

REGULAR MEETING
February 17, 2015

The Board of City Commissioners of the City of Herington, Kansas met at City Hall at 4:30 p.m. on the above date—the following being present: Mayor Beth Wade, Commissioner Fred Olsen, Commissioner Chuck Miller, Commissioner Michelle Stanford, Commissioner Kitty Walter, City Manager Ron Strickland, City Attorney Brad Jantz, and City Clerk Debra Wendt.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance. A motion was made by Commissioner Olsen, seconded by Commissioner Stanford, to approve the minutes of the meeting of February 3, 2015. Motion carried, all voting, “Aye.” Appropriation Ordinances #C0131-15 and #P0210-15 were discussed and reviewed. There were no additional agenda items. A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to approve the agenda. Motion carried, all voting “Aye.”

Tandi Arevalo, Co-President of the Herington High School Alumni Association, was present to ask for cooperation from the City for the all-school reunion May 22-24. She is also working with the Chamber Beautification Committee. She went over the planned activities, and said that they would like to have some picnic tables and trash cans at the pocket park, and welcome flags hung. The Knights of Columbus will apply for a cereal malt beverage license. Tandi will email a list of all the things they need to Ron.

The Mayor read a proclamation declaring April, 2015 as “Fair Housing Month” in Herington. A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Commissioner Olsen, to authorize the Mayor to sign this proclamation. Motion carried, all voting, “Aye.”

A resolution opposing State Senate Bill 171 was considered:

RESOLUTION NO. 863

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF HERINGTON, KANSAS, OPPOSING THE KANSAS STATE LEGISLATURE’S CONSIDERATION OF MAKING MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS PARTISAN AND MOVING TO THE FALL OF EVEN NUMBERED YEARS.

A motion was made by Mayor Wade, seconded by Commissioner Stanford, to adopt Resolution No. 863. Motion carried, all voting, “Aye.”

Westar Representative Suzanne Lane gave an overview of the process of evaluating the City’s electric distribution system. She explained that the City of Herington is a long-standing customer and partner of Westar, that the City pays Westar and/or the Southwest Power Pool for all aspects of our electric service, but the City then owns, operates, and maintains the distribution system. Suzanne then went over the difference between Westar retail and wholesale customers. Since the City has requested information about the process involved in selling the City’s electric system, Suzanne went over data and inventory that would be needed in order to make an assessment of the system. If Westar determines it is interested in acquiring the City’s system, then discussions would be initiated on the terms of the acquisition. Questions were answered as to staffing, mutual aid, paying for the bond issue, donations, franchise fees, and how we would pay for all the City bills.

A quit claim deed that would transfer some City-owned land that is connected to land owned by William Carson was considered. Mr. Carson has maintained the land for many years. A motion was made by Commissioner Olsen, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to authorize the Mayor to sign the quit claim deed. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

A motion was made by Commissioner Olsen, seconded by Mayor Wade, to appoint Ron Biehler to the Tree Board, term to expire 9-1-16. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Commissioner Miller, to appoint Mike Wendt as the Arborist member to the Tree Board, term to expire 9-1-17. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Commissioner Olsen, to appoint Brenda Wildman to the Tree Board, term to expire 9-1-17. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

An ordinance that would raise the residential electric meter service charge from \$10.10 to \$15.00, and the commercial meter charge from \$14.10 to \$20.00 per month was again considered. Ron reminded the Commission that this is not an increase in the price per Kwh, but only the meter charge. He added that the increase is necessary to maintain the electric system and pay employees. Kitty commented that she does not have a clear enough picture of the situation, and Michelle said she wants more information, including a list of "free" utilities. Brad said that the fact that the electric is operating in a negative fashion is a concern. Rick Freeman and D.J. Neuberger voiced concerns that the rent being paid for the Homestead Village and Hilltop apartments includes utilities and no money is being put in the utility funds. Kat Souza asked about the ordinance that created an equipment reserve fund, and wanted to know why employees do not have time clocks. Carl Brown suggested cutting the City Manager's salary by 25%. Michelle asked about the fuel adjustment that is mentioned in 7-111(c) of the code book, and Chuck asked what happened to the money that was made by selling the power plant. Fred suggested that money from the electric equipment reserve fund be transferred to the electric fund, to "save having to raise rates." Michelle told Ron that it is part of his job to look for grants, and asked if he had pursued any for windmills, solar panels, etc. Ron replied that we don't have any matching funds available, and that he doesn't think any benefits would outweigh the costs. A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Commissioner Walter, to table the electric rate ordinance, pursuant to more information. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye." A motion was then made by Commissioner Miller, seconded by Commissioner Stanford, to move enough funds from the electric portion of the equipment reserve fund to the electric fund to eliminate the deficit. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

Ty Dragoo, with the Union Pacific Railroad, was present to address the Commission. He asked for their support for Senate Bill No. 164, which would require a crew of at least two individuals on all trains. Ty pointed out some examples of why this is a safety issue. The hearing on this will be Thursday, February 19th at 8:30 a.m. The Commission offered a letter of support, but Mr. Dragoo said he would really like either the Mayor or City Manager to testify at the hearing. After discussion, Brad Jantz said he could go to Topeka on Thursday and testify. A motion was made by Commissioner Olsen, seconded by Mayor Wade, to support SB 164. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

The proposed land bank ordinance was considered. Michelle said that she had heard some concerns that the land bank may go to auctions and bid against citizens that want to buy the property. Brad said that the intent of a land bank is to not be in competition with citizens. A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Mayor Wade, to table this ordinance until Brad can make some changes and review the language. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

Michelle reminded everyone of the candidates forum which will be held on Wednesday, February 25th at the Community Building. She said she also had a business person that lives out of town lodge a complaint against the Commission that they don't come around and talk to the business owners and find out their concerns.

A motion was made by Commissioner Stanford, seconded by Commissioner Walter, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried, all voting, "Aye."

Also present at the meeting were Rick Freeman, Brandy Collins, Eric Gares, Virginia Neuberger, Bill Carson, Gloria Boomer, David Gehrke, Rita Gehrke, Mark Hager, Ray Perez, Ken Walters, Kat Souza, Wendy Jones, Carl Brown, Mike Ryan, Paula Strickland, Tandi Arevalo, Leslie Mayes, Cynthia Naylor, Ty Dragoo, Chad Hett, Suzanne Lane, Mike Bowers, Vickie Hawkes, D.J. Neuberger, Carl Lynn, Rusty Beames, and J.R. Sparke.

Debra Wendt
City

Clerk