COUNCIL MEETING

CITY OF LUVERNE

March 14, 2022

The City of Luverne Council met in regular session on March 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 5:41

Kathy Smyth, Councilwoman – phone-5:58

Elliott Jones, Councilman

Mike Jones, Attorney

Mike Johnson, Chief

Margie Gomillion, Clerk

Absent:

Eddie Billings, Councilman

William Neal, Building Inspector

Visitor:

Steve Defee Brock Flynn Fred Clark

Kirk Alsbrooks Steve Hermeling Butch Speed

Eric Harrell Will Tate

Mayor Beasley called the meeting to order. The mayor called on Butch Speed to lead the pledge of allegiance to the flag and Mike Jones to say a prayer.

The mayor called for the approval of the minutes of February 28, 2022. Councilman Jones made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Councilwoman Dawson seconded the motion and the vote was unanimously approved.

Mayor Beasley called for unfinished/old business. Councilman Jones stated at the last meeting we discussed looking at some adjustments so I invited Mr. Fred Clark, CEO of AMEA. He is going to talk to us about a study that Jackson Thornton can do for our utilities to kind of get us about where we need to be. Mr. Clark stated it was his pleasure to be here and Luverne is one of our leading members. AMEA is your wholesale power provider and we have been fortunate to have stable low rates now with no changes and no increases since 2012. We feel very good about that through 2025 and beyond. We have a number of initiatives going on at this time that makes a cost of service study that you’re thinking about doing very timely. One, your about to put in working with five other cities new automated metering systems to upgrade your meters so that your consumers will know what their electric usage is intra-month. Those should be deployed sometime next year. The pilot project will begin shortly. Along with that, sometime ago we put in place a support program which we will pay up to $25,000 cost of service studies that the member might want. Generally these are done about every three to five years and what it is doing is evaluating how your overall costs are allocated when you have capital needs or otherwise. I know there are a number of consultants. Jackson Thornton an accounting firm out of Montgomery, does some of this and I’m sure they can provide you more details about that. But, in affect AMEA pays up to probably the cost associated with what this would be which is generally $25,000 or less. Once you pay for or as you get an invoice from them just ask for a refund in affect where we will send a check to help offset that cost. This will enable you to have a better understanding of the total cost in your electric utility and be able to move forward from that stand point. Councilman Jones asked if this study would cover electric only or would it cover all utilities because we would like to look at the water and sewer also. Mr. Clark stated we might be able to help since you have not made utilization of these funds in the past. We will work with you to help you cover water and sewer. The mayor asked how would you compare our city rates to some of our other sister cities. Mr. Clark stated he is not familiar with our rates but Peter Thompson on my staff can do this study for you to get a residential comparison to know internally where the city stands from South Alabama Co-op and/or Alabama Power. Councilman Jones stated if it was ok with the council he would get that information and ask AMEA to do a study. The council was in agreement. Mr. Clark stated we are happy to be your partner both in power supply as well as distribution efficiency so anyway we can help we will plan to. Councilman Jones stated also if everybody is ok I will contact Jackson Thornton tomorrow. The council was in agreement.

The mayor called on the city clerk for the administrative report. Routine work was performed.

Mayor Beasley called on Mr. Steve Defee to report on the airport. Mr. Defee stated Mr. Wayne Carter sent a letter to the widow of Mr. Tom Crowell for the property that is adjacent behind the airport’s newest hangar with a price trying to acquire the property from them. The proposal price was the appraisal value only and haven’t heard anything back from them. If that property can be purchased then the city can clean that property up. In the future we can have tee hangars for aircraft. We can charge anywhere from $400 - $500 a month rent on just a single tee hangar. Also, we are temporarily shut down as far as our fueling system because of a piece of equipment that has to be replaced.

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 80 traffic stops, wrote 65 citations and gave 15 warnings. The department made 10 misdemeanor arrest. There were 5 animal control calls since the last meeting.

Mayor Beasley stated everyone has a copy of Mr. Neal’s report. Councilman Smith reported tomorrow morning we will be testing pumps on our two front line pumpers. Mr. Neal is still having health issues so I will take them to be tested.

The mayor called for any economic development. Councilman Jones stated he has an economic development project he would like to speak about and I invited Judge Tate to come tonight. Councilman Jones stated he would like to make a great announcement that there has been a behind the scenes project on going for almost a year which is a state of the art sports complex is coming within the city limits of Luverne. The contract for the land has been signed. Councilman Jones asked Judge Tate to speak. Judge Tate thanked the mayor and council for their time tonight. As Councilman Jones stated, March 19th of last year Senator Barfoot contacted Tom Perdue and wanted him to come to Montgomery but he was out of town so he contacted me. I met with Senator Barfoot and we discussed some things that were on the horizon that might come available. On March 26th of last year, Councilman Jones and I collectively penned an email with a dream of what we hoped to see happen on the 171.24 acre property just south of town here where the lake is just past Dr. Tompkins’ office. Over the almost 12 months now there have been meetings, phone calls, and negotiations that has taken place. The bottom line is there is a contract. I was asked the question why should we help Crenshaw County. I said because there is nothing in Crenshaw County that makes anybody want to come to see us. I said if you help us then people will want to come visit us. One thing lead to another and we are tentatively doing a track and field complex. Track and Field is a big draw with a ton of people being involved. I went to a sectional in Brewton at TR Miller when our school competed. There were over a 1,000 kids competing. I asked former principle of Luverne, Chuck Alford who is now the principle at TR Miller what they cleared in a day’s time hosting this and he said $24,000 a day. Travel ball is a huge draw these days so there have been proposed anywhere from 12 to 16 fields that will be available, four soccer fields, around the lake can do another walking trail which is about a mile and a half and hookups for about 35 RV’s on the back side. This is just an opportunity to get people to recognize the city and Crenshaw County to benefit us as a whole. Everybody talks about wanting to see 331 four laned. It’s my understanding from director Cooper that there are two things that get the attention of the state. Number one is traffic count and second is economic need. If we create this facility that causes people to want to come here then who knows what’s next. I think the potential is limitless. Our delegation in Montgomery Senator Barfoot and Representative Sells, have really gone to bat for us through this and are really trying to help us. Councilman Jones stated we also have tentatively talked about indoor arena with basketball and hopefully indoor swimming. I would like to thank Councilman Jones for being instrumental in helping me and did a really good job in penning that initial email to get Senator Barfoot’s attention. Judge Tate thanked the mayor and council for their time.

Mayor Beasley reported he had a rough week. There was a water problem at the assisted living that I met with Dr. Pat and Mrs. Sandy Walker on. We can’t find anything on the city’s part. The city workers installed a new meter this morning. We will see where that goes and I will report back to you. We had another incident that happened in District 1. A citizen complained about not being informed that the city would be working on a drainage ditch located on their property. The city is trying to improve the washing problem in a big ditch coming down Woodford and Ninth Street. We were in a deeded easement doing the work. Hopefully this will be taken care of tomorrow.

Councilman Jones stated we had talked last time about the budget committee getting together to go over some of the equipment needs of the city. Councilwoman Smyth, myself, and Mike Jones got together with all the department heads. We had an outstanding meeting. I would like to ask our department heads tonight to speak on what they told us the other day about the list of needed equipment and prioritized them. Everyone has a copy of this needed equipment list along with a copy of a list of old equipment for the street department with some things being 1985 models. Councilman Jones stated he would like to ask the department heads starting with Steve Defee to go over this equipment that he talked about because he gave us a good understanding of why he is asking for it. Mike Jones stated last time you talked about the pay increase that you’ve already approved but the issue was how to generate the revenue to cover the pay increase. So the consideration was do we need to do more. Is there more things we need to spend money on and would we want to consider those before you decide what ways you can generate that increase. It’s either from electric, water, etc. The consideration was to get with the department heads and is there things you need if there is then prioritize them in a list. If you can get it what would you want and need. So they brought us this list that Councilman Jones brought as kind of the things they could use and at the meeting they told us why. I think Councilman Jones wants them to explain how these things got on the list. You don’t have to decide tonight what to buy or what rates to raise. Hopefully we will get this study from the consultant so they can help you decide that but just thought before we got started it would be good for you to hear the same things we heard. It’s pretty eye opening of what they had to say. I think Councilman Jones asked the other boards here so they can hear what the workers have to deal with on a daily basis. Councilwoman Smyth stated the list looks like a lot and it is a lot but the important thing about the discussion was these are items they need for their daily work. They talked about why they needed them and the shape the machinery is in. We also talked about the liability of this equipment that does not work properly. Mr. Defee thanked the council for the opportunity to be here. Mr. Defee discussed needing a new grapple truck, dump trucks, work trucks, sweeper truck, sidearm with mower, motor grader, backhoe, tractor with bush hog, and a zero turn mower. Mr. Defee stated all their equipment is well beyond its years of service to the point that it is a hazard now for the guys to work. Mr. Defee discussed equipment not having any brakes at all. All I do as a supervisor is pretty much work on one or the other pieces of equipment day in and day out. The guys that I want to cross-train is scared to even get on the equipment because they know the condition it is in. Next, Mr. Flynn discussed needing a squirt boom truck, pole trailer, skid steer and a new service truck. Mr. Flynn stated these items would be great assets for them. They do not have a legal pole trailer at this time. At this time they can only haul up to a 45 foot pole. In some places we have 55 and 60 foot poles. A new service truck would allow whoever is on call to have everything they need especially in an emergency such as a house fire. Next, Mike Johnson discussed needing 13 police cars. We have nine presently but we usually carry 12. We’ve had a couple to go down and a couple junked. Out of the nine we have presently six of them are nine or ten years old. The maintenance is major going from $3500 - $4000 a year to $12,000 - $15,000 a year. The chief stated the importance of getting 13 cars where each officer will have their own car is they last longer and they are maintained better. This is better than hot seating cars which means one shift gets out of a car and another shift gets in so the cars run continuously and never cut off which is what we do now. Councilman Jones stated he wanted to clarify that is important not with just your equipment but all the equipment. If we buy a fleet of 13 cars on state bid then we keep them until the warranty runs out and turn around and sell these cars at retail price. Which is way above what the retail price of the state bid was. A lot of areas are doing this and finding when they sell on the retail bid they make as much money or sometimes a little more than it cost to buy new ones back on state bid. So they bite the bullet one time and keep a rotation continuously of new vehicles under warranty and don’t have to put any more money in it. Next, Mr.Alsbrooks discussed equipment needed in the water and sewer department are a mini excavator with trailer, enclosed trailer, lawn trailer, service truck and dump truck. With some of this equipment we would be able to do some of our own water and sewer projects ourselves. We need a closed in trailer so we would have everything we need when we go to a job site and not have to make a lot of trips going back and forth getting what we need. We do not have a lawn trailer at all so we have to borrow from the street department. We need a new service truck to pull the enclosed trailer and the old service truck to be used to stay hooked to the sewer machine. So when there is a sewer problem we won’t have to wait on a truck. Mr. Alsbrooks stated he would like to thank the council last week for voting the raises in, the guys are very appreciative of it. We went from having one applicant with no experience in the last three years to two people calling me the next day with experience wanting a job. I really appreciate it making my life a lot easier.

The mayor stated the council needed to appoint a voting delegate for the Annual Convention of the Alabama League of Municipalities. Councilman Smith made a motion to appoint Councilwoman Kathy Smyth to be the voting delegate for the Annual Convention of the Alabama League of Municipalities. Councilman Jones seconded the motion. The vote was as follows:

Yea: Betty Dawson Abstained: Kathy Smyth

Kip Smith

Elliott Jones

The motion carried.

Councilwoman Dawson stated she will be graduating Wednesday night for Wiregrass LEAD program in Montgomery.

Councilwoman Dawson made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Meeting was adjourned.