

EMERGENCY MEETING CALLED FOR

AUGUST 20, 2024

Call to Order

Mayor PJ Rathbone called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. In attendance were the following council members: Dennis Cash, Denese Cook, Bo Rhyne, Bobby Vassey, Kathy Rhyne, and Mayor PJ Rathbone. Tim Eidson was not present.

Invocation

Pledge of Allegiance

Business Items:

Council General Discussion—This is an opportunity for the Mayor and City Council to ask questions for clarification, provide information to staff, request staff to report back, or place a matter on a future agenda.

1. Discussion/Action: Employee concerns

- a. **The easiest way to start this is if the three employees have something to put out there to speak their whole mind and let everyone speak.**

The council will have a chance to digest it and read the policy that goes toward it. Denese had something at the meeting last week that has been weighing in on him. The council seems to be their own worst enemy at times. If we're going to grow and move forward of how things have always been done, we're not going to move forward. This is part of the reason for the new personnel policy and making it clear so we can have a place to grow for ourselves, our employees, and our city. It helps to have a clear definition of what to do and how things shall work moving forward.

- b. **Brian Wilson asked to speak first since he asked for the meeting. He did not foresee anyone to support him. First to begin with Ms. Brandi, he believes that he is being ripped apart by trying to please eight people. It puts her in a different position to where she doesn't respond well and then communication**

fails. Ms. Brandi is the key for communication because she is the body in this building being under the council's guidance and she will have to pass to us. It gets to the extreme to worry and then becomes offensive. Communication started off very well, but as I sit over the next several days but he can't see what she does other than to try to get the guys to get them to do what is wanted. Something happened to where the communication broke. It could be my fault because of my pride and an emotional outburst with good intentions or an intentional degrading. So he'd like to thank Ms. Brandi for the patience either by workorder or by verbal. However the council decides to pass information down to the other employees, losing an employee jolted us to a multitude. He is trying to figure out what they did where liability and accountability even came out. We've done far more than anyone has in the last four years. Ms. Kathy knows her plans, she knows her stuff and takes pride in it. I see it and I love it. He pulls a weed for Kathy before clocking in. Mr. Vassey cares about the park, even parts that aren't your responsibility. I respect it and I want to be a part of that. I can't really say much for Mr. Rathbone other than I have leaned on him more than I should, because he's not my source of success. Points to each member stating that they are his source. I've not had much to work much with Bo Rhyne but anytime I get a holler that there's a leak, I'm ready. Nobody wants to get money, I like to work on the lines and fix the leaks. We're one step away from leaning on someone else. We need a little bit knowledge. Never had we thought that you would follow us. Your intentions are knowledge, we can feel your intentions. Mr. Cash there are some issues. You're a smart man. You've got a privledge that not many people have. Fixing to get a new fire department, many people that like you and some that don't. Though I'm able to judge how you do me and how/who I try to lead. I've only been here 11 months but I don't intend to go anywhere but we're at a limit now that where you don't let go, we won't stay. You said to me that you pay me too much. What is the price? It's not the money, it's the cause. I've come back and said I can double the money elsewhere but I'm not a man to back down, a man to crush, all because you're insecure. I humbly say that. Consider the damage you are doing verses no one is out to hurt you or embarrass you Mr. Cash. But what you have done is take a bit of spirit out of myself and these guys. By your actions and your wife's actions. One in particular, you come up on me, twice in fact, and hate myself for keeping record, but keep record in case of litigation, I'll go elsewhere instead of one man. Your seat is not forever. Please don't come up on me and tell me that I don't deserve what I earn. The first time I took as a joke, the second time was clearly as an insult. Please don't come up on the guys and upset them, it impacts their. If you want to me to lead them stop taking their spirit. On Friday, you stood on the bank and said, "well, well, what do we have here". It would have been simpler to say, "hey guys, the

park looks good." It angers me at the part that you do it to them, if you say it to me, then I swallow my pride. But you're are belittling them. As a leader, I need you to pull them up, not down. Another example that occurred Friday. You were in here Friday with Ms. Brandi and Ms. Barbara. "Tell them not to drive that garbage truck". I asked her, to not give an order to Brandi to pass to him, you're the council. Why in the world would you allow it, if it was a positive opinion, I assume it would be accepted. That's not the only incident that has occurred with your wife. Your wife has helped stir the pot with a citizen that I no longer have respect for. (Aysel) The lady walks up and said ya'll need to cut the grass. He said he'd get to it as soon as they can. She comes inside of the building. Brandi is trying to please your wife, you, your neighbor (Barbara's friend). I can't go knock on that lady's door, but I can't. Whether I can please them or not, I still would like to be friendly. You're the council member, send me communication through yourself. He said he asked for Barbara's name, and she said to call her "Bitch". However, if you support her at the manner she came at me at, she took advantage of that. Another thing that you said, "Do I need to come up here, with my work clothes on and work with ya'll, cause if I do, ya'll be miserable." That's a threat with malice. Please don't do that again. I will do anything you ask, if done so correctly, but I will challenge it. I have to forgive you, I'm not out for nothing but making that park shine and keeping City Hall at its best and get some water once in a while. That graveyard is at its best. That whole side of those trees are gone. It would've cost over \$10,000 to do that road, I did it (1 man, 1 saw). The workorders, can I step in there and grab one? PJ said no, just go on. When you say, "Hey Brian, go turn the water off/on, it's hot, we do it." If you don't delegate with what you have, you deplete. There are several points that most people don't know, a plan isn't thinking it, at first you dream it, then you plan it, then you prepare for it, then you engage. If you do not take those steps, you won't make it. Period. Even if it's as simple as mowing the grass. So every night when I go home, I think of how I can make the most of what is given to me. How can I do this with this. I started off with 1 broke truck. And fixed two mowers. Would like two more employees. I recommend, if the budget is that tight, to come in at seven and leave at five. You can't do it in eight hours. 6 hours alone to do the cemetery because I'm not the person to allow someone to take 12 hours. I was told overtime had to be approved, that I have given countless hours for free. How many have you given for free? Many. I was told that the overtime was cut based on the budget, and when the budget was passed, I'd be allowed more overtime. By the time the guys get here, my brain needs to be ready so I can lead them depending on the project and the heart. But when you have a man out there in the heat by himself, that's why he's going to miss spots, his heart isn't in it. Give us the time and the heart we need and you'll see the difference.

It is the city's loss. I've been told I do it too good, because if I was doing for you it'd be not good enough, but if I'm doing it for Kathy, it would be too much time spent. It should be based on attendance, respect and production. I ask the council to reconsider in the future, I really think I need 45 hours, not because I need them at home, the main reason is for success here. 7-5 that way, when the guys come, I'm here, when they leave, I lock up. The gate wasn't locked up. You couldn't walk in that building when I got here but now your equipment is accounted for. Accountability can be a good thing if you're slacking. I can think of one thing, it's pouring down rain, we can't do anything. We can swap out to Saturday and us leave early because we're rained out this day. If we work Saturday, will you (Robert) take over for the day. Within an hour, power goes out. Brian wanted to know why he didn't find out by 1:30. Brian said that Dennis said the generators are out of fuel and Brian has been trying to trump the messages Dennis has sent. Robert called at 1:30 (Brian) saying that Brandi said Dennis said go home. Brian said he went and got the diesel that he had on stock and topped the generators. So he worked two and half hours over without your permission, but the mayor gave me permission. The order said to go get the lawn mower, and if you have questions of who authorized purchasing, you're over finance, you should have known, but there must be a reason, and I didn't question it. Answering your questions Mr. Cash puts me in a spot, you lead me into a negative response. You come and say Robert has been mowing the right of way, you know he's not made it past the store. The first thing I thought Dennis wouldn't lie to me, he knows how important it is to do. Mr. Cash said he's taking too long and Brian said he promised he'd ride down to check it out. The first thing I thought was that he was riding the clock. He said Robert picked up trash and reached the goal to where I told him to be, to stop at the bridge. Thursday morning Jerry was coming down Hardin, Jerry cut Holly ridge and coming down to meet in the middle to knock out city hall. And I was heading up the ditch line. My goal was destroyed because I questioned it because Dennis misled me. Then I got asked, I thought you told him to go to the bridge. The workorders now have names on it. I can't question it so until I find out why I'm not able to delegate any more. As soon as you're done and go pick up another work order, I'm no longer your leader. That was the wrong man for the job, I know them better than you. I don't want to point their weaknesses out because it seems like I'm putting them down. I had to goals set, setting these guys goals is a privilege and I felt like I finally got where I almost was. I got drenched. Being someone, respected and a leader, I always wanted to be but I can't be it, if you don't give me the trust and I don't feel that I have been gave trust and it's because of you Mr. Cash. You, Mr. Cash have held us back and set us up for failure. Just because of not knowing what happened. What's wrong with not knowing this part of the business. Maybe then you'll

know the answers to your questions. You don't have enough money to keep me here, I'm not for sale, but I want to be here. Because your park, your graveyard is almost the best it'll ever be. The other side still needs help and the road. When you focus on one thing, we'll have it. But when you spread it out, all you're doing is getting by. I don't want to point out any more negativities, I want the council to go home and decide one thing for me. Do you want me to lead your crew. IF you do, take those names off the workorders and let me delegate them because I'm willing to put my job on the line if it doesn't reach your expectations. I need to be able to reward these guys from time to time, yeah you're on a roll and finish the goal and split thirty minutes early. Some people aren't willing to carry the burden, but I am. I've done it for many years. If I have that power to delegate and to use my best judgement with what we do have. The older guy has limits, he's got this, you can't buy this. If they give me the privilege back, I don't want to have to explain, just do it. Because I want what they want. If I didn't, I'd be gone. Some of the things that you have said to me have triggered me. So, if you don't want me as your leader, it just means that you're going to have to find a leader. You may get the things done but you won't get the Brian Wilson touch. Ms. Brandi, when you pick, when you send that text, I'm on it. And I promise you, it don't matter who, it will be done at its best. I promise, if it's not, tell them. And if my reason ain't good enough, which I hope, it's because I'm not giving my best, I'll forfeit my job. I'll never give false testimony. I'll lose myself, so I want that communication to come back so you're not ripped apart trying to please. Help me, help us. Now you have the money, now you have it. Let's show everyone around us what we have, I go through Ranlo milking the clock, because the only reason they bought the bushhog is because what I've done with yours. You've got to give it your all. Consider giving me the extra time to help provide for my family, the extra time for success for leading these guys. The garbage route is doable with two people, we didn't come in when we normally do because we haven't made one decision because no one confirmed with me, we need daily checks done. I don't know what choices to make anymore. Give me back what you want. That's all I ask and give me time to make it happen. Last thing, ya'll probably don't want to do it, if the budget is that tight, I'm willing to get a pink card. A 6-man crew at the price of three. I've mentioned that to them, it is possible but don't think for one minute, that person will respect the city, or we won't. Instead of hiring people. I think, I hope that I didn't miss anything. I hope you still have heart and I hope you still have heart. I haven't heard a quip come out of their mouth yet. I don't want a new guy. I want that because I know what they're capable of. And as we grow with the new neighborhood coming, we'll have to have them. The new guys will be able to respect us and have a bond that Dennis Cash doesn't rip apart. That's all.

- c. Robert Farmer stated to the council, to the mayor, when I first joined the organization I had one goal. To bring my best. I've been in the business 20 years. I worked for City of Lowell for 16 years. I may have missed some things, at that point in time, I didn't know exactly what I was supposed to be doing. It's not like anything I've ever been through. I'm sorry, please forgive me. It's in my mind, in my heart I want to cut everything. I'm old, I can't see a lot. If there's anything I've ever done to disappoint you, and I want to give you my apologies. I've been doing this for years and given the time and the chance, the opportunity I promise you I'll have them talking about High Shoals how other cities did Lowell. There was no paper on the streets, the way I leave it was beautiful to them. That's how I want to do here. I feel like my job is in jeopardy, we're getting work orders but not being told where to start, where to finish. So we don't know what to do. So I'm asking ya'll please help us and give us a little time, and I'm promise you the surrounding cities will be talking about you. And they'll wonder "who's doing this now". I want it when ya'll are having a revival at the church, it's not just the church, it's the whole city. I've heard it before, I'll promise you I'll hear it again. If not, I'll give up my job because I know what we can and can't do. Please just give us time, to put something together, to get this jam started happening and let the work speak for itself.
 - d. Jerry said he'd stand behind them but he doesn't want to say anything.
- 2. I think we've heard a combination of sermons, court proceedings, litigations, but however you deliver your message is totally fine.
 - 3. One more thing, Mr. Farmer is when we have a storm, regardless of the storm, it's all hands on deck, it came to my attention what was I doing... I was always told the pump stations is #1. IF there's a spill, the city is responsible. When I was getting the text, I may have been driving while I'm driving the truck. When I get to a safe spot, I'll check. There may have been a three hour period between there. I'm sorry if someone thinks I done something wrong, my instinct kicked in. And I'm sorry if I was out of place, but I know time is money and money is time. Please forgive me for not calling Brian. But now I know how to fall in line. An emergency is controlled chaos.
 - 4. At the last regular meeting in July, we had some personnel policies written. You've not seen these, nor given these. These are the policies that we will go by. Bring up any questions to Ms. Brandi or myself (PJ) and we will try to answer them. These are very well-written policy. Brian Wilson, Jerry Bentley, Robert Farmer received a copy of the personnel policy.
 - 5. In the first article is general provisions, it has responsibilities of everyone of the city. The responsibility of the employees, section 4 of article 1. ****Read out****
 - a. ****Read out section 5****
 - b. Responsibilities for City Council ***read out***
 - c. Responsibilities of the Mayor

- i. We don't know what the Good Lord has in store for any of us. So this is the back bone for future council and what the city says.
 - d. The mayor shall appoint suspend, remove, otherwise provided by law in accordance with law. All staff assignment needs by the council should be communicated properly through the staff. Obviously, I have no vote power, other than to break a tie. That's always been my understanding is to carry out the council wishes. *(I don't plan on leaving)*
 - e. PJ told the employees to take it home and read it. I say this a lot, so this is the gospel as a city for employees to help move forward, to help us grow. We're growing at an acceptable rate.
6. Pj addressed Brian about being a leader. There's a different way to lead different folks because different people lead in different styles. Rather who is leading, it doesn't matter, there are attributes of a leader are different in communication, there is one thing that stands true, regardless, being a leader is acting like a leader and not carrying yourself at a higher standard than the people you're leading, then how will they follow. Being a leader is acting like a leader. Not everyone is meant to lead. That's for sure. Leaders aren't created, they're born. Even back in the days of, always heard of military promotions, the opportunity came about in military fields. No matter you're leading your children or an organization, you act like a leader. I challenge each one of us, you're a leader, you're a leader of this town and we must act like a leader no matter what. You've got a lot more experience than I do, when it comes to leading organizations (Looks at Chief Cash) than myself.
7. Kathy Rhyne to address everything first... More questions to the council
- a. Did we not agree that he was leader- yes
 - b. When was that taken away- it wasn't
 - i. Denese said this is her opinion, it's a conflict of how he wants to do it his way, and the workorders are in his way. And the workorders are things that have to be done.
 - c. Workorders have disappeared or not coming back and for accountability.
 - i. To understand who is doing what, is the mule pulling the wagon or three mules pulling the wagon. It's not micromanaging to piss anyone off. It's for accountability standpoint to make the council understand what the weakpoints, strong points, and a lot of it steams back to looking at needs for the city. Like do we need another body to make things efficient and a lot of things that go into that. Take one workorder in particular, trying to give you equipment to make things for efficient. We all know what needs to be done in the city, if you don't know everyone will get a phone call. If you get a phone call, I get a phone call, then I'll expect 6 more phone calls. IN the past we've had a problem with getting things done. We've gotten more done recently than in years past. I'll say that the city has been looking better consistently in the last

year, than in years past. There have been a few quirks, rainy days and try to play catch up. If the council wants you to fill out a workorder, then just fill it out. Don't look at it as a negative, look at it as a time to shine. When I go look at it and it's done correctly, there will be pride in taking ownership of your work. Hold yourself to a higher standard. If you're not willing to accept that higher standard, then you don't need to work for a municipality.

1. Secondly, no one should be reminded of their pay, that shouldn't be anything that a council member should tell them they are being paid more than their worth.
2. Who else has a key to the water plant? PJ has a key, the walk behind mower, has been messed with and there are in connection with Mr. Cash. One lock that takes the same key. One for each employee, and an extra for City Hall.
3. Bobby has nothing
4. Bo Rhyne, said the dealings he's had, things went well.
5. Denese—so what Brian says is that he needs more time and needs to be allowed to plan what the day holds. But, you can't do that because it's a municipality, it involves water breaks, Ms. Bessie needs them right now. There's always a wrench that gets thrown in. The work order thing, I don't comprehend what the issue is. You know every day, when you go to work, what you have to do. So if your workorder is laying out there, I don't understand what the issue is. It's there and I have to do it. I need to understand why the workorders are a problem. Sometimes there's something that happens and I Have to shift, but you still reach your goal. I miss, I can't comprehend why it is so hard.
 - a. PJ said we will continue to issue workorders. They want it prioritized. There's accountability is assigning the activities as a leader of why it hasn't been performed. We all know what needs to be done, and when a citizen comes to "Bobby", it may be an extra duty. Then it needs to be done. IF we're assigning workorders, then do we need a lead position. Workorders will be generated in here, if they're prioritized and assigned, when they are finished, they need to be turned in in a timely manner. Do not leave them in the truck, don't take them home with you. And I look at a completed pile, and the not completed pile to be lowered. So if they outweighs, then we need to look into a different system perhaps. In the beginning,

this was the best way I could come up with the know-how. To me, it's simple.

Mr. Mayor as you know the day of the generators, I called you as soon as Robert called me. When you come in on Friday, I was here all day Friday in the council room. Secondly, when I get work orders and they're not completed and I didn't check on it. They were signed off on them but weren't completed. As far as saying things and talking about things, I deny your allegations, you never once told that you called me and kept me on the phone for 2 and half hours talking about these gentlemen. Brian continues to interrupt Mr. Cash. Afterward, I've notified of what was done. The problem is ya'll haven't spoken to me in three days. Because we've have people call and complain about the park. They didn't speak to me at all. I did walk down to the hill and take the tractor and go the other way. As far as that, that didn't happen Friday. You've got your stories wrong on that. As far as my wife is concerned, (Brian interrupting), you were also told to apologize to Ms. Brandi about the Ms. April issue, it was told or suggested, and Ms. April and it hasn't happened. (Brian interrupted, stating he wasn't going to apologize.) Also, about Ms. Brandi, half the stuff that you've said on her, is unacceptable. If it's a workorder, I know about it. She calls me and we know what's there. I feel that you can't function with the work orders sent out. I did ask where the lawn mower was from and during the council meeting, we canceled the order, but we were going to order a backhoe but the finances weren't there. That part was questioned. As far as disrespecting any of you, I've spoken to Robert, Jerry 3 times at the most. I've come to You, Brian, to have it scheduled it in. It's not my problem, there's no simple way to put it. There are several in here, that have been signed by you, that's not completed, and if it causes chaos in your life, I issue orders every day, and I'm capable of doing so. If you've got a problem with me, we can change that, but if I'm asked to do something, I will do so to the best of my ability. Whatever I am given, I'll give to the best of my ability. When Brian calls, will notify PJ. When Robert called, I was out of town, I called PJ. That's all I have, Mr. Mayor.

So, we're to the point where we have heard concerns, we've had an opportunity to speak, we've issued the personnel employee handbook. Everyone has a copy. There is no need to have signatures on file, if ya'll feel you must have something to sign, Brandi can generate such.

Adjourn

- Motion to adjourn made by Denese Cook at 8:18 pm, seconded by Bo Rhyne. All in favor.