COUNCIL MEETING

CITY OF LUVERNE

February 14, 2022

The City of Luverne Council met in regular session on February 14, 2022 at 5:30 p.m., in the City Hall Building. The following members were present:

Mayor Ed Beasley

Betty Dawson, Councilwoman Kip Smith, Councilman

Kathy Smyth, Councilwoman

Elliott Jones, Councilman

Eddie Billings, Councilman – by phone

Mike Jones, Attorney

William Neal, Building Inspector

Margie Gomillion, Clerk

Visitor:

Steve Defee

Mason Adcock

Mayor Beasley called the meeting to order. The mayor called on Kip Smith to lead the pledge of allegiance to the flag and Kathy Smyth to say a prayer.

The mayor called for the approval of the minutes of January 24, 2022. Councilman Smith made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Councilwoman Smyth seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously approved.

Mayor Beasley called on the city clerk for the administrative report. Routine work was performed. The clerk reminded the council to complete their Statement of Economics Interest Forms by April 30, 2022.

The mayor called everyone’s attention to the chief’s report. Since the last meeting, the police department had 231 calls for service, not including building checks. The department made over 103 traffic stops, wrote 64 citations and gave 39 warnings. The department made 8 misdemeanor arrests. There were 2 animal control calls since the last meeting.

Mayor Beasley called on Councilman Billings for a report on the Parks & Recreation. Councilman Billings reported everything is fine right now. We have more teams than we know what to do with. Lee Simmons and the staff are trying to get everything cleaned up at Person to Person Park so teams can practice. The uniforms have been ordered except for t-ball. We had one situation with a gentleman that was wanting to coach that Lee told no. Councilman Billings stated he spoke to the gentleman and thinks Mike Jones spoke with him also. I think he is understanding why he was told no. Everything is going well with the Parks and Recreation as far as I am concerned.

The mayor called on Steve Defee to report on the Airport. Mr. Defee reported there has not been a lot that we have moved forward with as far as the grant. Last year the council proposed we move forward with a 50/50 match application with ALDOT Aeronautics Division which we were declined again. We met with the state last year about their continuing decline because they continue to want us to submit applications. I told them there was no point in us to continue to go through that process if we’re never going to get any money. I also spoke with Representative Sells about I thought we might be overlooked for whatever the reason. He looked into it and three days later we met with ALDOT. They basically told us that our airport is a little small rural airport and we walked away understanding that the funding that was there that we were small enough that they didn’t really care much about. Mr. Defee discussed the actual inspection last year was pretty intense with stuff that had never been an issue before all the sudden became a dramatic issue. All the issues have been addressed except one is partially addressed and we will finish it this week which is some trees that have to be cut. The biggest issue we are facing now is the fact that the runway end of itself as well as the tarmac is deteriorating. Mr. Defee stated this is something that is not an immediate closure but will happen if not addressed in the future. To repave a mile of road is somewhere in a $500,000 range. The second issue is from the Venue at the Runway. There was a fence that was separating airport property and the venue property. The owner of the venue, Mr. Daryl McGough, had the fence taken down. So people were crossing the little ditch line and going out on the runway to take wedding pictures which is a violation of the FAA. Social media is wide spread so the Department of Aeronautics got pictures and we were wrote up for that also. I have approached Mr. McGough about the fence a couple of times and Ms. Royals did also. Mr. McGough had said he was going to put a fence back up. Mr. Defee also discussed issues with people driving around the gate that should not be on the property due to the fence not being up. Mr. Defee also discussed the gate issue was the reason we applied for the grant to begin with. It would be a sliding gate that would have a code so only people who needed to be there would have the code. That code could be changed at any time. The problem that we are facing now is we have to give everyone who wants to rent space a key and other people get keys made from them. So the keyless system was going to eliminate a lot of that but we keep getting shot down by the Department of Aeronautics. Their final word on that was they don’t want to invest in an airport that is subject to close in the next four to five years. Because if that happens we have to pay that money back to them. We assured them we have no intentions of closing the airport. We have just got it where it is generating revenue after many years. We have a good bit of air traffic and those who come to the painting company most of them fill up with gas before they leave. The last time the airport had to purchase gas we had enough money to purchase it. The mayor asked Mr. Jones to send Mr. McGough a letter about the fence behind the venue. Mr. Defee stated some things he would like to ask the mayor and council is that the fencing that we have up front in some point and time to do something to address that. Plus help me with a future plan that we can do something to buy us future time with the actual runway. Anything that we can do on the lesser mode to help carry that much further out before they really began to require something from us. Councilman Smith asked roughly how much fencing was needed across the front. Mr. Defee stated 300 feet and the last estimate that we got again the last time to send back for the application that I’m not sure if Ms. Royals sent back for this coming year with the Department of Aeronautics for the fence and the electric gate which was a complete package deal was $35,000. Councilman Jones stated with the fencing and electric gate could fall under a soft target security with a Homeland Security Grant which is a 100% grant. Councilman Jones volunteered to get with Mr. Defee to get some information and write a Homeland Security Grant for the airport which will probably open up around June. Mr. Defee stated we have a good bit of military to fly in and out. Fort Rucker comes in and out all the time. They use it as a training facility. Councilman Jones stated with military operations at the airport opens up another level of doorways. The mayor told Mr. Defee that we appreciated him coming and what he had to say.

Mr. Defee discussed an issue the street department is facing with excessive debris that is being placed out by residents that require an extremely large amount of time for the guys to stay at that one place to pick up. The mayor stated he agreed and the ordinance needed changing. Mr. Defee suggested looking at changing that or either adding an additional fee if we pick up more than a truck load. The mayor asked if that was about three yards. Mr. Defee stated something of that nature. The mayor asked Mr. Jones to work on the ordinance referring to debris providing a load of roughly three yards per citizen and anything else would be an additional fee per load.

Mayor Beasley stated everything is going good at the library.

The mayor stated everyone has a copy of Mr. Neal’s report. Councilwoman Smyth asked if Mr. McGhee is inquiring about going to the zoning board or anything such as that about the property located at the four way sign on Hawkins Avenue. Mr. Neal stated he didn’t know because he has called him back twice with no answer. Three corners are zoned R-1 and one corner is zoned R-3. He can put apartments in the R-3 zoned area.

Mayor Beasley asked Councilwoman Smyth if there was anything new with economic development. Councilwoman Smyth stated everyone should have received an email regarding the ACE (Alabama Community of Excellence) visit for February 22nd & 23rd dates. Just reminding you to RSVP or just let me know if you can attend either of those which is the dinner on Tuesday the 22nd or workshop on Wednesday the 23rd from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. We will be discussing parks & recreation trails, economic development, educational work force, downtown revitalization and probably could discuss some airport issues at the same time. Lastly, the trees that had to be removed last year have been replanted downtown in the planters. A consultant came to discuss watering, fertilizing and pruning. The trees have been pruned back and will fill out soon. They have been cutting the ground cover because it has been pulling water out and away from the trees. Before Ms. Royals left to go to the county we utilized some of the AMEA grant money to put water lines and electrical conduit in those boxes. The water lines are in and working. The conduits are in the boxes but there are some issues that Brock and I have talked about getting electricity to those boxes which is DOT issues.

The mayor stated he has been working around the office and in the city seeing what we can do.

Mayor Beasley stated Patsy Owens’ appointment on the Board of Housing Commissioner will expire in March. After some discussion, Councilman Smith made a motion to reappoint Patsy Owens to the Board of Housing Commissioner. Councilwoman Smyth seconded the motion and all was in favor.

The mayor stated Bobby Owens’ appointment on the Board of Adjustments will expire in March. After some discussion, Councilman Smith made a motion to reappoint Bobby Owens to the Board of Adjustments. Councilwoman Smyth seconded the motion and all was in favor.

Councilwoman Dawson asked about the grant money that was received to put the lights where the mural is located. Councilwoman Smyth stated her understanding is that we have received that money and have been asking about how we can attach those lights. Councilwoman Smyth stated the city attorney has been discussing this with the businesses on either side. There has been some contract discussions about that for who is going to be responsible for putting the lights up, changing the bulbs and that sort of thing on private property. We are in the process of trying to find out what the legal description for that is with the City of Troy, Andalusia, and those cities around us who have done that. We hope to be able to complete it like we discussed but if they cannot hang there we are looking at alternate locations where they could be hung in town.

Mr. Jones stated he just wanted to mention to the council he has had a couple of questions about the rezoning for the council districts. This is done after the census. This can be done anytime up to six months before the next election. Mr. Jones stated he has already been in touch with Tyson with SCADC (South Central Alabama Development Commission). They are the ones who basically do the numbers and that sort of thing. The mayor recommended waiting until spring of the year.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Jones seconded the motion.

Meeting was adjourned.