bus, and thus in turn if you ride the bus you get access to the Community Center. He pointed out that this would add more people being able to use the Community Center and also justifies the raise that Kevin was looking at proposing and allows us to have this bus system. He stated that the way he had planned the bus system to pay for itself, is that we have six static stops that go to all various places in the City in a 2-hour time-frame but staggered one hour apart; so, each hour a business is showing up to one of the locations. He stated that you can charge for advertising on the bus, you charge for advertising at the bus stops and you can charge for having television advertising be played on the bus. He added that when someone gets the bus pass for the day they also are allowed to use the Community Center. He then explained that on top of those six static stops there could be six additional stops that we have businesses bid to pay for to have the buses stop at their location, to help offset costs. He then noted that there would be two buses that travel inside the City and one bus that travels from Jacksonville to North Little Rock and back in a two-hour time period. He stated that people who need to go to North Little Rock would call and get set on a schedule, the bus would pick them up, it does two-hour time period between the trips back and forth picking up passengers at either location for transport back to Jacksonville or to North Little Rock. He stated that all of this would be under the same costs that it would be to go to the Community Center for that day. He stated that with the City owning the buses, we would get depreciation, we also get to add stops,

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such as special events. He noted that it would bring jobs to the City as well as someone to manage it. He stated that it would increase the amount of people able to work in the City and the amount of people who could attend special events. He noted that we could even offset some of the costs for the Senior Center; pointing out that it could be a stop so, they could transport some of the people.

Council Member Rains questioned how much the City is currently spending contracting it out to the Little Rock Metro System.

Mayor Johnson stated that we use to pay almost \$90,000.00 annually. He related that Rock Region will be making a presentation next month about them running an uber style system where they pickup at your house and take you where you want to go, adding that you would just have to schedule it. He explained that they would be running 12 hours a day, six days per week, adding that it would also go to North Little Rock. He noted that the City can actually use some of the special CARES Act money to pay for it, saying that after three years we will know where people get on and how many people ride and can we do our own bus system cheaper than it is costing us to go with them. He stated that we are obligated through BRAC when COVID ends to have a bus system.

Council Member Blevins answered Council Member Traylor that his plan also has an uber style pickup, adding that Rock Region is \$87,000.00 the first year, \$109,000.00 the second and \$137,000.00 the third year. He said this is for one vehicle 12 hours a day for six days a week whereas my ideal is \$180,000.00 but we have ways to offset that money by monetizing different things such as advertising on the buses, the bus stops, the interior bus and also the business stops and we get to have the buses when it is all said and done.

Council Member Traylor commented that it would be a lot more than \$180,000.00; he mentioned insurance, adding how much money are we going to be able to recoup from this. He pointed out that every year at budget time we cut, because we don't have enough and what we are doing is adding. He continued saying that he agrees with the transportation side of it but we want to soar higher but everything you are talking about is going to take funds away from something that we are already doing.

Council Member Blevins stated that he has discussed alternate ways to get the money for the buses to begin with and when it comes to the actual monthly costs; you don't have to have a CDL to drive so we could get regular people with a driving record to drive the bus. He stated that you are looking at \$33,000.00; you hire four people which equals out to \$128,000.00 plus \$40,000.00 for the supervisor to manage the bus systems, which is \$168,000.00. He then added that he was not sure how much the insurance would be, which is why he said \$180,000.00. He answered that \$180,000.00 is the costs of them for the entire year.

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Mayor Johnson reminded him of the costs of retirement and overtime. He stated that a 35,000.00 a year employee costs \$50,000.00 by the time you do insurance and retirement.

Council Member Rains pointed out that a limited program versus an expansive program where we have more opportunities to provide the City with a return on investment. She stated that there is more opportunity but there is more risk with the plan that Council Member Blevins is presenting.

Mayor Johnson stated that it is worth looking at.

**c. ORDINANCE 1663 (#13-2021)**

**AN ORDINANCE WAIVING COMPETITIVE BIDDING BY THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE, ARKANSAS, FOR THE PURPOSES OF PURCHASING A SHOT CURTAIN FOR THE JACKSONVILLE SHOOTING RANGE; DECLARING AN EMERGENCY; AND, FOR OTHER PURPOSES.**

Mayor Johnson stated that the City did not receive the second bid so this will be tabled until we meet again.

Parks and Recreation Director Kevin House explained that there are two companies in the United States that manufacture a shot curtain, saying that the one we received will be the lower bid. He related that he only got a verbal price from the second company, Shot Shield. He stated that he would feel more comfortable if he had it in writing to show the City Council before asking to waive competitive bidding. He stated that he does not have the exact figures. He answered Council Member Rains that the only number provided was from Shot Stop, explaining that Shot Shield said they would have the verbal number they offered but have not submitted that yet.

Council Member Rains mentioned a third company, Ballista Flex, and Parks and Recreation Director Kevin House explained that he had tried to contact them but with no luck.

Council Member Rains questioned how many shot curtains is he proposing to purchase and is he considering the 8' X 50'.

Parks and Recreation Director House concurred he is looking at the 8' X 50'; adding that the height will be 40' tall and about 1,800 feet long.

Mayor Johnson stated that the main purpose of doing this is to reclaim the lead and get the recycle value and keep it out of the water.

Parks and Recreation Director House noted that the Cardinal Center in Columbus, Ohio has this same product and he talked to the installers and the guys that are using every day, saying that it is a good product.

Council Member Rains noted that it would be 225 curtains; adding that on the Shot Stop website they made an estimate for 16 curtains at the 50' range and

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installed that was \$27,000.00. She surmised that we are probably looking at over \$200,000.00 for that estimate for Shot Stop. She stated that it is \$188,000.00 for the one that we have.

Council Member Traylor noted that on the website they mentioned that the center panels wear out quicker than top and bottom, asking how long Director House would estimate before we have to replace any of the curtains.

Parks and Recreation Director House stated that we are in our 8<sup>th</sup> year and the center machines that are used most for practice have 1.2 million targets on them, explaining that the guys at Cardinal Center are actually rotating their curtains so once a year or depending on the number of shots they are taking the ones from the bottom or top and putting them to the middle to get a longer life. He then answered Council Member Rains that it could be done inhouse, being only the costs of a rental lifter and man hours.

Council Member Blevins recalled that when the City refinanced the bond it was said that some of the money would go toward renovating the Court House and also to build a garage and to do this.

Parks and Recreation Director House concurred, that the money would come from bond monies. He then answered that they had put in for approximately \$450,000, asking them to keep in mind this quote is just to get the fabric, pointing out that they will still have to set poles and put in a road. He stated that there is more to this, pointing out that they will be doing sealed bids for the additional work.

Mayor Johnson noted that along with a City garage there was funds for a car wash to be used by the Police Department, which are all tied in together.

Council Member Dietz stated that he is familiar with this due to meetings that began about this last year. He stated that this will help the City get ahead because eventually EPA is going to make the City reclaim the lead. He agreed with Director House that the EPA is going to mandate a shot curtain.

Director House then noted that Cardinal Center is reclaiming about 98% of every shot and currently lead prices are high.

Council Member Dietz noted that when the High School was built the City accepted the concrete so even then we were thinking ahead. He stated that this would be a bonus.

Mayor Johnson stated that the noise on the other side of the curtain is far less but really you do it because we do not need to be putting lead into the water table.

Council Member Rains confirmed with Director House that this would help with balancing the books of the sports complex. She then confirmed with Director House that currently the Shooting Range runs about a \$250,000 deficit with depreciation.

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In response to a question from Council Member Blevins, Director House responded that when we reclaimed lead last year, the old-fashioned way by scoping dirt, they were only able to reclaim about 60% of what had been shot and then we have to pay the company 80% to perform the work. He went on to say that the City actually collected about 43 or 44 thousand dollars.

**d. DISCUSSION: Consultant contract for CDBG**

City Attorney Friedman stated that typically when the City places an open bid, we follow Arkansas Code Annotated Statutes under Arkansas law, adding that we have Municipal Code which mirrors that, however when dealing with Federal stuff, we have to go by the code of Federal regulations. She related that their system of award management, their methods of procurement are a little bit different from Arkansas'. She stated that it was her understanding that Council Member Blevins had reached out regarding questions about the financing where money was going from HUD. She added that someone had expressed some concerns about our contracting process, she stated that she is apprehensive about presenting a contract to the City Council to vote on until she is confident that this money will be reimbursed by HUD. She stated that in order to do that she has been trying to contact HUD's Chief Legal Counsel, and it is her understanding that they are on vacation. She went on to say that she has a meeting with them next week to try and make sure that this contract passes muster, and is not something that the City is going to have to come out of pocket for and that we will get reimbursed by HUD.

Mayor Johnson stated that his question would be, since we have approved paying Ms. Watson for June, so what do we do about July.

City Attorney Friedman stated that is the other thing she is going ask about, having the contract be retroactive.

Mayor Johnson clarified that there is not action to be taken now. He then asked if Ms. Watson is to go to work on July 1.

City Attorney Friedman stated that from her understanding she has already been working but agreed she should continue working.

**APPOINTMENTS: SEWER COMMISSION**

**Council Member Traylor moved, seconded by Council Member Blevins to approve the appointment of Jeff Elmore to the Sewer Commission to fill the unexpired term of Bob Williams to expire 04/20/2022. MOTION CARRIED.**

**PLANNING COMMISSION**

**Council Member Rains moved, seconded by Council Member Mashburn to approve the reappointments of Dan Brown and Vivian Brittenum for terms to expire 01/01/2024. MOTION CARRIED**

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**ADDITION TO AGENDA:**

Council Member Sansing moved, seconded by Council Member Smith to cancel the upcoming council meeting of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021 due to the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday. MOTION CARRIED.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Mayor Johnson announced that Big Bang on the Range will be held July 4<sup>th</sup> at the Shooting Range.

He then announced that Jacksonville Chamber of Commerce is hosting their Business Expo Job Fair at the Community Center, July 24<sup>th</sup>, starting at 9:00 a.m.

He stated that Juneteenth was announced by President Biden as an official holiday, so the City will observe that beginning next year.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Without objection, Mayor Johnson adjourned the meeting at approximately 6:53 p.m. MOTION CARRIED.

Respectfully,

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Susan L. Davitt  
City Clerk-Treasurer

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MAYOR BOB JOHNSON