

BELLA VISTA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

August 25, 2025 6:00 PM

Bella Vista District Court 2483 Forest Hills Boulevard

MINUTES

Call to Order by Mayor Flynn at 6:00 pm.

Pledge of Allegiance recited.

Roll Call called by Clerk Krug. Council Members Harp, Hughes, Newport, Wilms, and Honchell were present. Council Member Isbell was absent. Mayor Flynn was present.

Mayor Flynn called for a motion to suspend the rules and to change the order of the meeting for a special presentation to Madison Randall, since there were so many citizens signed up to speak. Council Member Harp made a motion to suspend the rules, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

Mayor Flynn read a Certificate of Recognition to Madison Randall, in recognition of her selection as Miss Amazing National Teen Queen 2025. She is the first young woman from Arkansas to achieve this honor. Miss Amazing is a non-profit organization on a mission to provide personal growth opportunities for girls and women with disabilities. Madison represents Bella Vista as an ambassador for other young people with disabilities and special needs.

Citizen Input

Lori Frank, 8 Itetbury Ln. Lori spoke in opposition to the proposed resolution for partisan elections. She believes non-partisan elections allow voters to judge candidates on qualifications, experience, and commitment to the community.

Carol Quinn, 1 Teresa Dr. Carol spoke in favor of the proposed resolution for partisan elections. She believes candidates should declare their values and what they stand for, and by declaring a party affiliation, voters quickly understand the candidate's general ideology, and their policy decisions.

Gail Pianatto, 28 Ciemny Ln. Gail spoke in favor of partisan city elections. She believes voters have a right to know which party platform candidates align themselves with, because this speaks volumes about a candidate's worldview and ethical system. She believes candidates can say anything, but political and social organizations they align themselves with tell the truth about who they are and how they represent their constituents.

Walter Watts, 18 Kirkwall Pl. Walter came to speak in favor of full transparency in city elections, in support of partisan elections. He urged all City Council candidates to declare their affiliations, to be proud of it, and not to hide it.

Judi Frigon, 7 Frensham Ln. Judi came to support partisan elections. She believes all the voters in Bella Vista have the right to know the ideology of each

Council Member.

Michelle Chiocco, 51 Purfleet Dr. Michelle came to support partisan elections, saying they do not divide us, but rather inform us. She believes party affiliation gives voters context before they choose. Trust in government is only possible when the process itself is transparent, in her opinion. Michelle also spoke against the proposed business license resolution.

Lori Roller, 3 Blake Ln. Lori spoke in favor of partisan elections. She doesn't understand why Council members would not want to be clear about party affiliation and be proud of it. She believes party platform alignment does affect matters voted on in Council meetings on behalf of Bella Vista residents, and cited a recent Bentonville example.

Rhonda Davis, 14 Kirkwall Pl. Rhonda came to urge Council members to vote against the proposed resolution on partisan elections. She believes when party filing fees replace voters' signatures to get on the ballot, it increases the possibility for elected officials to see themselves as more accountable to a party agenda, than to the residents they are elected to represent.

Jeannie Breese, 65 Reighton Dr. Jeannie came to speak against the proposed resolution on partisan elections. She has been a resident since 2001, and believes the City Council has done just fine without political elections. She believes residents deserve non-partisan, fair-minded people in Council seats, so our local government does not fall prey to partisan gridlock. She also came to mention that September 8 is 988 Day - a day to spread the word about the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Patricia Heaton, 2 Greta Cir. She came to speak in favor of partisan elections, saying that party affiliation transparency is crucial for voters to know. She thinks, at the bare minimum, it provides voters a basic understanding of the values and political foundation of the candidate. She urged Council members not to hide their worldview, to be transparent, and to vote yes for partisan elections.

Dee Whitaker, 47 Applecross Ln. She came to speak in favor of partisan elections. She shared her experience in Colorado of trusting School Board members who hid their true ideologies, and then things happened to children at school that parents weren't informed of. Parents trusted in school board members, but the trust was broken. She said Bella Vista residents want to trust Council members, but they need to know where a candidate's foundation lies, and where their voices come from.

Staff Attorney Kelley interrupted the meeting, stating that the 30-minute time allotment for public comment was expired and a suspension of the rules would be needed to continue. Council Member Wilms made a motion to suspend the rules in order to complete the list of citizen input, seconded by Council Member Harp. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays:0) Passed: 5-0.**

David Whitaker, 47 Applecross Ln. David came to speak in favor of partisan municipal elections, stating that Council members should be proud of who they are and not afraid to identify their party affiliation.

Wendy Gandioso, 16 Morley Dr. Wendy came to speak against partisan elections. She believes we have a unique opportunity to run our city without the distraction of bipartisan politics. She thinks the current Council members are working well together, getting things done for Bella Vista successfully. To her, where the Council members stand on each issue is what matters to the residents.

Jim Lemmon, 6 Rudston Ln. Jim spoke against the partisanship issue, for the reason that Council members would prioritize and listen first to their parties. He thinks it muddies the water for residents who vote. He referred to a quote from George Washington, who warned against the evils of partisan politics.

Martina Platte, 47 Buckingham Dr. Martina spoke in opposition to bipartisan municipal elections in Bella Vista. She thinks they would bring division by adopting political labels, instead of seeing candidates as individuals. She believes that local government is about who has the best ideas for our roads, public safety, preserving our nature, and balancing our growth; not about team colors.

Randy Rice, 1 Dearhurst Ln. Randy came to speak against partisan elections. He is baffled as to why Council members might want to turn Bella Vista elections into a partisan organization. Until now, voters looked at candidates and voted for individuals. He thinks putting politics into elections is the antithesis of transparency.

Reisha Bravo, 16 Portsmouth Dr. Reisha came to speak in favor of partisan elections, stating that voting in an election is the foundation of our freedom. This is about the voter's right to make the most informed decision when casting that one vote. She believes partisan elections help voters navigate issues by understanding what could influence a candidate, what motivates them as a community leader, or policymaker.

Steven Marshall, 20 McKenzie Ln. Steven came to speak in favor of partisan elections. As a Senior Chief in the Navy, whenever he sees another Navy hat on someone, he already knows a lot about that person. He likened that to politicians identifying their party. He thinks since taxpayers foot the bill for everything decided on by City Council, residents need to know how the Council plans to achieve goals. For example, public safety. Will they increase law enforcement, or will they do it through social programs? Party affiliation will give residents a general idea of core values and how Council members will vote. It is his opinion that candidates who go door-to-door during elections should be ready to state their party affiliations.

Teresa Marshall, 20 McKenzie. She declined to speak, saying others had already voiced her opinion in favor of partisan elections.

Kristin Slewinski, 10 Munster Dr. Kristin came to speak against local partisan elections. She thinks city issues are about building a community where people want to raise their families, and how we take care of our mutual "home." She thinks that inserting politics into local government can turn our neighbors into

opponents, instead of partners.

Don Rogers, 39 Huskins Circle. Don came to speak in favor of partisan elections, because he thinks the voters need to know who the Council members are and what they stand for before elections.

Joshua Karczewski, 2 Blenheim Ln. Joshua came to speak about the trees, and his concern about the impact of residents cutting down tree limbs on neighboring property. He urged the Council to change the ordinance that allows this. He also expressed frustration with the way so many trees are being cut down in Bella Vista and changing the beautiful landscape.

Sarah Bodine, 25 Merritt Drive. Sarah came to speak out against the proposed partisan resolution. She would like to see local politics connected to the community and what we have going on in Bella Vista.

Bryan Proctor, 39 Cargill Dr. Bryan spoke in favor of partisan local elections. As a retired law enforcement lieutenant, he has seen how party affiliation almost always filters into the decisions that are made by Council members. He saw the great influence it had on the way they conducted themselves and voted on issues.

Shannon Moots, 2 Pratt Ln. Shannon came to speak in favor of the proposed partisan resolution. She struggled to find information about the candidates in our last election, and knowing political affiliations would have helped her. She doesn't understand why a candidate would want to keep this information hidden, except to hide involvement with certain organizations like Emerge Arkansas and not really want residents to know about it. She thinks it is unethical to gain the trust of people that may not actually agree with your political views while serving in a political position.

Janae Cox, 31 Lambeth Dr. Janae came to speak against the proposed partisan resolution. She thinks being non-partisan is nothing to be ashamed of. Candidates who affiliate with a party pay fees to that party platform, instead of gathering resident signatures. Party candidates must file a year ahead, while non-partisan candidates file several months before the vote in November. She cited a variety of voter resources, like Voter 411, that exist to help the voter learn about candidates' voting records.

Council Member Reply Council Member Harp thanked all the residents who came out to speak and reiterated why he wanted to get this Ordinance on the Agenda, which echoed much of what residents voiced in their comments. Council Member Hughes thanked all the residents who came to speak, and for all the others who sent emails regarding this resolution. She said citizen engagement is one of her favorite things, even though not all share the same opinion. Council Member Newport thanked all those who came out tonight. She asked Janae to share her voter resources with all the City Council members. Council Member Wilms stated that he is a conservative, but there isn't a conservative party in our area, so he belongs to the Republican Party. Council Member Honchell thanked everyone for coming out. He stated that he is an

Independent, and has no problem telling people who he is. He said that he does Council work because it is what he loves to do, to do hard things. He stated that he has financed every one of his campaigns. He is concerned that partisan elections would bring a very divisive element to our community.

Reports

Certificate of Recognition to Madison Randall, Miss Amazing National Teen Queen 2025: Mayor Flynn completed before Citizen Input

Monthly Financial Report: Mayor Flynn spoke about the recently completed Gap Audit, and then the June financial statement. The total operating revenues are up 12% over last year. City sales tax is up 14% over last year, which is surprising. County sales tax is up 4.6% over last year. Operating expenditures are \$500,000 under budget. Although the economy has been uncertain, the City's performance far exceeds what anyone would have expected.

(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 Hughes. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

Consent Agenda Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Newport. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

Approval of Minutes: Monday, July 28, 2025, City Council Regular Meeting

Approval of Minutes: Monday, August 4, 2025, City Council Special Meeting

Unfinished Business

ORDINANCE: ADOPTING A NEW ZONING ORDINANCE AND MAP FOR THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA (CHAPTER 109), REPEALING PRIOR ZONING ORDINANCES AND MAPS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Second Reading Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the second reading. Staff Attorney Kelley explained the process of the amendments. Council Member Hughes and Council Member Newport voiced their desire to wait until September to consider the amendments. Council Member Wilms made a motion to add the first amendment to the zoning resolution. No second to the motion. Member Wilms made a motion to amend the proposed ordinance to make the clarifying front yard restriction requirement, no second to the motion. Council Member Harp voiced his desire to wait until the 3rd reading in September to consider the amendments.

AMENDMENT: ADDING SMALL CELL PERMITTING REQUIREMENTS TO THE PROPOSED ZONING ORDINANCE AS RECOMMENDED BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION

AMENDMENT: REMOVING SEPTIC TREE PRESERVATION REQUIREMENTS AS

REQUESTED BY COUNCIL MEMBER HARP

AMENDMENT: CLARIFYING THE FRONT YARD RESTRICTION REQUIREMENT FOR ELECTRIC PANELS AS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF

AMENDMENT: CLARIFYING SEWER UTILITY INSTALLATION DESIGN REQUIREMENTS AS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF

AMENDMENT: REVISING THE PROPOSED ZONING MAP FOR BOUNDARY CLARIFICATION, FUTURE LAND USE POLICY, AND OTHER PURPOSES AS RECOMMENDED BY STAFF

ORDINANCE: ADOPTING A NEW SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE FOR THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA (CHAPTER 107), REPEALING THE PRIOR SUBDIVISION ORDINANCE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES *Second Reading Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the second reading. Moves to third reading in September.*

New Business

ORDINANCE: AMENDING SECTION 27-4 HOURS OF TRAIL OPERATION; PROHIBITION ON USAGE WHILE CLOSED OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA TO ALLOW TWENTY-FOUR (24) HOUR PER DAY USAGE OF SHARED USE PAVED TRAILS *Staff requests third and final reading Mayor Flynn read the ordinance. Council Member Hughes made a motion to suspend the rules and move to the third and final reading, seconded by Council Member Honchell. Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4/Nays: 1, Wilms) Passed: 4-1. Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the third time. Motion to approve made by Council Member Hughes, seconded by Council Member Newport. Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed 5-0.*

ORDINANCE: ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS LICENSE REQUIREMENT FOR QUALIFYING BUSINESSES OPERATING WITHIN THE CITY, PROVIDING FOR CLASSES AND EXEMPTIONS, REQUIRING ANNUAL RENEWAL, ESTABLISHING FEES, PROVIDING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES *Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the first time. He offered an amendment to this that would extend the first license purchased to January 2027. Council Member Harp voiced his hesitation regarding this, due to our need to invite new businesses here to afford the city services that our citizens deserve. He is opposed to raising taxes, to the city footing the bill, and he fears this permit would make it harder for new businesses. Council Member Hughes wants to wait for three readings of this ordinance for transparency's sake, and to make sure it is done correctly. Motion to approve the amendment made by Council Member Hughes, seconded by Council Member Newport. Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0. Council Member Wilms commented regarding the differentiating between home businesses. Council Member Harp disagreed, and Mayor Flynn suggested the Council discuss this at the next Work Session.*

RESOLUTION: AMENDING THE 2025 CITY BUDGET IN THE AMOUNT OF

\$20,119.00 TO APPROPRIATE LIBRARY IMPACT FEES FOR THE PURCHASE OF LIBRARY SHELVING AND FURNISHINGS Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Hughes asked Staff Attorney Kelley to explain what impact fees are, which he did. They are fees the city collects upon new development that allow the city to recoup the cost of increased development on city government. In this case, whatever the impact of growth is on the library, such as additional needed shelving or books, could be covered by impact fees. These funds must be spent within 7 years of when they are given. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH SIDDONS-MARTIN EMERGENCY GROUP, PURSUANT TO AN HGAC COOPERATIVE PURCHASING AGREEMENT, FOR THE PURCHASE OF ONE (1) RIT-PAK AND FIVE (5) AIR PACKS FOR USE BY THE FIRE DEPARTMENT Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Newport made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Honchell. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

RESOLUTION: PROVIDING FOR PARTISAN PRIMARY ELECTIONS FOR MUNICIPAL OFFICES IN THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA, BEGINNING WITH THE 2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION CYCLE AND PROVIDING VOTER TRANSPARENCY Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Harp declared he is a member of the Republican Party. Council Members Harp and Honchell discussed differing views on this resolution. Council Member Hughes said she reached out to different community leaders on this subject and read a quote from the Mayor of Pea Ridge, in support of non-partisan elections. Council Member Newport suggested going to Benton County Clerk and getting a list of all registered voters in Bella Vista. She found the majority of voters to be non-affiliated. A short discussion between Council members followed. Motion to approve made by Council Member Harp, no second. Council Member Honchell made a motion to table indefinitely, seconded by Council Member Newport. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4/Nays: 1, Harp) Passed 4-1.**

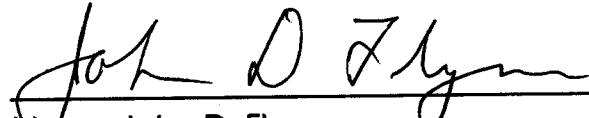
Announcements

- Next City Council Work Session: 5:30 pm Monday, September 15, at Bella Vista District Court
- Next City Council Regular Meeting: 6:00 pm Monday, September 22, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Work Session: 4:30 pm Thursday, August 28, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Regular Meeting: 4:30 pm, or immediately following BZA, Monday, September 8, at Bella Vista District Court
- Board of Construction Appeals: 3:00 pm Tuesday, September 9, if

necessary, at Fire Station #4 Conference Rm, 1639 Forest Hills Blvd.

Adjournment Council Member Wilms made an announcement about the upcoming Wishing Springs Art Gallery Event, October 16-18, 2025. Council Member Honchell announced his absence from September's Council Meetings due to his wife, Kim's, upcoming brain surgery and recovery during that time. Mayor Flynn adjourned the meeting at 7:56 pm.


City Clerk Wanda Lepillez Krug


Mayor John D. Flynn

