

CITY OF WILDER, KENTUCKY

December 4, 2023

City Council Meeting

The regular meeting of the Wilder City Council was held on Monday December 4, 2023 at the Wilder City Building, 520 Licking Pike, Wilder, Kentucky 41071.

Lords Prayer

Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Roll Call:

Roll call was answered by Councilwoman Sandy Decker, Councilman Brad Murphy, Councilman Bob Blankenship, Councilwoman Kelly Meiser, Councilman Andy Williams and Councilman Jim Proffitt.

Approval of Minutes:

Mayor Jones stated since the November 6th meeting minutes were sent out late on Friday, the minutes will not be approved until the January 2nd meeting. Juanita apologized for getting the minutes to council late on Friday and in the future will send out the minutes within two weeks of the meeting.

Mayor Jones opening comments:

- Welcomed everyone to the meeting.
- Scott Luck, a friend of Bobby Mackey's, will be leading the songs at our Annual Tree Lighting. Mayor Jones thanked Scott Luck and his family for coming to our event.
- Mayor Jones introduced Attorney Aaron Beck.

Attorney's Report:

Attorney Beck introduced himself. Mr. Beck works for O'hara, Taylor, Sloan, Cassidy, and Beck Law firm. Mr. Beck stated he is delighted to be the city's attorney and is looking forward to working with the Mayor and Council.

Attorney Beck presented Municipal Order 23-1201: **A Municipal Order adopting a personnel policy employee handbook for all full and part time employees for the City of Wilder**

Mayor Jones stated she sent the handbook to council about a month ago to look over. She also put together a summary of all the benefits for council so they could see the highlights in the handbook.

City Administrator Vance talked to Councilwoman Meiser today regarding a couple changes to the handbook. City Administrator Vance gave council copies of the changes.

1. Page 17 under disciplinary action a letter "B" was added regarding employee's comments on the disciplinary form.
2. Councilwoman Meiser stated the vacation days for fire, police and admin were wrong. City Administrator Vance corrected the mistakes to the vacation days. Council was given a revised schedule.
3. Councilwoman Meiser also asked City Administrator Vance about children in the work place. City Administrator Vance stated children are allowed to have dinner with their relative at the firehouse, the section regarding children in the work place pertains to children being left unattended in the firehouse.

City Administrator Vance stated he will send council a new handbook with the above changes and he will also be distributing the handbook to all employees on a flash drive.

Mayor Jones thanked Councilwoman Meiser and Councilman Blankenship for their input on the employee handbook.

Upon motion of Councilman Blankenship, seconded by Councilwoman Decker to approve Municipal Order 23-1201. A Municipal Order adopting a personnel policy employee handbook for all full and part time employees for the City of Wilder. Mayor Jones called for a vote. Motion carried.

Councilman Williams asked why the handbook was approved by Municipal Order instead of a Resolution. City Administrator Vance stated KLC recommended this because Municipal Order only requires one reading and no publication. Council will still approve any changes just through Municipal Order.

Mayor Jones also commented Municipal Order gives council more flexibility with changes.

City Administrator Report:

- City Administrator Vance stated the Gloria Terrell water project started today.
- Planning and Zoning Commission approved Overlook at Sunrock Phase 2 stage 2 development plan for the next four condo buildings and the clubhouse.
- Healthworks renewal for 2024 update -- Deadline is approaching for employees to sign up for the additional HSA monies. City Administrator Vance stated he thinks it is a good incentive. Council agreed and would like to continue with this incentive into next year.
- Craig Kramer from Bray Excavation contacted City Administrator Vance about storing pipe for the next phase of SD 1 project. There will need to be a property agreement if the city is interested.

Department Reports:

Treasurer Report:

- Nothing to report.

Upon motion from Councilman Murphy, seconded by Councilman Blankenship to approve the financial reports and authorize payment of the bills for General Fund ending October 2023. Mayor Jones called for a vote. Motion carried.

Police Chief Comments:

- Toys for Tots – toys are due by December 15th.
- Wilder is hosting the Drug Recognition Expert Course for the next two weeks. Ryan Miller will be attending this course.

Fire Chief Comments:

Doug Neyman not in attendance.

Captain Jeffery Lang:

- Thanked everyone for their support on the Turkey Raffle. It was a huge success.
- Breakfast with Santa is December 9th from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Mayor Jones comments:

Old Business:

- Business luncheon went very well. Thanked all the businesses to coming to the luncheon.
- Thanked Councilman Williams for attending the Duke meeting on November 9th regarding the expansion of the trails.
- Councilwoman Meiser brought up some questions regarding the police recruit. This will be discussed more in January.
- Banners are in. The banners will be hung around the city. Thanked Councilwoman Decker for working on this beautification.
- Mayor Jones thanked each councilmember for their contributions to projects and/or events they were involved in over the past year.
- Mayor Jones thanked the entire staff for helping her transition from councilmember to mayor. Everything went very smoothly.

Council Comments:

Councilman Murphy:

- Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe holiday season.

Councilman Blankenship:

- John's Hill Road is slipping again. Councilman Blankenship asked if someone could contact Kentucky Transportation Department. City Administrator Vance stated he will reach out to them.
- Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Councilwoman Decker:

- Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Be safe.

Councilwoman Meiser:

- Thanked City Administrator Vance for working with her on some changes to the Personnel Policy.
- Councilwoman Meiser was not at the last meeting. She stated she wanted to read something regarding City Attorney, Justin Verst.
 - Councilwoman Meiser stated she wished things would have went down differently with Attorney Verst. She stated nobody should be treated the way Attorney Verst was treated after serving the city for 45 years and finding out via email that his contract was terminated. There is a statue that states there should be a reason for why he was terminated. It also states in the personnel manual and KLC that all non-elected city officers should be appointed by the executive authority which is the Mayor, however it also states the appointment should be approved by the legislative body, which is council. Council had no involvement in hiring new legal counsel.

Councilwoman Meiser made a motion to remove all funds effective immediately for legal counsel in accounts, 1-006 (attorney salary), 1-007 (additional attorney fees), and 1-112 (professional fees) freeze all money to Aaron Beck and the law firm O'hara and Taylor until council has a chance to weigh in on the hiring of a new city attorney. In order not to leave the city at risk, Councilwoman Meiser asked for council to set aside \$2,000 for council to hire their own legal counsel should they need an attorney. Councilman Proffitt seconded the motion.

Mayor Jones stated this caught everyone off guard and she also stated this is not an employee, or an elected office or an elected official; this is a contract employee contracted for professional legal services. Mayor Jones stated she will look into her concerns.

Attorney Beck stated this is not an employee situation, this pertains to a contract employee and under KRS 83A.130 all contracts are with the mayor. Councilwoman Meiser stated there needs to be more conversation because in the Wilder City Officials the city attorney definitely needs to have an approval through council.

Mayor Jones stated since there was a motion and a second, if council wanted to give her time to look into it, the motion would need to be rescinded. Council agreed to not take a vote until Mayor Jones could look into the KRS statute and Councilwoman Meiser rescinded her motion.

Councilman Williams:

- Merry Christmas everyone.
- Councilman Williams stated he was not at the last meeting and he also has very strong feelings regarding the termination of Attorney Verst and he prepared a statement. Councilman Williams stated besides being a lifelong friend to him and his family, Attorney Verst has also been a lifelong friend to the City of Wilder. Councilman Williams shared how upset he was about the termination but also how Attorney Verst was terminated by email. He stated as it pertains to transparency, Mayor Jones stated she has been thinking about the change for the last year, and Councilman Williams stated this is the first he heard of it. Councilman Williams stated he thinks some voters may have thought differently if they knew this was on Mayor Jones's agenda. He also stated he does not know Mr. Beck but he does know he works for a law firm that represented a plaintiff in a long drawn out lawsuit in the late 90's against the City of Wilder. Councilman Williams stated he does not see how this was in the best interest of the City to terminate Attorney Verst's contract.

Mayor Jones thanked Councilman Williams for his comments.

Attorney Beck stated in regards to the 90's lawsuit, he was in high school and he has no knowledge of the lawsuit. He stated his law firm would not take a case against the City of Wilder.

Councilman Profit:

- Wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Be safe.
- Thanked the residents for coming to the meeting.

Open Forum:

Darlene Spicer stated she was also stunned over the termination of Attorney Verst. Councilmembers seemed to be very upset over this decision. Darlene Spicer stated Attorney Verst received an email on November 1st and council received an email shortly after and she stated Mayor Jones was elected on transparency but there wasn't transparency on this issue. Darlene Spicer stated there should have been some discussion. She said there is nothing Attorney Verst did to deserve this.

Darlene Spicer stated she doesn't think Attorney Verst integrity should be in question.

Darlene also stated to put an attorney in place without any input from council is wrong. She stated that Mayor Jones went out on her own and made the decision and she doesn't think it is right.

Mayor Jones thanked Darlene Spicer for her comments.

Cindy Roeder thanked the Mayor and City Administrator Vance for everything they do for the city. She also stated she doesn't know the whole story regarding Attorney Verst but she trust Mayor Jones to make the decision and she elected Mayor Jones off her transparency and she feels she has been as transparent as she can be in this matter but also protect the privacy between the two parties.

Mayor Jones thanked Cindy Roeder for her comments.

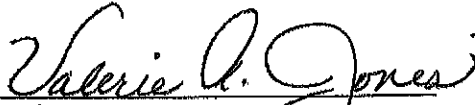
Diane Redman stated change is always difficult. She also stated one thing she liked about Mayor Jones is she walked the streets in her neighborhood and she did things. Ms. Redman said Wilder is a small town and it is hard to make a decision about people, especially when those people are friends. Sometimes council need to set aside the personal side and trust the Mayor, she was elected and she has the opportunity to move the city forward, instead of keeping it the good ole boys neighborhood. She said change is always hard but just because you make change it doesn't mean it's wrong.

Mayor Jones thanked Diane Redman for her comments.

Adjournment:

Upon motion of Councilwomen Decker, seconded by Councilman Blankenship to adjourn the meeting. Mayor Jones called for a vote. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m. The next meeting of the Wilder City Council will be held on January 2, 2023.


Valerie A. Jones, Mayor

ATTEST:


Juanita Schantz - City Clerk