

**Meeting of the Vilonia City Council
February 25, 2025**

Members present: Brady Zweifel, Joe Maxwell, Mike Matos, James Firestone, Lacosta Beene, Steven Craig

Meeting Prayer: Led by Mayor Scroggin

Pledge of Allegiance: By all.

Meeting called to order by Mayor Preston Scroggin.

Established quorum.

Approval of minutes for January 21, 2025 meeting: Motion of approval made by Maxwell, seconded by Beene, all in favor, motion passed.

Approval of Financial Statement for January: Motion of approval made by Firestone, seconded by Craig, all in favor, motion passed.

Reports of City Departments:

(A) Fire Department: Jimmy Hoofman presented. For the year so far, there have been 17 permits, 14 just in January. Fire Department has had 140 calls so far. We have an upcoming CPR class for the public; March 20th, 6PM, at the Fire Station on Bise Drive. Cost is \$5 for the card. Must register for the class. Call the Fire Department to sign up. Five days of training with our fire officers using a house that was donated for us to work with. Brief summary of the training: scene size up operation, forceful entry, 360s and job assignments, search and rescue, victim rescue, ventilation practices, ladder work, roof work, hose deployment, backup firefighter work, blowing and moving, then live fire scenarios, live fire attack, and live fire search and rescue.

Back in January, there was an issue with one of the fire trucks (the tower truck) involving a leaking pump. The repair is expected to cost about \$26,000.

(B) Planning Commission: Next meeting is Thursday, February 27, 2025, at 7PM, at City Hall. There will be a public hearing. Agenda items are Taco Bell site plan, Commercial Building site plan, a lot split, and a mobile food truck (Taqueria El Macho #2, located at 1 North College).

(C) Police Department: Brad McNew presented. Presented the 2024 Vilonia Police Department Vehicle Pursuit Annual Report and Analysis to the Council, one of the four reports required by ALEAP. Hired a new officer, Tyler Crawford, and will bring him next month. Crawford will go to the Academy on May 4th. We've gotten all the computers in from the equipment grant, and all but 4 have been installed. All the vests are in. Once we get the cleared check back from the bank that we paid for, I'll submit that to the Department of Justice, to get our matching funds. We're still waiting on our taser for our equipment grant. We've already gotten the \$75,000 for the equipment grant and just need to prove how we spent it. The vest grant, you pay before you get the match.

(D) Sewer Department: Joe Maxwell presented. The 107 pump had the new pump installed and calibrated but when it was turned back on the original pump shaft twisted off. We have ordered a new shaft. Once that's installed, the programmer will come back. We're hoping next Friday, then it will, hopefully, be all done.

Update on Fox Run Pump Station: the orange pump there is a temporary pump. The contractor has redone that lift station and we're waiting on the electrician to hook up the permanent pump.

Mayor stated he wanted to express his thankfulness to the Sewer Committee for their work handling the city's tremendous growth.

Matos asked if the Sewer Department has the reserves to replace the 107 pump in its entirety, likening it to an old car that needs constant maintenance and parts. Maxwell stated a lot has been replaced or rebuilt all along, but also confirmed the Sewer Department has some CD and are quite frugal. Maxwell stated "We've always had good people in the Sewer Department and they're the ones who keep going. I just get to sit there and look down and see what they're doing."

(E) Street Department: Mayor presented. Getting ready to look at more of the ditching on the banks on the roads. We put out a bid for finishing the street lights from City Hall to Hwy 64, including getting the current lights off the City Hall grid and some wiring in City Hall. The low bid was from Evatt Electric, here in Vilonia, for \$65,153. This will complete the Main Street and Church Street Light Project. Matos requested clarification on the City's bidding process. Mayor stated the bid is put out in the newspaper. Matos confirmed this money was a previously awarded grant. Firestone asked how much the city has received in grants for different projects. Mayor stated this project was around \$4 million, and we had also received about \$3 million in bridge grants. The Mayor thanked Firestone, Beene, and Craig for their help on these projects.

Mayor stated the Arkansas Highway Department and the state have been very impressed with our sidewalk project. He also mentioned we plan to work on some more projects this summer heading toward the Dollar General. Firestone stated that on his way to work in the mornings, traveling Hwy 64 eastward, he sees kids coming from the subdivisions, where there is no shoulder, they'll be walking and wet under their knees walking through the grass, so he is very happy to see more sidewalks.

Beene mentioned one of the things brought up during the meeting with the Highway Department about 107 was the barricade around the gas main at the school and she wanted to thank Summit Utilities for coming and putting that in at no cost to us.

Mayor requested an update from Craig regarding the Highway Department's study timeline. Craig said he had spoken with them and was told they were running behind, but hopefully by the end of this month (February) they'd have a report and sent it to us by the end of next month (March) on recommendations and improvements. The report was originally anticipated in January. Craig stated he remembered the guys from the engineering firm had highly recommended doing something with the traffic light for safety reasons for pedestrians. The Mayor explained any traffic light on any state highway system is maintained and controlled by the Highway Department. We pay the bills, but they control everything that goes on. Mayor stated that in addition to being hopeful about recommendations for the traffic light, he was also excited to see if, later on, they replace the bridges down the road to help alleviate with getting flood waters out.

Motion to accept the low bid from Evatt Electric, of \$65,183, to come out of Street Funds, to complete the lighting project, made by Craig, seconded by Beene, all in favor, motion passed.

- (F) **Parks & Rec:** Mayor presented. Spring ball registration is ongoing (ends February 28th). Sign-ups available in the lobby of City Hall or online at www.cityofvilonia.net/parks. The National Fitness Campaign Grant has been paused until 2026.

Public Comment: None

Announcements:

- (A) We have received the easement agreement for the Benny Dallas annexation from Landon Sanders's attorney office.
- (B) The Arkansas Municipal League has been informed of the appointment of Dustin Chapman as our city attorney.
- (C) At the January Council Meeting, during the re-appointing of the Sewer Committee, Tony Fowlkes was not included. He is also up for reappointment. Motion to reappoint Tony Fowlkes to the Sewer Committee made by Matos, seconded by Craig, all in favor, motion passed.
- (D) Resolution 2025-1 City Council Code of Conduct, submitted by Council Person Maxwell at the January Meeting, has been pulled by Council Person Maxwell.
- (E) We are still working on the Storm Sirens, but expect them to all be in working order in the next two weeks.
- (F) We are looking at repainting City Hall and the Vilonia Senior Centers, specifically the metal outriggers. Neither building has been repainted since their construction.
- (G) Per the Metroplan Metrotrends in December 2024, Vilonia had a 225% increase in growth. Benton showed 60%, Bryant 54%, Cabot 59%, Conway was off a little bit, North Little Rock 54%, Sherwood 20%. I predict big apartment complexes in the future. Conway added 668 multi-family units in just a four month period, Little Rock 538, Benton 180. Maxwell asked at what point the city would move up in class. Firestone and the Mayor both agreed that at a population over 5000, the city would be required to become a city of the first class. Craig: "2030, we'll go to city of first class, no choice." Maxwell then asked what the Fire Department would need to "go down in class." Hoofman responded our current rating is 3; we missed a 2 by just water pressure/flow and full time staff. The ISO ratings go from 1 (Best) to 7 (Worst). Conway is a 2. Maxwell asked how many staff are required. Hoofman replied he believed it was three per shift.
- (H) **App** – Download the Connect Vilonia app on the Apple and Android App Store to get notifications directly on your phone.
- (I) Craig stated he met with the Forestry Commission yesterday about adding trees to the city, mainly at the Weaver Family Park. They recommended several species as well as a few to stay away from. We're looking at doing some pecans out there, making a walkable nut garden, creating an area for the public to go out and gather them up. They also suggested being a Tree City USA, where Forestry would buy us a tree every year that we could plant on public grounds, anywhere we own property. We'd need to have a Tree Board and pass an ordinance. The tree would be a nursery type tree; 10 foot, 30 gallon, root balls, and whatever they have in stock. The Mayor and Craig both mentioned

there was a lot of enjoyment by the community from the pecan tree next to the Senior Center.

(J) Department Recognition by Council Person Beene – This month I want to bring attention to the Peewee Basketball program. We have so many coaches and parent volunteers, just a great community program. Be nice to them, tell them thank you.

(K) Vilonia Area Chamber of Commerce: On behalf of the Vilonia Chamber of Commerce, President Jackie Fowlkes presented:

- We just completed our annual Awards Banquet. We had 150 people in attendance. I want to thank Mike and Brady and Joe and LaCosta for all attending. Drake Toll was our speaker.
- Award Winners:
 - Youth of the Year – Landon Runyan
 - Family of the Year – Charlie and Linda Weaver Family
 - School Employee of the Year – Erin Rappold
 - City Employee of the Year – Vanessa Flores
 - Volunteer of the Year – Tim Turner
 - Non Profit of the Year – Spirit of Vilonia
 - New Business Spotlight – Botanicals Florist
 - Chamber Spotlight – Pafford Medical
 - Business of the Year – Carlson Gracie JiuJitsu
 - Citizen of the Year – Jim King
- VACC is partnering with the Vilonia High School, tomorrow is Freshman Community Service Day. Freshman must have 75 hours of community service to graduate. VACC has a member supervising volunteers at the Veterans Museum.
- The next monthly luncheon will be March the 20th at 11:30AM at Simple Simons. The Faulkner County Democratic Women will be our guest speaker.
- Zweifel stated, in reference to hours for graduation requirement and the Veterans Museum, March 22nd starts the GI Joe program at the Veterans Museum. It is a program from March through November leading up to Veterans Day (November 11) that over the course of those months, you will do 40 hours of community service in remembrance of the fallen soldiers. I did it last year and loved it and hope more people will come out and sign up for it.

(L) The Planning Commission will next meet on February 27, 2025, at 7PM. It will be the site plan for Taco Bell and the Commercial Building.

Old Business:

(A) Resolution 2025-4 Recognizing the Equality of All Council Members. Matos stated he had heard from the City Attorney, who suggests section 5 be removed because the Mayor does not have the right to withhold any information from the council per FOIA. He then requested that he “take this down at this time.” No disagreement from Council Members, resolution pulled.

New Business:

(A) Resolution 2025-5 Veterans Museum Lease Agreement Renewal – Read in full. Motion to approve made by Maxwell, seconded by Matos/Firestone, all in favor, motion passed. Matos clarified Section 4 of the General Lease states lessee is responsible for all

repairs; Mayor confirmed that was accurate. Preston Scroggin stated he would personally take care of the \$10 lease fee. Firestone called for a round of applause for Linda Hicks, who is in charge of the museum's daily operations and head of the Museum Board.

- (B) Ordinance 2025-1 Establishing General Speed Restrictions – Submitted by Council Person Steven Craig** This ordinance was also worked on with Council Person LaCosta Beene. First reading, read in full. Typo noted for revision. Motion to open up for discussion made by Craig, second by Matos, discussion opened. Discussion held.

Notes from discussion: •Craig: the ordinance was sent to the city attorney, who responded he was good with the ordinance's wording. State law sets unposted roads at 35mph speed limit. The purpose of ordinance is to give officers more ability to enforce posted limits, especially in subdivisions. •Matos: the city should review unposted streets and post limits on those that need them. Also asked if new limits would need to be set via ordinance; Craig denied, stating the attorney said whatever the city posted signs as, the current city judge would abide by. •Mayor: 20mph is pretty standard for subdivisions. Also stated if this ordinance was passed, the Street Department would do the surveying. •Firestone: trouble spots would be Cemetery Street from Main Street to the Baseball Fields and North Mount Olive Road from Main Street to the Softball Complex. •Maxwell confirmed VPD patrols subdivisions, but do not sit and watch, to which Mayor replied when there were complaints, the officers would step up their patrols in that area.

Motion to waive second and third reading made by Matos, seconded by Zweifel, all in favor, motion passed. Motion to approve ordinance made by Maxwell, seconded by Zweifel, all in favor, motion passed.

- (C) Spirit of Vilonia – Donna Merriman, Executive Director of SOV, and Cindy Sellers-Roach, Assistant Director of SOV, presented. They provided a pamphlet (attached). Received Non Profit of the Year from VACC this year.**

Merriman shared statistics for SOV starting in 2015. Sellers-Roach mentioned all statistics prior to that were lost in the 2014 tornado. In 2015, SOV served about 1,500 meals a month, so 18,000 for the year. For 2024, we've served over 65,000 meals. The local churches listed in the pamphlet regularly send money to the SOV. The SOV thrift store makes about \$1,000 a month. All the money goes to buy food. We've never turned anyone away for food, ever. On a monthly basis, we buy more food than the money we bring in. It's the occasional donations of like \$5,000 that really make it possible. Recently, the Fire Department had a coat drive, so we gave all our donated coats. We're listed with the school and we help the kids get their volunteer hours. Linda Marie works with us; if the items in their consignment aren't sold and the sellers don't want them back, she donates them to us. We have a program with the school where the cardboard we collect is sold by the Special Needs students to make money. We donate prom dresses to the school, or if the kids need clothes. We work with Feed the Vets in Cabot; they only serve once a month and they have a lot of food donated to them, so if they have food that will expire before their next serve day, they donate that to us, and we do the same thing. We had about 380 families in our database at the end of 2024. We started serving four meals per person instead of three meals per person. USDA Statistics in 2023 listed Arkansas as #1 in food insecurity. We were #3 for a long time, but now we're #1, saying

1 in 5 persons have food insecurity in Arkansas. That is why we want to expand. We're in half the building (at 1113 Main Street).

In our plans, we're looking at a 50'x100'. We also need space where people can drop off furniture and things that are a little bigger. Mayor stated the council was very open to leasing land to SOV, but would need a concept first. Sellers-Roach suggested the future SOV lease agreement mirror the VDRA lease agreement. Mayor suggested the SOV create a plan for what they want to do on the piece of ground so the council could know how much they would need. Merriman stated they were working with an architect. Sellers-Roach stated they already know what they needed, they just hadn't made it into a drawing yet.

Matos stated he was in favor of leasing the property, but his concern was for SOV, since if they raise private money to build a complex, that complex would belong to the city. Sellers-Roach referenced the VDRA contract's clause stating the city would partially reimburse for the building if the city had to take the land back, depending on length of lease. Craig suggested an initial agreement for fifteen or twenty years to recoup building costs, then renewals in ten year increments. Beene asked if the VDRA building lease would be at the March meeting. Mayor confirmed that was his understanding.

Matos asked if the city had other property besides "here and out there on Mt Olive." Mayor stated the city has been donated 14 acres next to City Hall, currently earmarked for a future community center. Mayor added there were 35-40 acres on North Mount Olive, and the Baseball Complex about 20-22 acres.

Craig suggested a prime location for SOV would be the roughly 1 acre space next to the new gravel parking lot at the Soccer Fields.

Zweifel asked if the building would require Planning Commission approval before coming before the council. Craig agreed it would.

Beene asked how the city, or individuals, could help make it easier for SOV to provide their services to Vilonia. Merriman suggested following them on Facebook or making any type of donation: money, food, or other. They are a registered 501(c)3, so all monetary donations are tax deductible. Sellers-Roach requested donations not be dropped off outside their building, but instead during operating hours of 9AM to noon on Monday, Wednesday, and Saturday. The Feed the Need food drive is organized by the Ministerial Alliance twice a year at Harps. The Boy Scouts do their drive once a year, as does the Postal Service. SOV does not organize drives. We purchase through the Arkansas Food Bank Network, where we can get it much cheaper than even Sam's Club and do not have to pay tax. We do have refrigerators and freezers, so we can take any food donations. Beene suggested VCDC's Eagle Fest as a good time/location for a food drive. Matos recommended sharing SOV information on Facebook. Beene asked if SOV had the city put out their event information, to which they stated they did not know how – Craig clarified they would just need to email the city with the request.

Motion to adjourn made by Matos. Meeting adjourned.

Date: 3/18/25

Mayor: 

Recorder: 