

**3CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE NEIGHBORS
MAYOR AND BOARD OF ALDERMEN
MEETING MINUTES
THURSDAY MARCH 16, 2023 – 7:30 P.M.**

PRESENT Mayor Tommie Pierson, City Attorney Dorothy White-Coleman, City Engineer Clayton Klein, Planning and Zoning Board Pat Barrett, Treasurer Rick Rognan and City Clerk Semmie Ruffin-Hall.

ABSENT Chief Jeremy Ihler and Jeff Howe

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER BY Mayor Pierson at 7:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL: City Clerk Semmie Ruffin Hall called the roll:

- Alderman Alease Dailes-Present
- Alderman Alicia Smith-Present
- Alderman Dinah Tatman-Present
- Alderman Theresa Hester-*EXCUSED ABSENCE*
- Alderman Peg Warnusz-Present
- Alderman Lynette VonSeggern-Present
- Alderman James Thomas, Sr.-Present
- Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward-Present

Seven Present/One Excused Absence -Quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor called for a motion to approve the agenda. **Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward** made motion to approve agenda, second made by **Alderman Alease Dailes**. **Mayor** called any further discussion. **Alderman James Thomas** motion made to table Item #6 since clerk was not able to transcribe minutes for 03-02-23, second made by **Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward**. **Mayor** stated all in favor say. **7-Ayes/0-Nays. Motion passed.**

CITY COLLECTOR REPORT-JEFF HOWE

- *City Clerk advised Jeff Howe stated since he gave two reports last meeting he has nothing for this meeting.*

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (With 3-minute time limit)

- *No comments from the public at this time*

APPROVAL OF INVOICES OVER \$500 (03-02-23 through 03-12-23)-Motion made by **Alderman Alease Dailes for \$119,468.06**. To approve invoices over \$500, 2nd made by **Alderman Lynette VonSeggern**. **Mayor** called for any discussion-none. **Mayor** asked for roll call.

ROLL CALL: City Clerk Semmie Ruffin Hall called the roll:

- Alderman Alease Dailes-Yes
- Alderman Alicia Smith-No
- Alderman Dinah Tatman-No
- Alderman Peg Warnusz-Yes
- Alderman Lynette VonSeggern-Yes
- Alderman James Thomas, Sr.-Yes
- Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward-Yes

5-Ayes/2-Nays. Motion passed.

CITY ENGINEER/BUILDING REPORT-CLAYTON KLEIN

- Finishing work on QT Remodeling.
- Working with Travers Logistics to get them to finish work they had permitted on.
- The Recreation Center progressing well.
- Still on schedule to have work completed by mid-May weather permitting.

Alderman Alease Dailes asked Clayton Klein if he had inspected any of the construction sites that MO American Water has dug up our streets and putting them back. **Clayton Klein** responded no, not the recent ones.

PLANNING AND ZONING-PAT BARRETT

- Mayor Pierson brought Commission members up to date about discussions he's had with Clayco Construction and Tom Glosier, agent for owner of the property at I-270 & I-367. The Mayor discussed possible future development at the 100+ acre site.

- Mayor Pierson talked about a hotel possibly being built there since the Zoo will be developing property at Columbia Bottoms & Spanish Pond Road as the St. Louis Zoo WildCare Park. He said we need to draw visitors to Bellefontaine Neighbors and this development (at 270 & 367) would be an attraction.
- He said the State of Missouri has millions of dollars available for development. He was going to check with Governor Parson's office and/or St. Louis County accordingly.
- One member of P&Z talked about how youth sports teams are popular now with people travelling to other cities for competitions. He thought that such competitions are becoming lucrative and that enclosed sports facilities would be an advantage to attracting people here. Chair Barrett talked about the PowerPlex STL facility that's planned for the old Mills Mall and that a marketing study needed to be performed at the beginning of the project to avoid duplicating nearby venues that might compete with it. Whatever is built there would ideally contain services and products that would otherwise require people to drive 30 minutes or more to purchase or participate in. We agreed with the Mayor that a sit-down restaurant would be very desirable for both visitors and residents of nearby communities and a requirement for any hotel.
- We agreed that it would be ideal if a Developer would buy the land from the property owners directly without funding from the City. We want to avoid risking funds and financing the project to any significant degree, as much as possible.
- Concerning development on the north side of I-270 being done by Christian Hospital now, Mayor Pierson said he would speak to Rick Stevens, president of Christian Hospital, to see what they have in mind there.

CHIEF OF POLICE REPORT -JEREMY IHLER

- *Excused Absence*

TREASURER'S REPORT- RICK ROGNAN

- Keep in mind as a city to issue more bonds at some point and time we have to get these audits done.

- Secondly, we do not have enough bonding capacity until about 2025 or 2026 before we are able to do anything. Anything additional requires the votes of the residents. We are not capable of doing anything until 2025 or 2026 to give us enough bonding capacity to move forward. If we had all these audits done, we will be good. If we do not have these audits done, we will not be able to issue any more bonds and move forward.
- 2025 and 2026 is the next time we will be able to issue any large sum in order to be able to accomplish what is being described or discussed tonight.
- Revenue we are at 84.72 and that is good news for the city.
- Not in every category but it looks like we are going to make our revenue.
- Asked the board to give approval to send the non-binding preliminary estimated tax rates to St. Louis County according to the state statute.

Alderman James Thomas, Sr. made a motion to direct our treasurer to send the information to St. Louis County to meet the deadline to follow the state statute to move forward and send the non-binding preliminary estimated tax rates to St. Louis County, second made by **Alderman Alease Dailes**. **Mayor** called for any discussion. **None**. **Mayor** called for an all in favor.

7-Ayes/0-Nay. Ayes have it. Motion passed.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT -DOROTHY WHITE COLEMAN

- I do not have a report tonight.

(In pre-meeting Alderman Alicia Smith had concerns about the Bill #2670, but wanted to go on record as saying she does not disagree with the bill)

BILL #2670 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING AN AGREEMENT WITH COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES, INC. TO DESIGN, INSTALL, SERVICE AND MAINTAIN AN IP VIDEO SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM IN CERTAIN FACILITIES OF THE CITY OF BELLEFONTAINE NEIGHBORS, MISSOURI (INTRODUCED BY ALDERMAN ALICIA SMITH)-

ALDERMAN ALICIA SMITH-made a motion for the first read of Bill #2670, second made by **Alderman James Thomas, Sr.** **Mayor** called for any discussion. **None**. **ALDERMAN ALICIA SMITH**-made a motion for the second read of Bill #2670,

second made by **Alderman James Thomas, Sr.** second made by **Alderman Alease Dailes.** **Mayor** called for any discussion. **None.** **Mayor** asked for roll call.

ROLL CALL: City Clerk Semmie Ruffin Hall called the roll:

- Alderman Alease Dailes-Yes
- Alderman Alicia Smith-Yea
- Alderman Dinah Tatman-Yes
- Alderman Peg Warnusz-Yes
- Alderman Lynette VonSeggern-Yes
- Alderman James Thomas, Sr.-Yes
- Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward-Yes

7-Ayes/0-Nays. Motion passed.

Mayor asked for ordinance number advised him I was unable to have for this meeting due to the conference I had attended and with limited computer access, I had.

BILL NO. 2671- AN ORDINANCE CONFIRMING Randall Cahill AS SPECIAL COUNSEL FOR CERTAIN PENDING MATTERS (INTRODUCED BY ALDERMAN JAMES THOMAS, SR.)

ALDERMAN James Thomas, Sr. -made a motion for the first and second read of Bill #2671, second made by **Alderman Alicia Smith** on first read. **Mayor** called for any discussion. **None.** **Mayor** called for an all in favor. **7-Ayes/0-Nays.** **Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward** seconded on second read. **Mayor** asked for roll call.

ROLL CALL: City Clerk Semmie Ruffin Hall called the roll:

- Alderman Alease Dailes-Yes
- Alderman Alicia Smith-Yes
- Alderman Dinah Tatman-Yes
- Alderman Peg Warnusz-No
- Alderman Lynette VonSeggern-Abstained
- Alderman James Thomas, Sr.-Yes
- Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward-Yes

5-Ayes/1-Nays/1-Abstained. Motion passed.

Mayors Report

- Officer hired today and we will bring him before the board when we meet in person. Young man 36 years old and I think we will be pleased with him.
- Let me share I did meet with Clayco that are in preliminary stages. Any moment on this will have to come before the board for approval.
- Also met with owner of the land, Thursday of last week. It was a good meeting and he wants us to have that land.
- We have good board members and let us together move this city forward.
- I hope that at the next board meeting, we will be meeting in person and I will have more to say.

ALDERMAN'S REPORT

Alderman Alease Dailes

- Good evening everyone.
- I have been out talking with many of our neighbors. From the beginning of 2016, I always wanted the City of Bellefontaine Neighbors to be an example like the city of Ladue. I always want to have, retain and keep our certified police department within our great city of Bellefontaine Neighbors. I hope we can continue to advance as a premier city, which requires us to have our own certified police department. I want to be crystal clear I want us (meaning the city of Bellefontaine Neighbors) to always have our city of Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department as one of the largest police departments in north county. For anybody who thinks differently, or who has stated or rumored or assumed anything different. That is not true. I do not want anything but for our great city to have its own police department. Always and nothing else. I want you to hear it from me. I hope our police department will grow as a diverse department, which will reflect the community that it serves. Such as officers from all races including women. We are a premier city we have a great police department with a great staff as well as great elected officials. Instead of spreading negative divisive untrue rumors. I hope that we can work together to bring positive change to grow our city and our community. I hope to help us all to move our city to a greater higher level of prestige within the state of Missouri. In addition, to make us one of the best cities to live in the United States. I want to

always have our own Police Department the city of Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department nothing else and always. This is what is in my heart this is my continue vision for the city of Bellefontaine Neighbors I will always work for our police department the Bellefontaine Neighbors Police Department as a part of our community family just as I work for neighbors in our community. No other options. I hope everyone understands those are my words and that is what I want for our great city.

- I received a letter from Chief Goldstein and he did pay their fees and wanted the board to know that.
- For the newsletter, anyone that knows an 80, 90 year old or older please ask them if I can have their photo. We would like to put that in the newsletter.
- I met many young people taking care of their parents and their grandparents in this neighborhood and I wanted to give a shout out to them.
- People are talking about the trash; we only have a part time inspector. If you live on a block, adopt a block so we can all pitch in to help our city clean.

Alderman Alicia Smith

- Good evening everyone and thank you for staying.
- I along with my counterpart Alderwoman Dailes will continue to drive the city as usual. This past Saturday and Sunday, we put out notices like those that we did previously regarding your trashcans. So please pull your trashcans back after your trash has been picked up. We will be putting the ordinances and reminders in your doorway.
- If you guys are looking for something fresh, new something else to do. So many different events are being held this month. Such as comedy, different eateries that are going on. Laser shows, concerts, social (including karaoke night), health fairs. Events for children and young adults and family events. Including the circus which is coming in March, March 26 to be exact at the Family Arena from 1-5. There will also be a community open house that is coming April 22, which is a Saturday, at 1150 Graham Road at the main entrance. It is a free event for screening, balance, blood pressure, body mechanics, grip strength, hearing and posture. If you are

unable to make it, you are more than welcome to contract the Orthopedic Surgeons at BJC Medical Group (314) 953-8250.

- Again, thank you for staying and have a great evening.

Alderman Dinah Tatman

- Good evening everyone, to our citizens and colleagues.
- I want to extend an invitation again for all those who are interested in getting involved and volunteering in our first annual Creating Healthy Lifestyles Building Healthy Community Health Summit, which is going to be held Saturday April 15, 2023 at Riverview Gardens High School Gymnasium from 10-4. The purpose of this summit is to offer practical information, resources and tools for our citizens. Because we have been identified as having the highest health disparities in six concentrated areas.
 - Asthma
 - Diabetes
 - Suicide
 - Mental Illness
 - Opioid
 - Addiction
- We have all of the major medical and healthcare providers that are collaborating with us. From dental, to vaccination. From prostate cancer to breast cancer screening. In addition, stress tests anything dealing with any of those health disparities. So I just welcome again if you want to volunteer because we need at least about 25 volunteers. You can reach out to me by my email on the website or the phone number and leave a message.
- Also, I want to give a shout out to our police department because they have been doing a fantastic job. Been getting feedback from citizens that have seen them in the community where they have not seen them before. In addition, I see them on the highway (270) on both ends. We appreciate the extra presence.
- We will be knocking on your doors if we have not already. Thank you and have a good evening.

Alderman Peg Warnusz

- I like to welcome everyone especially those that are staying on board with the meeting.
- I have some concerns about the ordinance that was filed and passed on hiring a lawyer in order to take care of the alder people who were on board last year and they were the ones that fail to show up at board meetings. We have a lawyer that was paid a lot of money to fight this case, but we have nothing that says the members of our board today are sitting and they also got up and left meetings that occurred in the last year before the new board took place. If we are going to punish one group then we need to punish all groups. However, I also think we can easily say let us pay what they are owed and move on. Because it is a lot of money, we are paying in order for them to be tried in court. That is just my opinion. If you want more information, you can contact me and I will be glad to talk to you.
- Have a good evening.

Alderman Lynette VonSeggern

- I want to thank everybody for joining us on zoom this evening. I am ready for go back to in person, I like In person better.
- I want to give a shout out to our police force, I see them every morning at 5:30 when I am leaving, and it is so good to see them on the streets. I know they are out there.
- I want to give a shout out to the Parks and Rec and Public Works department for the cleanup in Wilderness Park it looks amazing. I went by there today and it looks amazing. Thanks for your hard work.
- That is all I have and everybody have a good evening.

Alderman James Thomas, Sr.

- Good evening.
- I would like to say the police department continues to strive to patrol our city, as a board member I have always supported them, and I will continue through my votes and interaction with the police department. One thing that we have to be is truthful to ourselves and I will leave you with a quote from Carter G. Woodson on this evening concerning education. Because as you know the state has passed open enrollment, we are getting ready to lose out if our students up to a certain percentage choose to leave our

school district. I am hoping the school district can get them to stay. **Carter G. Woodson** said, *“Real education means to inspire people to live more abundantly to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better.”*

- That is all I have to say for tonight, thank you.

Alderman Regina Harmon-Ward

- Good evening. I don't have a report
- I would also like to give the police department a shout out as well I see them up and down my block quite often.
- In addition, props to the Rec Center for having the Mammogram Van that I participated in. I just wish we could have had more participation. I do not know what we needs to do to get the word out more. I just found out the night before. I would like to see a better turn out when the Mammogram Van comes to our city. It is very important that we have these services.
- In addition, I hope that we have a good turnout for the Health Fair because there are many things we need to know and we need to experience. In addition, many resources as Alderwoman Tatman said.
- Other than that, you all have a good evening. Thank you to whoever is still on with us, I would like to thank you guys for coming out.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC (3 MINUTE TIME LIMIT)

- **Wanda Lane-99XX Martingale Road**

-Since everyone is talking about the police. I know that I am not the only one that remembers all of the dissension that has happened in this department this past year. So much so that the chief felt like he needed to call a community meeting in order to get support for a pay increase. I am happy to hear everyone now is a 100% behind supporting the police. However, I have attended many meetings where visually and audibly it did not always sound like that. I know my eyes and ears were not deceiving me. Therefore, I am happy everybody is on board with the police.

-Regarding the Planning and Zoning Meeting on Monday if you heard Chair Barrett say that the initial goal or plan is for the contractor to purchase the land from the owner. That is the initial infant stages where we are in now. I bring this up because I was listening to the treasurer talk about our bonding rating and how we need to have many things in place before we

can do anything like that. We are hoping we do not have to have the cities money involved in this at all, or minimally.

-Speaking of the treasurer, I appreciate all the information regarding the taxes. I call St. Louis County on a regular basis I have spoken to the board of equalization. As a taxpayer, I do not want my taxes to increase. I think it may be important for the citizens to know the difference between assessed value and fair market value. If you thinking about selling your house that is one thing, if you think about paying more taxes then yes that is another whole thing. I am not in favor of that.

-Last thing that I might like to ask the attorney. I would not like some negative information to go on my personal employment history. Therefore, is the State threatening to charge the city with this misdemeanor for not filing our audit on time and if that happens in light of the situation meaning the citizens or the elected officials have nothing to really do with what has happened with the auditor, the change of ownership and all this other stuff Is there something we can do proactively to make sure no one bears the brunt of this? Where it appears everyone is working as diligently as they can, it appears that way. Attorney if you do not have the answer to that question tonight I understand. I am just asking why is this such a big, well I understand why it is important but I want to know if we are being threatened for this because we have pay our bills (thank you Mayor for paying our bills). We have to keep the city afloat.

-Second to last thing, I attended all of these meeting most of them regarding the last board. If memory serves me correctly when other board members were present they actually showed up and asked to be excused, these people did not show up at all. It was a concertive effort that they are not going to attend the meeting and with the intention of holding up city business. It is a violation of your oath, I do not appreciate it as a citizen, and I do not think we should pay them a dime. Thank you very much mayor.

- **Anthony Green-92XX Waldorf Drive**

-We are on a precipice of an election for FY 23 year. I had the courage in November 2021 to ask the Mayor as well as Patrick Howard where we were on the FY 21 Audit that was November of 2021. Here we are April 2023 and

all I have heard is nothing but a portfolio of excuses as to why this audit is not done. I sat at this podium and explained to you what the risks were of not having this done, especially since we have received ARPA money. We are statutorily required to have an audit done even if we have not spent the ARPA money. It needs to be done, we had enough meeting between FY 19 audit and FY 20 audit where Horschild Bloom, now Sikich told the mayor, the board and everybody that we had significant deficiencies about the accounting staff which included Patrick Howard as well as Lori Lenz. Their needs to be some things done with their training and education on it. There were significant deficiencies in FY 19 and FY 20 on this. I recall no corrected action plan being developed by any of the board members or the mayor. It was not addressed: and if it was addressed, show me receipts. I am tired. I pay way too much in taxes. I do not want to hear any more rallying calls about we are moving forward as a city when I have watched everybody tell me I need to be more patient about an audit that was supposed to be done eons ago. I do not want Rick to sit in front of me and tell me what I should be looking for. Because I am a CPA and licensed in the state of Missouri and I know what I should be seeing and all I am seeing is excuses. Rick is well competent as an auditor and so am I. I do not know what is going on but I want some answers. I am a citizen. I do not sit on this board of eight and the mayor. I called Angela Dorn in December 2022 and asked her on that phone does she expect the audit to be done by the election of April 2023. Her response was "Oh my gosh I should hope so". I do not recall. Beside the little side bars you have, have any of you called her. Why she is not in any of the meeting we have had, why she cannot explain her story. Her allegation is this story is more nuisance than what is being presented before us. In addition, it is more complicated than just Sikich not holding their end of the bargain. We have serious internal control weakness that the city are preventing it from providing the documentation that needs to be provided annually. Until we fix the root cause of that part of which is policy and procedurally other part is certain people in the accounting department cannot fulfil their duties of what they need to do for grants, accounting for ARPA and other stuff. You have not addressed those issues and as long as those remain, we are going to be locked. You can have any other big name accounting firm you will be in the

same situation because no one is talking about fixing substantially the internal control. Also the leveling of training education of those also who actually recording journal entries. We do not have a December 31, 2022 balance sheet. Yall posted the revenue because we are waiting on our auditor to tell the accounting department what our cash balance should be. That is the reality of where we are. We are waiting on an auditor who is not even here most of the year to tell us what our cash balance should be. Before we can have a balance sheet that shows what our cash balances are and so I think all hands need to be on deck. I do not need to see you having your head go up and down yall need to be in some serious meetings and figure this out. I am tired of the okiedoke, I am tired of people voting in locks with one another and not doing their official duties of figuring out what this -\$771,000. How much of it has been found, if any. Is it holding up the audit, if so why? Need to get in a room with the bank statements out to match up. Whatever it takes, I do not really care if Lori feels uncomfortable not my concern she is a whole adult she can deal with it. However, you need to get to the bottom of this, it needs to be done. I do not want to hear any more excuses. I have been more than patient, not the FY 22 just the FY 21 can we please get it done. Thank you.

- **Pamela Anderson-Clark-11XX Avant**


-I have the same concerns that the gentleman had before me. I have been in this community for 27 years. No matter what, whether I was employed, unemployed or whatever. I have a responsibility to this household to make sure that the bills are being paid no matter what. That the property is being maintained. Pay my taxes. I do not log onto these meeting monthly but I have had people tell me maybe I should. I do read keep up with the website. I see everything on that website except audited budgets. In addition, it concerns me, if we do not keep this neighborhood secure by protecting and supporting our police department paying our bills. The way we should pay our bills, then what is left for us out here us that are really trying. I do not understand. This is the first time in all these years (when my bills are not being paid, I am sick) this new election we have coming up. That is front in my mind, am I going to be protected. Are my bills going to be paid to be able to move forward? That is a concern for me.

-The good thing is over the last couple of years Mrs. Hall who has been promoted she has done a great job. When I call and I am able to get to someone and get an answer. She will call me back if I need it. It has been a couple of years. However, if I need an answer or whatever, she calls me back. Mr. Ross, I see the improvements and I had a conversation with him late last year. So they give me some type of security. That something is being done. Most important thing that needs to be done here is we need to be able to balance our budget. I need to be able to log on here like I can for prior meeting and whatever, I should be able to log on to see what is going on with the budget. If I am controlling the budget in my household any of these people in this house should be able to be relaxed knowing I care and that I am going to make sure everything is ok so we can sleep comfortably. Right now, I am not sleeping comfortably in Bellefontaine Neighbors because I have this concern over my head. I just wanted to present that.

ADJOURNMENT-Alderman James Thomas, Sr. and Alderman Alicia made a motion to adjourn. Second made **Alderman Lynette VonSeggern.**

Meeting adjourned to close session at 9:32 pm.

ATTEST:


Semmie Ruffin-Hall, City Clerk

Approved by the Board of Aldermen on April 20, 2023