



City of Benton Finance Committee

Monday, February 10, 2025

Council Chambers

Immediately following Personnel, Health
& Safety at 5:00 p.m.

Chair – Steve Brown

Vice-Chair – Jeff Morrow

Staff Liaison – Mandy Spicer

Frank Baptist

Ann Spencer-Cole

Evelyn Reed

Bill Donnor

Jeff Morrow

Judd Hart

Trevor Villines

Jeff Hamm

I. Establish a Quorum

Council Member Brown called the meeting to order, recognized attendees, and established a quorum.

II. Benton Utilities

December 2024 financials – No representatives from Benton Utilities were present for the meeting but did provide handouts. Council Member Brown asked everyone to look them over and suggested holding any questions till next month's meeting.

III. Fire Training Facility Bid Acceptance

In January, the City advertised formal bids for the construction of a new Fire Training Facility. Bid were opened on Friday, February 7th and Lonestar Tactical Buildings was determined to be the lowest acceptable offer at \$463,045. Cash on hand to be used is held in the Public Safety fund.

Council Member Hamm made a motion to accept the resolution. Council Member Hart seconded it. Before a vote could be taken Council Members started asking questions.

Council Member Hart asked if this bid meets all the Fire Department needs. Chief Evans answered this does fit all his needs for training.

Council Member Brown asked how many story the facility will be. Chief Evans replied 3 stories.

Council Member Villines ask for the location of the new facility. Chief Evans advise it will be on S Market St across from the new Animal Shelter.

Council Member Baptist asked for better description of the layout of the building than the handout in front of him. Chief Evans briefly went over the layout and what each area would be used for. He also offered to send an email with a better copy of the

layout. Council Member Baptist then followed up with asking how often the facility will be used. Chief Evans advised at least a couple times a month plus this will allow more instructors to come in and host training classes. This can even include volunteer departments.

Council Member Morrow asked what other costs will be incurred. Chief Evans advised nothing other than the burn materials which consist of used pallets and hay, and possibly personnel cost when hosting a class.

Council Member Villines asked when the facility would be open. Chief Evans advised he was unsure. It would be August or September before the construction would be done and ready for shipment to us in separate sections.

Council Member Morrow asked if this bid included everything. Chief Evans explained that the concrete pad and fencing are separate. Also, a classroom with an attached bay for an spare apparatus to be added later.

With no further questions, Council Member Brown reminded the council of the motion on the floor. A vote was taken. All those present were in favor and the motion carried.

IV. Court Clerk Digitization of Records bid acceptance

In January, the City advertised formal bids for digitizing the Court Clerks records from 2005-2021. Bids were opened on January 21st and Preferred Office Technologies was determined to be the lowest acceptable offer of \$129,977. This was not the lowest offer but the best offer for the scope of work asked for. Judge Clay Ford or Leah Redmond will be present to answer any questions the Council may have. Cash on hand, held in the Court Automation fund, will be used. At present there is over \$200K held in that account. It may only be used for Court Automation purposes.

Judge Ford stepped forward and explained how and why the decision was made to not go with the lowest bidder. He gave an overview of where money in the Automation fund comes from and how much has been deposited over the past several years plus expenditures.

Council Member Donnor made a motion to accept the resolution. Council Member Hamm seconded it. Council Member asked for any questions before taking a vote.

Council Member Hart asked if this would be all that is needed to keep the digitization up to date. Judge Ford was not positive, but the hope is that they do a little bit every year moving forward. Council Member Brown asked if they have the staff to keep up. Judge Ford believes they do.

Council Member Brown then asked if there were any concerns with the records being taken off site. Judge Ford said there were no concerns citing that Bryant has used this

company and had no problems plus these files are public record. Council Member Villines asked if these files would be posted online. Judge Ford was not sure on that but would get with Trevor Villines at Saline County to see if they could make that happen.

With no further questions, Council Member Brown reminded the council of the motion on the floor. A vote was taken. All those present were in favor and the motion carried.

V. Court Clerk Bulletproof Glass Bid Acceptance

In January, the City advertised formal bids for the construction of bulletproof glass to be installed at the Benton District Court Clerk counter. Bid were opened on Friday, February 7th and Elrod Glass was determined to be the lowest acceptable offer of \$44,307. Cash on hand, held in the Court Automation fund, will be used. At present there is over \$200,000 held in that account. It may only be used for Court Automation purposes.

Judge Ford explained that he wanted to upgrade the existing glass to bulletproof glass.

Council Member Brown asked if there was a need for the upgrade. Judge Ford advised there have been no incidents. This project was on the back burner, and he just wanted to make that area more secure. The funding is now available, so the decision was made to move forward with this project.

Council Member Morrow asked how this project falls under technology since the Automation fund is for technology purposes. Judge Ford felt that bulletproof glass is a technology.

Council Member Donnor made a motion to accept the resolution. Council Member Spencer-Cole seconded it.

Council Member Hart asked if there were other areas in the courthouse that needed to be upgraded. Judge Ford advised there were no other glass that was no already upgraded.

With no further questions, Council Member Brown reminded the council of the motion on the floor. A vote was taken. All those present were in favor and the motion carried.

VI. Proportionate Share Annual Agreement

Each year the City of Benton and the County share the base salary of the state district court judge. Benton's share for 2025 is \$35,651.60 which is the same as the 2024 rate.

Council Member Brown opened the floor to questions. No questions were asked. Council Member Baptist made a motion to accept the resolution. Council Member Hart seconded it. A vote was taken. All those present were in favor and the motion carried.

VII. Congo Widening Grant Acceptance and Budget Amendment

In 2024, the Streets & Drainage department submitted a grant application to ARDOT for an 80/20 Federal Surface Transportation Block Grant for the Congo Widening project. Attached is a copy of the award letter for up to \$400,000 for the design phase only. A resolution is needed to approve the contract, appropriate the \$400,000 revenue, and \$500,000 expenditure associated with the grant.

Council Member Donnor made a motion to accept the resolution. Council Member Hamm seconded it.

Council Member Villines asked what section of Congo Rd is being widened. Director Richey advised it is between the 2 roundabouts from Shenandoah Rd to Longhills Rd.

Council Member Morrow asked if there was a timeline. Mr. Taylor Clark with McClelland Consulting Engineers advised it will be in the next 5 to 6 years citing all the events leading to the widening of Congo Rd.

Council Member Baptist asked if there will be sidewalks on both sides of Congo Rd. Mr. Clark advised depending on funding the current plan is to have a sidewalk on 1 side and a trail on the other.

Council Member Hart stated that the design part is up to \$400,000. His question was how much will it cost. Mr. Clark explained how the total is actually \$500,000, and he is confident if McClelland is chosen the design will not exceed that amount. Council Member Hart asked a follow-up question, asking what some examples of expenses. CFO Spicer explained the city will pay the cost of the project up to \$500,000. Then the City will be reimbursed 80% from the grant.

Council Member Villines asked if the sidewalk and trail on Congo Rd will be like what is currently on Alcoa Rd. Mr. Clark said it will be the same, though the trail width may vary.

With no further questions, Council Member Brown reminded the council of the motion on the floor. A vote was taken. All those present were in favor and the motion carried.

VIII. CD Bid Acceptance

Several times a year the City requests CD rates from area banks. This week we received responses from 7 banks. The bid responses are in front of you.

CFO Spicer explained that a letter went out to 16 banks asking for CD rates. The list before the members are the 7 banks that replied. They are listed anonymously. There are currently 3 \$1,000,000 and 4 \$500,000 CDs. Her recommendation is Bank B for both the 6-month and 12-month CDs.

Council Member Brown asked how these CDs will be split out. CFO Spicer advised there will be 2 6 months at \$1,000,000, and the rest will be 12 months. The 6-month CDs will be needed at the end of the year for Streets projects.

Council Member Donnor made a motion to accept the recommendation of Bank B, which was Gateway bank, for the new CDs. Council Member Hamm seconded it. A vote was taken. All those present were in favor and the motion carried.

IX. New City Hall Change Order

Discussion of 3 recent change orders for the completion of the New City Hall. No legislation is needed, information only.

CFO Spicer reviewed in some detail the 3 Change Orders and their costs. Some of the money for these projects will come from the Contingency Fund written into the contract. The rest will come from saving on the parking which came in under budget that the council voted on last year.

Council Member Villines asked how much money was originally in the Contingency Fund. CFO Spicer was not 100% sure but believed it was \$80,000.

Council Member Hart asked if there was a reason why the elevator and other expense were not caught in the first walk through.

CFO Spicer explained that when the elevator company came out to inspect in December, they flagged 15 items that were not up to code. Some of these items were expected to be grandfathered in and were not.

Council Member Baptist asked if these change orders, specifically the elevator, will cause any delays opening City Hall. CFO Spicer has spoken with the construction Manager. Once the Change Orders are signed by the Mayor, the work will begin this week so we can move next week.

X. Other Business

CFO Spicer presented January 2025 financials. Sales tax was down 6% from January of 2024. The General Fund was \$655,000 in the red. She explained that January is a very heavy expenditure month, and cited some examples, plus there were 3 payrolls. Had there only been 2 payrolls for the month, the General Fund would have narrowly ended in black. She advised all the department heads are watching their spending.

XI. Adjournment

With No further business to discuss, Council Member Brown adjourned the meeting.