

**Minutes of the
City Council Work Session
15430 Highway 99, Eagleville, TN
Monday, September 25, 2023 – 6:00 PM**

1) MAYOR'S WELCOME and CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Chad Leeman called the meeting to order at 6:16p.m.

2) ROLL CALL

Roll was called by City Recorder Christina Rivas.

COUNCIL MEMBERS

PRESENT:

Mayor Chad Leeman

Vice Mayor Bill Tollett

Councilman Jason Blair

Councilman Craig Campbell arrived at 6:52pm

Councilman Ryan Edwards

Councilman Brandon Emamalie

Councilman Chris Hendrix

STAFF

Hellyn Riggins, City Manager

Jonathan Armstrong, Fire Chief

Christina Rivas, City Recorder

Stephen Aymett, City Attorney

Mike Walker, Financial Advisor

Dave Breniser, Police Chief

3) DISCUSSION

a) Review of Emergency Services Provided By City

City Financial Advisor Mike Walker stated that he had queried several cities and proceeded to review his findings:

- Rutherford County would have to provide police services in the absence of a City police department.
- City of Farragut has a population of 26,000 and no police department.
 - Does not have a contract with the Knox County.
 - Crime is low; consisting of speeding, nuisances and some vandalism.
- There are limitations with a contract with the county in that they cannot enforce local ordinances.
- Thompson Station in Williamson County has a population of 7,500.
 - The county charged the city \$125,000 per year for police services.
 - The town does not have a court; thus, cases and revenues are handled elsewhere.
 - Thompson Station reiterated that County sheriffs cannot enforce local ordinances.
- Mr. Walker's discussion with Rutherford County Chief Deputy Keith Lowry noted the following:
 - The County added 20 new positions and nine School Resource Officers.
 - Has difficulty filling the positions.
 - 9 officers cover rural areas of the County.
 - Currently, the officers have a ten minute response time.
 - Eagleville police are deputized to work in the county areas adjacent to Eagleville.
 - Hiring out services is a common practice.
 - To patrol Eagleville would take 5 officers.

- Eagleville currently has 4 positions for officers.
- The cost for (RUCO) officers is \$102,000 per year, including salary and benefits – totaling \$562,000 per year.
 - Eagleville’s current budget for officers is \$161,000.
 - There would be an additional cost for vehicles and an upfront capital cost of \$53,000.

Mr. Walker stated that it is possible to negotiate the cost with the County. He further noted that a contract would be required to attain services, which would require the County Commission’s approval. He stated that a contract would result in the following:

- Eagleville would relinquish its City Court, though it could be negotiated.
 - Without the Court, the City would lose \$68,000 in revenue.
- It has been difficult to find officers for coverage.
 - No assurances that officers would be present.

Vice Mayor Tollett clarified that he, “...was not leading the charge...” to remove the police department. He noted that two officers had resigned and that it appeared to be a trend. He continued, citing:

- Word could spread that Eagleville is unwelcoming and the City needs to be prepared.
- The public and Council may have been hard on those officers.
- Council has a responsibility to its employees and needs to be ready to manage differently.
- It could be difficult to fill the vacant positions, now.

Discussion ensued noting the following:

- The Police Department and its officers need to be prepared to weather storms.
- Both resignation letters from the officers cited the same grievances.
- Most municipalities and counties are having difficulties in filling officer positions due to a shortage of applicants creating competition among neighboring governing bodies for officers.
- The former Eagleville officers’ perception was that Council and spouses of Council members had power over them and their jobs. They chose to leave before the situation hurt their careers.

Mayor Leeman stated that Eagleville officers know the community. He noted that one cannot be upset with officers for doing their job to the letter of the law and that Council cannot, legally, tell them how to execute their duties.

Councilman Blair stated that he was unaware that former Eagleville officer, Tyler Stokes had seven years with the force, and that Chief Dave Breniser had just celebrated ten years with Eagleville Police Department. He questioned what happened to drive Officer Stokes away after nearly eight years with the City. He stated that he has seen Officer Bobby Black interact with the community in a way that exhibited a personal touch with the community. He continued that it would be important to see more of that kind of presence in the community to forge a positive relationship.

Chief Dave Breniser noted that the majority of the community supports the police department, however a small margin had been especially vocal in a negative manner.

Mr. Walker suggested that the police department make a concerted effort to be present in the community and build relationships. He noted that when derogatory comments are posted on social media, having those relationships with the community would be critical to assist in quashing the negativity.

Mayor Leeman stated that:

- Council needed to support its officers and work to put to rest the negativity in the community and back the officers for upholding the law.
- Much of the time, those stopped by Eagleville officers do not receive a ticket. The officers opt to educate them instead.
- Eagleville officers provided a courtesy call to the parents of minors that are stopped.

Councilman Edwards stated his appreciation for Chief Breniser's leadership.

Councilman Campbell arrived at 6:52 p.m.

It was noted that:

- Officers' salaries had been increased steadily over time.
- The City offers full benefits for the employee and the County does not.
- Priorities differ among age groups: Younger officers are more interested in a higher salary, while seasoned officers are interested in benefits.

Mr. Walker stated that the starting pay for Rutherford County is \$51,300, while the starting salary with the City is \$45,000.

Chief Breniser noted that due to grants the City has received to pay for the Academy, the City cannot require a 2 year contract. He suggested to reallocate the budget to recruit a lieutenant or sergeant and have three officers instead of four. He stated that after a year, adding a fourth officer could be considered.

Mayor Leeman noted that he reviewed the salaries of sergeants in the county and the starting salary was \$75,000-\$80,000. Mr. Walker clarified that a corporal earns \$57,550 and a sergeant earns \$66,300.

Chief Breniser stated his desire to have a department operating at 24 hours a day to meet the needs of the City as it grows. Councilman Hendrix stated that it was important to move in that direction, as the City is growing. The Chief stated that the department needs to be proactive, rather than reactive.

Vice Mayor reiterated that it was not his intention to disband the police department, but rather the City needs to do a better job with their officers or they won't be able to have a police department.

Councilman Campbell apologized for his tardiness.

Councilman Blair noted that the demographics of Eagleville are different from other places. Elsewhere, if stopped by an officer, the officer and driver are unlikely to see each other again, versus here, they could see each other at a restaurant.

City Manager Hellyn Riggins noted that both officers cited that on social media, County officers could be derided collectively. Whereas, in Eagleville, officers and their families were called out by name – creating a more personal issue. Due to those circumstances, the officers chose to leave.

Mayor Leeman noted that if they took it personally, it showed that they cared.

Councilman Blair stated that if councilmembers were aware of disparagement of their officers, they needed to step in and support their officers. Vice Mayor Tollett concurred.

Discussion ensued:

- Chief Breniser explained the term, "Dual Commission".
 - Eagleville use the County's dispatch system and Criminal Investigation Department (CID) unit.
 - The services of a larger agency are utilized through dual commission.

- Eagleville's police department has the authority to act on the County's behalf when patrolling areas that abut the City.
- The County has authority to act on the City's behalf when the City lacks staff.
- Eagleville officers have to meet the standards of the State in order to be dual commissioned.
- Both County and City officers help each when needed.
- This relationship was not financially beneficial; however, the County aids the City with dispatch capabilities and the City provides support in the outlying areas of the County outside City limits.
- A number of Rutherford County officers live in Eagleville and are supportive.

Mr. Walker noted that the County had resources that are available to Eagleville when needed.

It was noted that the City has an established, amicable, working relationship with Rutherford County Public Safety Director, Chris Clark.

City Manager Hellyn Riggins stated that she would meet with Police Chief Dave Breniser and return at a future Work Session with a proposal to hire an officer with more experience at a higher rate of pay. She noted that they would need to modify the approved budgeted funds allotted for four officers for use for three officers.

Discussion followed regarding fundraising and how best to create competitive salaries to attract officers.

Financial Advisor Mike Walker stated that the City of Brentwood created a public safety trust fund which grateful citizens could contribute donations for firefighters and police officers. The fund was available to personnel that needed assistance with items that their benefits did not cover. He noted that this built loyalty and community.

City Attorney Steve Aymett stated that, legally, he did not see an issue with this idea and that it addressed the point of bringing the community together.

City Manager Riggins noted that the City pays the full retirement for its employees.

b) Update on Public Safety Center

Mr. Walker stated the following regarding the public safety center's progress and financing:

- Due to the permanent financing with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), interim financing with First Horizon bank is necessary.
- Each month the USDA must approve the City's reimbursement for interim financing.
- The contractor's invoice is reviewed monthly.
- A contingency fund of 5% of the budget had been created.
 - \$75,000 has been spent out of \$261,000.
 - Spent due to site work as they ran into bad dirt.
 - This cost overrun would have been paid had it been known ahead of time.
- 5% of the payments is retained each month that will be due to the contractor upon completion and acceptance of the building.
 - The City is not paying interest on the 5% that is retained.
- Interest costs will commence in November 2023.
- To date, \$1M has been spent on the construction loan.

- Some of the cost is due to paying in full the loan with Wilson Bank & Trust to acquire a better interest rate.
- The projected date for completion of the center is end of August 2024.

Mr. Walker stated that it is preferable for the completion date to occur promptly, after the start of the 2024-2025 fiscal year. He noted that the interest would not start until one year after the loan begins with USDA. Therefore, interest cost would not begin until the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Ms. Riggins noted that upon closing the loan with USDA the interest rate would also be lower than the interest rate on the interim loan.

Mr. Walker stated that the Eagleville Safety Center is of the highest priority for USDA in the State.

c) Discussion of City Seal

Councilman Emamalie presented the design and stated that the designer requested constructive criticism to complete the seal.

Discussion ensued regarding the colors in order to perfect the design. It was determined that:

- The stars should be white and the “1832” gold.
- The seal will be adaptable for usage on signs and stationery and could also be embroidered onto fabric.

Fire Chief Jonathan Armstrong informed Council that 2023 marked the seventieth year for the Eagleville Fire Department.

Mayor Leeman thanked Council for attending this Special Work Session, citing that Council as a whole, wants to do what is best for the City. He also expressed appreciation to staff for hosting a most successful Fall Festival.

Ms. Riggins noted that the Merchants Association will meet next month to discuss the Fall Festival and review adjustments that may be needed to make it better. She stated that staff will meet, subsequently, to take their input into consideration along with staff’s observations. Ms. Riggins acknowledged Council’s support for the festival and that their involvement was great for the community.

Councilman Campbell stated that his establishment had record sales of beer. It was noted that last year was the first year that alcohol was sold during Fall Festival. Chief Breniser reported that there were no alcohol related incidents during the festival.

Fire Chief Armstrong reported that there were a few people treated for heat exhaustion and dehydration and a missing child that was quickly found and returned to his parents.

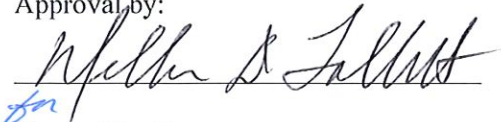
Vice Mayor Tollett noted that trash collection was handled expediently. Council concurred citing that the area had been maintained during the festival and cleaned promptly afterward and looked as though the festival had never taken place.

Mayor Leeman thanked Vice Mayor Tollett for hosting the meeting this evening.

4) ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Chad Leeman confirmed there was no further business to address and adjourned the meeting. The meeting ended at 7:48 p.m.

Approval by:


for

Mayor Chad Leeman



City Recorder Christina Rivas

Date minutes approved: October 26, 2023