

April 3, 2017

The monthly meeting of the New Castle City Commission was held on Monday, April 3, 2017 at 7:00pm at New Castle City Hall. Present were Mayor Dennis Benham, Commissioners Mitchell, Gatewood and Kurtz. Also present was City Clerk Lynn Adams, Public Works Director Scot Treece, MSM/EDC Jeff Thoke, City Attorney Joseph Yates, Asst. Fire Chief Lorry Hansen, Sheriff Deputy Kyle Stewart and citizens Danny Holcomb, Bobby King, Dale Mahoney and Sein Davis.

Mayor Benham called the meeting to order.

Commissioner Gatewood made the motion to approve the minutes of the March meeting as presented. Commissioner Kurtz seconded the motion and it did carry unanimously.

Commissioner Gatewood made the motion to approve the expenditures for the month of March as reported. Commissioner Mitchell seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

Kyle presented the written reports from the Sheriff's office for the months of February and March. 107 hours were logged for the City for the month of February and 104 hours for the month of March. There is one person currently in the academy that will be added to the Sheriff's staff that should enable more after dark patrol hours.

Richard was unable to attend tonight. He is currently working on several complaints/issues with junk accumulation and parking. He will meet with the City Clerk later this week. The Mayor advised that he wants written reports on all activity.

Regarding the awning at A-1, Joe advised that he had spoken with Eileen and she said there were three contractors who advised that they would donate materials to her so she can rebuild the awning which is still in place. Joe stated that the City's only concern in matters such as these is if they create an unsightly or unsafe condition. \$500 to \$600 has been raised to help Eileen remove the awning. The City is working on implementing a "façade grant" program for the 17/18 budget cycle to assist business owners such as Eileen repair their buildings.

There was discussion. No one is quite sure what to do now as there is confusion as to Eileen's intentions as to whether she is going to take down the awning or keep the awning. Commissioner Gatewood suggested that Richard Jaehnigen (Code Enforcement Officer) let Eileen know that she has to move forward on this issue by the May meeting. Commissioner Kurtz and Mitchell and Mayor Benham concurred with Commissioner Gatewood. The Mayor will advise Richard.

The expired cable franchise was the next item to be addressed. Joe advised that the City did not have an agreement in effect as it expired approximately 4 years ago. Now that Spectrum has bought TWC, they are looking to enter into a new agreement with the City. Joe advised that he has spoken with Mr. U'Sellis who advised that he does not believe that "free access" points would be a problem and could be approved but that the 5 years instead of the 10 years would have to be reviewed by the legal department.

There was discussion and it is the consensus of the Commission to bargain for the 5 year contract life and the "free access" locations.

There will be a public hearing on May 1, 2017 at 6:45pm for the purpose of reviewing the 17/18 proposed budget and the expenditure of Road Aid and LGEAF monies.

Jeff advised that he has applied for a historical marker for the Odd Fellows Lodge. The cost will be \$2500, \$2000 of which has already been raised by Lodge Members. Jeff will know if it has been approved on the 15th of this month.

New lights will be purchased for the locker. They will be ceiling lights with multiple lights per fixture. The Henry County Chamber of Commerce dinner/meeting was held in the locker last Tuesday with 75 in attendance. Two more benches have been placed and 3 more are being sponsored and finally he is continuing his work on developing a façade grant program.

Lorry presented the monthly financial report from the fire department. He also advised that the old Tahoe has been sold for \$1,000 and a new one (2011) has been purchased.

The request from Judge Brent regarding economic development donations was briefly discussed. He is requesting \$1,000 from each of the 4 largest cities in the county and then the county will contribute \$4,000. Jeff did not have time to obtain information regarding this matter due to the passing of his mother. It is believed some things have changed since our previous financial participation. Jeff will secure additional information and this matter a decision will be made at the May meeting.

State laws have changed regarding local code enforcement. KLC is preparing a summary and Joe stated he will attend the training session if the Commission approves him to do so.

Commission Kurtz said he has received complaints regarding tires and trash on properties as well as burning debris within the City limits and dogs running loose.

Mayor Benham advised that the City already has one individual in court over a dog issue. He will meet with Tony later this week and they can prepare all the complaints for Richard to address immediately.

Those individuals in attendance that had signed up to speak were then given the opportunity to do so.

Joe Yates advised he was speaking as a private citizen that owned a business within city limits, not as the city attorney. He stated it is his opinion that New Castle doesn't need a police officer or for that matter even a contract with the Sheriff's office. He believes the "drug issues" are a social problem and he would like to see evidence or research to show having a police officer prevents crime. He doesn't believe the lack of a police officer to be a financial issue. He believes there is a lot of misinformation on social media. The time his home was broken into (while he lived in New Castle) and others he is aware of, occurred while there was a full-time police officer. He said there was also misinformation on social media regarding the main street program and the budgeted funds.

Bobby King was next to speak. He stated that he does believe a police department is needed and that he has spoken with Joe about a few ideas he has. He stated he does support the Sheriff's Department but they are not 24/7. He stated that in the last 7 days there have been 9 break-ins within the City and that the victims are coming to him to report them because they are afraid of retribution if they report it to the Sheriff. He said a neighbor called him at 3:41 Saturday morning asking him to check on their property and he cannot do it anymore. Mr. King said that people are scared and thieves are walking

around town at night. He would like to see 5 special deputies to serve in the county and be paid by the county and the largest cities. He suggested that some ways the City of New Castle could come up with extra funds would be to enact a occupational tax and put parking meters back in. The County could use some of the funds that the Sheriff's office turns in to them at the end of each fiscal year and some planning and zoning monies.

Dale Mahoney signed up to speak but chose not to.

Danny Holcomb stated that he does support the statement that Joe made regarding that the City does not need to contract with the sheriff's department but he believes the city does need a full-time police officer. He would like to see the matter put to a vote. If the majority of the citizens of New Castle want a full-time police officer, pursue the matter. If the majority doesn't want a full-time police officer then give the matter up.

As there were no further matters to be addressed, Mayor Benham made the motion to adjourn. Commissioner Gatewood seconded the motion. It did carry unanimously.

We adjourned at 8:11pm.