

KECHI CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
August 3, 2023

I. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Ashley Velazquez called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Council present: Todd Hedstrom; Richard Haddock, Brian Adams, Kendra Baldrige, and Mayor Ashley Velazquez.

City staff present: Andrew Kovar, City Attorney; Kamme Sroufe, City Administrator (CA); Theresa Morlan, Finance/HR Director; Debra Creekmore, City Clerk; Police Chief, Braden Moore; Lt. Amanda Smith; Police Officer, Josh Meyer; Police Officer, Andrew Allen and Thomas Bevan, Public Works Director.

Guests present: Joanie Harris; Bea Burkhalter; Bret Coleman; Josh Englert; Gary & Denise Gelvin; Leslie Walderschmidt; Rusty Leeds; and Taylor Messick.

A. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE – Led by Mayor Ashley Velazquez.

B. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda

1. City Council Meeting Minutes of July 13, 2023

Motion by Brian Adams to approve the consent agenda and seconded by Richard Haddock. Motion carried 4-0-0.

C. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Brian Adams to approve the agenda with the addition of the topic for the Executive Session to be non-elected personnel for 10 minutes. Motion seconded by Brian Adams and carried 4-0-0.

II. COMMUNICATIONS

A. SWEARING IN OF OFFICER ALLEN

Oath of Office was administered by Debra Creekmore, City Clerk to new Police Officer Andrew Allen.

B. Kechi Civic Groups/Committees

Mayor Velazquez announced that “Shellebrate Fall” will be held in October and information will be posted on the Fair Page and Instagram. This event will include fireworks and a dance.

C. Kechi Good News

Mayor Velazquez read a note from Councilmember Matt Brewer thanking everyone for the outpouring of support after his surgery. He is resting at home and expects to return to the council meeting on August 27, 2023. She also reported on her trip to Colorado Springs where she met with that city’s Chamber of Commerce and learned more about it and how it supports Colorado Springs. Support of our local Farmer’s Market was encouraged. The Kechi Playhouse production of “Flaming Idiots” was hilarious and a new show opens August 4, 2023. Mayor Velazquez also thanked our Public Works employees and Police Department for their hard work in the city and for them to know they are appreciated.

D. Public Forum

Joanie Harris, 109 Chippewa Street, spoke regarding the budget and the water and sewer plan. She feels the discussion on the mill level, when compared to surrounding cities, is like comparing apples to oranges. She has researched the Sedgwick County property tax site and overall Sedgwick County taxes. She referenced the city survey results and asked the council to seek alternate financial resources for these projects. Bea Burkhalter, 427 Sioux Court, spoke about concerns of the Confederate Flag flying at 61st and Oliver. She is fearful visitors may see this as a negative sign of how Kechi is perceived and asks what is going to be done about it.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. KDOT AGREEMENT KA-5554-01 (346-21)

This agreement is regarding turn lanes from Highway K-254 on to Rock Road. This seems to be “after the fact” and an odd process. There will be no financial impact for the city.

Motion made by Brian Adams for the mayor to sign the KDOT Agreement KA-5554-01 (346-21), seconded by Todd Hedstrom. Carried 4-0-0.

IV. OLD BUSINESS – None

V. COMMUNICATION

A. PHMSA GRANT LETTER OF SUPPORT

The city applied for \$2.2 million. This is a 5-year grant for replacement of steel pipes. A letter of support was sent by Senator Jerry Moran’s office. The awarding of funds will be in the spring. Mayor Velazquez asked each of the councilmembers to sign a letter of support to attach to the grant.

B. POLICE DEPARTMENT UPDATE

Chief Moore stated that the crime index for the state of Kansas came out last month. Kechi was at 7.9% per 1,000 residents. Eighteen crimes were reportable to the KBI, all of which were theft. Bel Aire had a rate of 16.7% and Park City was at 38.4%. The state average was 26.2%. Officer Watson was dispatched to a runaway call. The girl was found on K-254. Someone at the home she was staying at had flushed her goldfish. Officer Watson did a good job of thinking outside the box by taking the girl to lunch, bought her a new goldfish and showed her the city. The girl said she wants to go into law enforcement. There have been no more problems with this individual. Officer Watson has been training new officer Allen. They seized some drugs, caught a car thief in the act and on a welfare, check found an individual with warrants for burglary in the county. This person was arrested by Sedgwick County Police.

C. CITY PARK UPDATE

Lt. Smith made the initial call for the vandalism in the city park. Rocks had been placed in the trash cans. Street signs were stolen. Public works found some of these. A stop sign was also stolen but has been replaced. Kechi Police has some camera footage to review and have three individuals they suspect.

D. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Administrator Sroufe reviewed the Economic Development Policy. She said the current policy is limited to developers. The city needs to develop areas approved for incentives. The Neighborhood Revitalization Plan is for any type of property. It is not targeted at the infrastructure. The city needs to set up districts that are eligible, such as areas that need to be revitalized or areas that have some reason that they have not been developed. The improvement value is paid by the developer and then application is made to the city every year rebate.

The Rural Housing Incentive District is an alternative to the special assessment process. The cost of the infrastructure is paid by the developer and can be recouped from taxes of the developed land. It must follow city guidelines but there is no obligation to the city. The council agreed to have staff look into these ideas.

E. SEWER INFRASTRUCTURE & HUFFMAN

At a meeting with PEC, the sonar results of the Huffman sewer show the line is not located where it should be, and several sections of the line are heaving. The entire line has risen with no known cause. The estimate to replace the entire line is \$1.2 million, which includes 1600 linear feet. The 460 linear feet to replace the damaged sections has an estimated cost of \$350,000. The question was posed as to what the city's legal obligation is to pay for these repairs.

F. 2024 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT

The budget has been reviewed by Administrator Sroufe and is very tight. She asked for council advice in determining what to cut. She has looked at the Public Works Personnel to make the split more reflective of the work that is performed daily. She proposes the new split to be 30% General, 30% Gas, 30% Water and 10% Sewer. The intent is to make the cost of utilities more in-line with labor hours and therefore help with utility costs.

VI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion by Brian Adams to go into Executive Session for the purpose of non-elected personnel and to return to the Council Chambers at 7:53pm. Seconded by Richard Haddock. Carried 4-0-0.

The meeting resumed at 7:53pm with a reminder that no binding action was taken while in Executive Session.


VII. RECESS

A motion was made by Richard Haddock to recess the meeting until August 10, 2023, at 5:30pm for a Budget Workshop. Seconded by Todd Hedstrom. Motion carried 4-0-0.

The meeting recessed at 7:54pm.



Signed: 
Mayor Ashley Velazquez

Attest: 
Debra Creekmore, City Clerk

