

BELLA VISTA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

March 24, 2025 6:00 PM

Bella Vista District Court 2483 Forest Hills Blvd., Bella Vista, AR 72715

MINUTES

Call to Order

Pledge of Allegiance recited.

Roll Call called by Clerk Krug. Council Members Hughes, Newport, Isbell, Honchell, Harp were present. Council Member Wilms was absent. Mayor Flynn was present. Council Member Wilms arrived at 6:15 pm.

Citizen Input

Julie Hull, 17 Stevenson Lane. Julie came to speak about septic-related issues that affect realtors like herself. She cited Ordinance 2021-32, and asked Council members to add a proper advertising clause or please uphold violations of the ordinance. She referred to several incidents of realtors listing 2-bedroom septic properties as 3-bedroom homes for sale, which is a clear misrepresentation of those properties. Failed septic systems occur with overload and can quickly affect adjacent properties. She urged the City to address the non-compliant realtors who list homes for sale improperly, because proper disclosure is fair to the public.

Council Member Reply

Council Member Hughes thanked Ms. Hulls for coming to speak. She acknowledged the reality regarding septic and realtors in Bella Vista, and stated there is work to be done by the Council to address these issues. Council Member Harp thanked Ms. Hulls for coming and bringing this to the Council's attention. He said he spoke with several realtors to find out more, and he believes the legislation in place does not need to be updated. He believes it is a question of upholding Ordinance 2021-32 and compliance.

Reports

State of the City Report: Mayor John Flynn

Mayor Flynn announced the official 2025 State of the City Report is on the City website for those who want to read it. He summarized it:

- The new Oz Trail Bike Park has recently been approved by the Planning Commission.
- Campfire Ranch, another Blue Crane development, is being renovated and will be a positive addition to the community.
- The S & P Global ratings improved Bella Vista's rating from AA- to AA recently, another positive step.

- The Fire Department Station #1 living quarters were completed in 2024. Also, the new Fire Training Tower was completed and opened in 2024.
- The Fire Department had over 4000 ambulance and fire calls in 2024, and that number has been increasing every year along with our population increase.
- The Planning and Development Department had similar increases. In 2024, Planning issued 636 housing permits. Every type of permit issued by the City has increased by more than 100% in the last five years, and some even 200% and 300%.
- The City was rebranded with an updated logo, thanks to Cassi Lapp, Communications Director. It reflects well on the modern view of Bella Vista, and people seem to be very happy with it.
- Street Department: More than 50 miles of streets were resurfaced in 2024, and over 1200 work orders were completed. The Street Department did an excellent job on snow removal. They won an AML trendsetter city award for their asphalt zipper, a machine that saves the City time and money.
- The Police Department added body cameras and a new in-car camera system. Police continued to do a great job on customer relations, which included a National Night Out, Shop with a Cop, Coffee with a Cop, and Citizens Police Academy. Police have accomplished more than 12,000 hours of training, which greatly exceeds the minimum requirement.
- The Library has experienced great growth in foot traffic, and also in new library cards, increasing by about 12% in 2024. The Library has a new expanded parking lot with lights, thanks to the Library Foundation. Quite a few new programs have been developed.
- The IT department was successful in rebutting attempted hacking last year, and they have improved the city's cybersecurity even further since then. They have been actively working on body cams and bringing technology into newly constructed facilities.
- Mayor Flynn concluded that the city is in good financial shape and all the departments are working hard. The city continues to experience significant growth and a lot of people want to move to Bella Vista. This is a great compliment and provides a positive outlook.

Monthly Financial Report: December 31, 2024, Year End Report

Mayor Flynn summarized the end-of-year Financial Report through December 31, 2024. The report was emailed to the Council members that morning and added to the city website. It has been very consistent with past reports. City sales tax was up 7% for the year and county sales tax was up only 1%. Our city sales tax increase was greater than other cities in

Arkansas, as most cities were fairly flat this past year. Property tax revenue was up 4.5%, and people are aware that their housing values are going up. Property tax goes mainly to the schools, not to the city. The city gets about \$200 per house from property tax. When values go way up, one's property tax only increases by 5% each year on the home lived in. A special rule exists for residents aged 65+, whereby property tax value is frozen, unless there is an increased millage. Almost 30% of the population is frozen in Bella Vista. Property tax does continue to go up, and the total is almost \$4 million dollars, almost as much as our city sales tax. All in all, our operating revenue went up 2.8% last year. Our operating expenses were under budget by \$369,000. The city is in good shape financially, but it continues to be a challenge on the budget side. Mayor Flynn appreciates all the departments working so hard to accomplish a lot with fewer people than they would like to have.

Tree Board Report: Chairman Mike Abb

Mayor Flynn introduced Mike Abb, Chair of the Tree Board, who came to give a report. He said the Tree Board is the mascot of Bella Vista, but unfortunately, it is something that isn't growing along with the city's growth. He said the role of the Tree Board is to celebrate the canopy, and continue to grow the canopy. The Tree Board began 7 years ago in 2017 and they have gained some big wins. They applied for and achieved the designation of Bella Vista as an official Tree City USA, and have placed the signs on the entrances to town. They have also achieved the designation of Monarch Migration City, and have placed that sign in town. The Board has put a lot of effort into placing pollinator beds next to the trails, and volunteers have rallied to water the beds, sometimes on a daily basis. They are planning the annual Tree Give-Away (trees provided by the city) with registration starting April 4th online. April 19th will be the actual Tree Give-Away at the new Fire Training facility, which should be an improvement over the parking lot at St. Bernard's Church.

Looking ahead, the Arbor Day Planning Ceremony will be held at noon on Friday, April 25 at the Veteran's Memorial. Ongoing initiatives behind the scenes include tree identification, working to "beef up" discussions concerning regulations and codes, and trying to get more of the budget directed toward the trees. He gave a shout-out to volunteer Cheryl Hall, who is a huge contributor to botanical care and efforts in the city. Planner Christopher Hyatt addressed several questions posed by Council members.

(The Chair will entertain a motion to suspend the rules of order and procedure to allow all ordinances on the agenda to be read by title only.) Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Harp. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

Consent Agenda

Mayor Flynn explained the new Consent Agenda procedures. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Isbell. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

Approval of Minutes: City Council Regular Meeting February 24, 2025

RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH FORVIS MAZARS, LLP IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$51,000.00 FOR AUDIT SERVICES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2024

RESOLUTION: AWARDING BID AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH SUPERIOR AUTOMOTIVE GROUP IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$56,234.14, FOR THE PURCHASE OF ONE (1) CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500 4WD PICKUP FOR USE BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

RESOLUTION: AWARDING BID AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH SUPERIOR AUTOMOTIVE GROUP IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$62,703.04, FOR THE PURCHASE OF ONE (1) CHEVROLET TAHOE 4WD FOR USE BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT

RESOLUTION: APPROVING THE MAYOR'S REAPPOINTMENT OF DEMARA TITZER TO THE BELLA VISTA ARTS COUNCIL FOR A THREE (3) YEAR TERM

Unfinished Business

ORDINANCE: AMENDING SECTION 2-140 CODE ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA TO PROVIDE FOR DEVELOPMENT COMPLIANCE OFFICERS, DEFINING THEIR AUTHORITY, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES *Third Reading Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the third time. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Honchell. Council Member Harp stated his opinion to oppose this ordinance and a short discussion followed. Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 1, Harp) Passed 5-1.*

New Business

ORDINANCE: WAIVING THE REQUIREMENTS OF FORMAL COMPETITIVE BIDDING AND AUTHORIZING THE PURCHASE OF STREET SALT AND SAND BASED ON PRICE AND AVAILABILITY BY INFORMAL PRICE QUOTES THROUGH MAY 31, 2026 *Staff recommends move to third and final Mayor Flynn read the ordinance, and said staff recommended moving to the third and final reading. Council Member Honchell made a motion to suspend the rules and move to the third and final reading, seconded by Council Member Wilms. Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0. Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the third and final time. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Hughes. Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.*

RESOLUTION: AMENDING THE 2025 CITY BUDGET TO APPROPRIATE A TOTAL OF \$53,083.33 AND TO AUTHORIZE AN ADDITIONAL BUILDING INSPECTOR

POSITION BEGINNING JUNE 2025 FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT Mayor Flynn read the resolution. A short discussion on the budget followed. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Hughes. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: AMENDING THE 2025 CITY BUDGET TO RECOGNIZE AND APPROPRIATE AN ADDITIONAL \$101,496.00 IN GRANT REVENUE FROM THE ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION AND THE WALTON FAMILY FOUNDATION TO FUND 100% OF AN ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION PROJECT Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Isbell. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: REQUIRING THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA TO STUDY THE FEASIBILITY OF ENACTING AN ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE SALES PERMITTING AND TAXATION PROGRAM Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Newport reminded the Council that this is a resolution to study the item, it is not for passing it. It is to explore potential revenue that it might bring our city for the overall goal of funding 6 additional members to our Fire Department. A short discussion followed. Council Member Newport made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Isbell. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: REPEALING RESOLUTION NO. R2025-19 AND AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH RED RIVER DODGE OF HEBER SPRINGS, PURSUANT TO A STATE PROCUREMENT CONTRACT, FOR THE PURCHASE OF ONE (1) RAM 1500 4X4 PICKUP TRUCK IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$40,500.00 FOR USE BY THE CODE ENFORCEMENT DIVISION OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT Mayor Flynn read the ordinance. He explained this was a passed resolution that needed a wording correction, so it needed to be passed as revised. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Harp. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA, ARKANSAS TO UTILIZE FEDERAL-AID FUNDS FOR A TRAIL AND GREENWAY MASTER PLAN AND BELLA VISTA WAY PLANNING STUDY Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Planning Director Robertson explained the deadlines for application behind the timeliness of passing this resolution. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Isbell. A short discussion with questions answered by Director Robertson followed. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA, ARKANSAS TO UTILIZE FEDERAL-AID TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM OR RECREATIONAL TRAILS PROGRAM FUNDS Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Director Robertson explained the two different applications

to try and increase the chance of getting a grant. Mayor Flynn added that Regional Planning people do encourage cities to do this to increase chances of getting a positive response. Council Member Newport made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.**

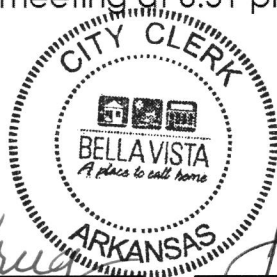
RESOLUTION: APPROVING AN ART LEASE FOR MICK THE FROG Mayor Flynn read the resolution and explained the transaction involved. A short discussion followed, and Council Member Harp added that he did not approve of this resolution when the city already had a tight budget for essentials. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Honchell. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 1, Harp) Passed 5-1.**

Announcements

- Next City Council Work Session: 5:30 pm Monday, April 21, at Bella Vista Police Training Room
- Next City Council Regular Meeting: 6:00 pm Monday, April 28, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Work Session: 4:30 pm Thursday, April 3, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Regular Meeting: 4:30 pm, or immediately following BZA, Monday, April 14, at Bella Vista District Court
- Board of Construction Appeals: 3:00 pm Tuesday, April 8, if necessary, at Fire Station #4 Conference Rm, 1639 Forest Hills Blvd.

Adjournment

Mayor Flynn adjourned the meeting at 6:51 pm.



Wanda Lepillez Krug
City Clerk Wanda Lepillez Krug

John D. Flynn
Mayor John D. Flynn