

Mayor: Ethan J. Barnes
Recorder-Treasurer: Mitchell Sparks
Council Members: Penny Allen, Tony Berry
Mark Gordon, Laura Smith
Sue Taylor, Herbert Wise
City Attorney: Joe Grider

City of Hardy, Arkansas

PO Box 5 · 124 Woodland Hills Road
Hardy, Arkansas 72542
870-856-3811
www.cityofhardy.org
www.facebook.com/cityofhardy



Minutes of Special Business Meeting Hardy City Council November 30, 2023 · 6:00 p.m. Hardy City Hall

Mayor Ethan J. Barnes called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. on Monday, November 30, 2023 at Hardy City Hall, 124 Woodland Hills Road, Hardy, Arkansas. Councilwoman Allen led all in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of our county. Mayor Barnes gave the invocation. Recorder-Treasurer Mitchell Sparks called the Roll. The following members answered to their names: Penny Allen, Tony Berry, Mark Gordon, Laura Smith, Sue Taylor, and Junior Wise. With all six council members, there was a quorum. Attorney Joe Grider was not present.

Councilman Gordon made a motion to approve the agenda of the November 30, 2023 meeting of the special business meeting. Councilman Berry seconded the motion. All in favor; motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

Presentation and Discussion of the City of Hardy Operating Budget for the Year 2024 by Resolution 2023-26.

Mayor Barnes reviewed two minor changes made since the last regular meeting.

Street Budget - Line 6610 Street Supplies - increased to \$10,000. Hardy bypass is considered the city's street expense for improvements—funds for flashing beacons and flashing stop signs. Also, \$1,000 for road barricades that have been discussed by the Solar Eclipse Committee.

Councilman Gordon asked if there were outside funds available for this, and Barnes said there wasn't.

General Budget – page 3 of 7 - Line 5008 Payroll and Health \$5,592.36. This is the cost for one benefit package for an employee. The cost went up because of the number of claims submitted. It includes vision and dental insurance. Gordon asked if the quality of service has changed, Barnes explained an additional \$4 a month has been added so the employee does not incur multiple referral fees, saving the employee from additional co-pay costs. Councilman Wise asked how many employees are covered. Barnes didn't have an exact number, but said all but two are covered, making it 8 or 9. Barnes stated Chief Moore does not have city insurance, he pays for his own insurance. Moore stated at the meeting he would rather stay with his current insurance.

Councilwoman Smith suggested an increase to the mayor's salary. Gordon requested that we first review the budget.

Gordon went through his notes.

Are all of the fire and all of the police being covered by LOPFI? Barnes and Sparks believe everyone is being covered. No one has notified the mayor that anything is incorrect with the retirement amounts.

Are all city employees still covered by Med Flight? Barnes answered yes at \$60 per person, including city council. The council has talked about recycling expenses several times, did we already agree to up the amount paid, or did we just put it into the budget? Barnes said he is making that suggestion to the council because the city needs to. Gordon asked if other cities are doing it. Barnes didn't know what the other cities were contributing.

Gordon asked Line 8004 on page 2 of 4 of the Water Budget, why does it appear multiple times on the budget? Barnes explained the amount is for two side-by-sides, a tractor with bushhog and a grapple for the Bobcat that would split between water, wastewater, street, and parks. Gordon questioned whether the other equipment is that the city had when he was previously on the council. Wise explained it was sold and the bobcat was purchased. Wise questioned the need for two side-by-sides. Barnes asked Superintendent Morris how many people read water meters and Morris answered three. Wise asked Morris if he needed two. Morris said one for sure, but it

Filed 12/11/23 MTS 12F4
City of Hardy, Arkansas
Recorder-Treasurer Office

would be nice to have two. Smith made the point that using the side-by-sides would reduce wear and tear on the trucks.

Gordon asked about the \$50,000 expense that has no line items. Sparks explained that it is a payment to USDA for the 1990s loan for the sewer system.

Gordon asked about the A&P Commission budget concerning their payments to the city. Barnes said the \$50,000 was approved. Wise asked if the 1/3 payment of A&P Commission tax revenue to city was stated in a document. Barnes said former recorder treasurer Darlene Wilson had found the document stating it.

Gordon asked about General Budget page 3 of 7 line 4615 and wondered if it's just a padded number or is there something in mind. Barnes said he has a plan to fix up city hall and make it more presentable.

Gordon asked about General Budget page 3 of 7 line 5008 – payroll – insurance - health. He realizes we just talked about it from another page. Sparks explained there will be a line 5008 on each budget. It'll be higher in the water department because there are more employees.

Wise asked about the 'fourth water employee' that was never hired, and will it be hired. Barnes said as of 2024 there won't be a fourth water employee. Wise asked Morris and he said it would cut into the current employee's overtime. Morris asked if they need someone or a temp, does it need to be in the proposed budget. Barnes said that would be accounted for at the end of 2024 through a resolution. Gordon asked how much overtime was paid this year. Barnes said he couldn't provide that information at the present time but could see how much the city went over-budget on water works. Gordon asked again could we cut the overtime from the current employees and pay a fourth employee to save funds. Barnes said no but didn't have exact figures during the meeting to analyze the comparison of costs.

Gordon asked about General Budget – page 6 of 7 - Line 6350 under Police concerning licensing fees, dues and memberships when from \$6,500 to \$13,000. Barnes asked Chief Rose to answer the question. Rose explained it was an update to the system to match what the other area police and sheriff departments have installed. This is the dispatch and recording system. The city didn't change software companies just moved to a different system. Wise said to Rose that when the current system was proposed it was 'the system'. Rose said it was 'the system' but the new sheriff has changed systems, and the city needs to be on the same one. Rose said not all of the original funds were spent on the old system, as the expense was not fully deployed. Everything that was purchased is still needed. Rose said the new system will be beneficial to everyone. The communication will be top-notch.

Gordon asked about General Budget - page 7 of 7 line 8004 - equipment. This line was under Police. Barnes asked Rose to answer. Rose said there are two squad cars that do not currently have radar installed. They are also requesting additional tasers.

Wise asked if the budget discussion could be started earlier. Sparks said he would create a calendar event for August to start discussion of the budget and the Ad Valorem.

Wise asked about the previous meetings discussion about hiring an engineer to review the Main Street sidewalks. Barnes reviewed his budget notes and then remembered that the council had not made a motion to pursue this request, so it's not in the budget. It is in the strategic plan. With gaining approval from the Judge and Sheriff's Office, Barnes offered an idea of getting the Sharp County inmates to work on the Main Street area filling holes with concrete patch as a temporary fix.

Wise asked about getting a code enforcement officer. Barnes said it is in the budget as a part time employee.

Wise and Gordon returned to the discussion concerning a fourth employee for the water department. Gordon asked Morris if the employee would be a 'skilled' employee. Morris replied that if he had a fourth person now it would be for unskilled tasks, but if he were to hire one it would be a skilled position.

Smith asked about General Budget - page 6 of 7 - line 6650 telephone under Parks and Recreation. Barnes explained that telephone includes internet. He found that in 2023 cameras were purchased for Loberg Park for \$429 and that is the reason for the overage.

Smith asked about General Budget - page 6 of 7 - line 6742 publications. There was nothing budgeted in 2023 but the city spent \$56 to advertise for park ranger services.

Councilwoman Allen suggested that the city only needs one side-by-side. She also questioned the A&P Commission's decision to budget \$50,000 for the city, when it's supposed to be a third. Barnes explained that the budgeted income is a guess, and, for example, the city may only get \$35,000 based on the tax collection. Smith explained the A&P budget, like the city budget, is a living project. Wise said he wanted to see the document that explains the one-third amount the city should receive. Smith said she has seen the document but does not have a copy. Barnes yielded his time to Jeff Munroe, a resident in attendance. Munroe explained when he was on A&P Commission, as A & P Treasurer, he asked for a copy of this document. He wrote a letter to the then mayor for these documents. He never received them. He believes the one-third amount is hearsay and that the documents need to be shown.

Allen asked if we the city is supposed to receive a portion of the A&P Commissions rental fees. Barnes said the city isn't due any of the rental fees. He explained the A&P gets 100% of the Civic Center rental fees. The city gets 100% of the rental fees for the Old Hardy Gym and the Johnson Center.

Smith asked about the water issue at the Old Hardy Gym. Barnes explained the water issue has been fixed, and the damaged floor has been fixed on the previous Friday. It was a \$985 invoice. A lean-to is needed to protect the air conditioner\heating unit.

Wise commented that he didn't believe there were as many campers at the camper park as there has been in years past. Barnes asked him how much crime has happened in the last year. They both agreed it was much lower.

Allen asked how to find out the rates for the campground. Sparks explained that there is a phone app or a webpage called "Campspot" that handles the fees. It has the up-to-date fees. People asking should be directed to the Campspot website.

Allen asked about the restrooms at Hardy Beach. Barnes reported that the work was completed. The city is still looking for an old satellite dish to layover the roof. Gordon suggested the top of a grain bin. Superintendent Morris said a ceiling needs to be added to the entry way to keep people from climbing over into the closed restrooms.

Smith reintroduced her suggestion of increasing the mayor's salary. Gordon asked if the mayor wanted insurance or a raise. Barnes said the council should have given him, as a fulltime employee, insurance coverage when he took office and was hired as an employee; Barnes also suggested a consideration of an increase in wage to comply with Federal Minimum Wage laws. He then said it was a violation of the Federal Minimum Wage laws and that he had up-to three years to sue but clearly did not want or plan to sue the city or make claim. Allen asked if Barnes had requested health insurance; he said he did not because it was not in the approved 2023 budget and as an effort to save the city money.

Recorder-Treasurer note. At this point, Wise presented a letter that was sent directly to council members from a resigned employee that concerned Barnes' conduct towards her during her employment. As this is off topic from the special meetings purpose, and because it is a personnel matter, I decided not to post the discussion here, but it

needed to be mentioned. It was decided a regular meeting, possibly an executive session of a meeting, was a better place to discuss it.

Councilwoman Allen made a motion to read Resolution 2023-26 City of Hardy Operating Budget for the Year 2024. Councilman Gordon seconded the motion. All in favor; motion passed. In Attorney Grider's absence Recorder-Treasurer Sparks read the resolution.

Councilwoman Taylor made a motion to read Resolution 2023-26 City of Hardy Operating Budget for the Year 2024. Councilman Gordon seconded the motion. Mayor Barnes called for a roll vote. Taylor – yes. Gordon – yes. Allen – yes. Berry – yes. Smith – abstain. Wise – abstain. The vote is four in favor, zero against, and two abstain. The motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

NONE

ADJOURN

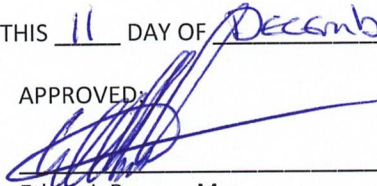
Councilman Wise made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilwoman Allen seconded the motion. All in favor; motion passed. Barnes declared the meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

The next regular meeting of the Hardy City Council is scheduled for Monday, December 11 at 6:00 p.m. at Hardy City Hall, 124 Woodland Hills Road in Hardy, Arkansas.

Respectfully submitted,
Mitchell Sparks, Recorder-Treasurer

PASSED AND APPROVED THIS 11 DAY OF December, 2023

APPROVED:


Ethan J. Barnes, Mayor

ATTEST:


Mitchell Sparks, Recorder-Treasurer

