

CITY OF IOLA

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A regular meeting of the City Council of Iola was held on April 24, 2023, at 6:00 p.m., at the Park Community Building, 510 Park Avenue, Iola, Kansas.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor French called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Mayor French and Council Members Shallah, Peterson, D’Albini, Wicoff, Kinder, and Lohman were present. Also present were City Administrator Rehder, Assistant Administrator Schinstock, and City Clerk Hutton. Council Member Slaugh was present via telephone. Council Member Peters was absent.

REVIEW & APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion made by Council Member D’Albini, seconded by Council Member Shallah, approves the agenda as amended with an added Executive Session under item 8B. All in favor. Motion carried.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Persons wishing to address the City Council regarding items on the agenda may do so as they are called. Persons wishing to address the City Council regarding items not on the agenda may do so when called upon. Comments on personnel matters and matters pending in court or outside tribunals are not permitted. Speakers are limited to three minutes. No action will be taken.

Fire Chief Corey Isbell told the Council that on behalf of himself and the department they want to thank the Administrator, the Council, Thrive, and all of the citizens and businesses for their support of the purchase of the new fire truck. Chief Isbell invited everyone outside to see the new truck. The council went outside to look at the truck.

CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Minutes Approval**
 - **April 10, 2023, Council Meeting**
- B. Appropriations Approval**
- C. Library Board Appointment - Nancy Haire**
- D. Iola Senior Center Request**

Council Member Lohman motioned to approve the consent agenda with the correction. Motion seconded by Council Member D'Albini. All in favor. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Meadowbrook Park Land Swap- Assistant Administrator Schinstock informed the Council that during a routine inspection Code Enforcement Officer Hutton and himself identified that a shed was on city property. The shed was installed without a permit and was put in an area previously platted for a city road.

Assistant Administrator Schinstock spoke with the landowner, and he agreed to swap part of his land with the area of the city land to prevent the moving of the shed. This will also even border the city and the two adjacent landowners. The property owner was tasked with surveying his property to determine the true and accurate property lines.

Mayor French asked if this situation occurs; he would like to see a letter placed in the council packet from the homeowner requesting the swap.

Motion made by Council Member Shallah and seconded by Council Member Kinder to approve the land transactions as proposed on the attached maps and authorize staff to sign the necessary documents. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Promise to Pay - Humanity House - Tori Bland, Client Advocate for Humanity House, noted that the poverty level for Iola is 26.7%, with 20% of the community being 65 or older.

She is here to speak about the current City of Iola Utility Payment Policy and ask the Council to adjust the policy to allow payment arrangements.

Logan Stensing, Thrive Allen County, Early Childhood Policy Developer, stated that one day he picked up the phone at Thrive, and the individual was on the other end stating that her grandchildren's utilities had been disconnected and she was seeking help to pay the bill. She noted that Humanity House and the CURB program representatives had told her that they were out of funds and could not assist her. He noted that other communities had developed policies that address payment arrangements and why the City of Iola can't.

Georgia Master, a Humanity House Volunteer, stated that she prays the Council makes the right decision for the neediest citizens.

Council Member Kinder noted that he had not been on the Council when the previous changes were made to the policy. At that time, all individuals were given one free shut off per year, the penalty amount was lowered from 5% to 2 1/2%, He feels that Iola has the longest amount of time to pay their bill for area cities. In his opinion, if we allow

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individuals to spread a \$500 bill over the next few months, we will add more cost to the future bills.

Council Member Kinder stated that an idea would be that when an organization such as Humanity House pays the individual's bill, then when they get paid, they can pay HH back. He noted that part of the problem is that the individual living place is inefficient and then costs more money to heat and cool.

Council Member Kinder stated that this needs to be a broader discussion on addressing the issue between all entities instead of trying to address it with just this partial piece.

Ms. Masterson informed the Council that clients are encouraged to make an effort to repay the bill. Any effort that is made helps the organization. If no effort is made, then they don't help in the future.

Council Member Lohman stated that just because this is not the silver bullet doesn't mean it is not worth doing. It is worth listening to possible options if individuals have a mild cash flow issue. He noted that this would not cost the city money.

Administrator Rehder explained the City's current AMP plan. His current bill is approximately a \$4.00 difference from month to month. It allows everyone eligible to know what to expect on the bill.

City Clerk Hutton stated that her staff always gives customers the option to pay the average based on their overall history, even if they don't qualify for the AMP plan.

Council Member Shallah noted that the customer always has the ability to pay ahead. If they receive LIEAP money or assistance from other sources, they can pay on their next utility bill when they receive their checks.

Council Member Shallah noted she would like to see Humanity House do more education for their clients on how to budget and maintain their funds.

Council Member Shallah stated that the City Clerk's office is only following the policies in place it is not ok for customers to yell and cuss at them.

Council Member D'Albini stated that currently, residents have 42 days to pay their bills. He doesn't have a problem with the proposed short-term promise to pay but does have a problem with the long-term one.

Ree Jordan, Board Member from Humanity House, stated that if the Council adopted this policy, it would not be on a person to make the decision. Anyone can go in and ask for an extension application.

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Council Member Slaugh noted that the City of Iola has a liberal policy compared to KCC. The city allows more time before the bill is due. Allowing payment arrangements when they are already over 2 bills due would only dig them deeper into the debt.

He feels like the city crew is doing their best job. There is an advantage to paying the bill earlier than later. The employees are enforcing the current policies. The policies adopted by the Governing Body. They are good and fair policies, and they should be followed.

Council Member Wicoff stated that this is a tough subject to talk about. He agrees with what is being said. He doesn't think extending credit to individuals will help their situation. He only wondered about the city shutting off in extremely hot and cold weather conditions.

City Clerk Hutton stated that the city looks at the hourly weather forecast in the winter. If the temperature is forecasted to drop to freezing or below within one of those hours, shut-offs are not done until a day when the temperature is above freezing. During the summer, extreme temperatures are monitored, and decisions are made.

Paige Olson, Humanity House Board Member, informed the Council that they are always looking for volunteers, and she welcomes anyone on the Council that would be willing to volunteer.

Administrator Rehder commented that Humanity House should take advantage of some goodwill. The last time they came before the Council, they made several changes to the policy to assist some of the customers.

Council Member Peterson stated that giving everyone the 42 days to pay allows everyone to receive a paycheck during the time allotted.

Council Member Shallah stated that when the policy was changed in the past, it was done to affect everyone. If we do it for one, we must do it for all. She noted that employees within the utility department had helped individuals with their bills and or they knew someone who could help those who need the help.

She feels like citizens are notified by their initial bill, they can sign up online to receive text notifications of their bill. When they are past the due date, they get a yellow postcard which gives them two extra weeks to pay. She feels like Humanity House needs to concentrate on educational programs that help individuals learn to manage their money. She commended the staff for being as kind and caring as possible despite taking unnecessary heat from customers.

Motion made by Council Member Slaugh to leave the current utility pay policy as is. Motion seconded by Council Member Peterson. Voting in favor of the motion were:

Council Members Peterson, Slaugh, Shallah, Wicoff, and Kinder. Voting against the motion were Council Members Lohman and D'Albini. Motion carried by a majority vote.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

A. Non- Elected Personnel - City Administrator Performance Evaluation-

Motion made by Council Member D'Albini and seconded by Council Member Peterson to recess into executive session for fifteen minutes pursuant to personnel matters of non-elected personnel, K.S.A. 75-4319(B)(1). The purpose of the executive session is to discuss an individual employee's employment and shall include the Mayor, Council, and the Human Resources Director. The regular meeting shall reconvene in the city council chamber at 7:32 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Contract Negotiations - Motion made by Council Member D'Albini and seconded by Council Member Shallah to recess into executive session for 15 minutes pursuant to contract negotiations, K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(3). The purpose of the executive session is to prepare for future or current contractual discussions and shall include the Mayor, Council, City Administrator, and Assistant City Administrator. The regular meeting shall reconvene in the city council chamber at 7:47 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

B. Contract Negotiations - Motion made by Council Member Shallah and seconded by Council Member Kinder to recess into executive session for 10 minutes pursuant to contract negotiations, K.S.A. 75-4319(b)(3). The purpose of the executive session is to prepare for future or current contractual discussions and shall include the Mayor, Council, City Administrator, and Assistant City Administrator. The regular meeting shall reconvene in the city council chamber at 7:57 p.m. All in favor. Motion carried.

COUNCIL & ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

A. Council Member Peters -

- Council Member Peters was absent.

B. Council Member Lohman–

- Council Member Lohman stated that he appreciates Humanity House and the Food Pantry for providing a need in the community. He noted that setbacks are not necessarily defeats.

C. Council Member D’Albini–

- Council Member D’Albini stated that he knows the employees in the utility office are often berated, and that shouldn’t happen when they are only carrying out the policies in place.
- Council Member D’Albini noted that next week is Municipal Clerk’s Week. He wanted to thank everyone in the Clerk’s office for all they do.

D. Council Member Peterson–

- Council Member Peterson stated that two parents had approached her about the 8-9-year-old soccer tournament being canceled due to coaches yelling at referees.
- Administrator Rehder stated that he had heard about the incident after the fact and had discussed it with the Recreation Director.

E. Council Member Wicoff-

- Council Member Wicoff had nothing to report.

F. Council Member Slaugh–

- Council Member Slaugh had nothing to report.

G. Council Member Shallah –

- Council Member Shallah had also heard about the soccer tournament being canceled.
- Council Member Shallah thanked the City Clerk’s Department for all they do.

H. Council Member Kinder -

- Council Member Kinder appreciates Humanity House and the Food Pantry, and all of the individuals who showed up this evening. Everyone volunteers for these organizations as well as all of the other organizations within the community.

I. Mayor French

- Mayor French stated that he had also been told about the canceled soccer tournament.

- Mayor French asked if an additional page to the agenda could show recurring items that have not been closed out or resolved. For instance, the plate that is sticking up on Highway 54, the flag committee, etc.

J. Administrator Rehder

- Administrator Rehder reminded everyone that with the arrival of the mowing season, everyone needs to remember to not blow their grass out into the street or alley. Staff will be enforcing this ordinance. The grass collects in the storm drains and causes clogs and drainage problems and making the streets slick for bicycles and motorcycles.

K. Assistant Administrator Schinstock -

- Assistant Administrator Schinstock had nothing to report.

DATE / TIME OF NEXT MEETING

City Council Meeting 6:00 p.m. on Monday, May 8, 2023

City Council Meeting 6:00 p.m. on Monday, May 22, 2023

8:11 p.m. Motion made by Council Member Peterson and seconded by Council Member Shallah to adjourn the meeting. All in favor. Motion carried

It was approved by the City Council of Iola, Kansas, on the 8th day of May 2023.



Handwritten signature of Steven French in black ink.

Mayor Steven French

Handwritten signature of Roxanne Hutton in blue ink.

City Clerk, Roxanne Hutton