

BELLA VISTA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

March 23, 2026 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 Honchell, Harp, Hughes, Newport and Wilms were present. Council Member Isbell was absent.

Citizen Input There were no citizens on the list to speak.

Council Member Reply N/A

Reports

State of the City Report: Mayor John Flynn highlighted the accomplishments of the year 2025, noting the local economy of Bella Vista holding strong with continued growth in both residential and commercial development. He attributed Bella Vista's success to its people — the cornerstone of qualified and professional staff members of each city department. He thanked them for their hard work over the years. Several new businesses opened in 2025: Rosita's Little Sugar Bistro, Table a Pain, Vagabond Coffee, as well as Campfire Ranch. There was a 12% increase in city tax in 2025, which placed BV within the top three cities in Arkansas. More businesses coming up for 2026 are the OZ Trails Bike Park, slated to open June 12, and the Veteran's Health Clinic on the west side.

On the financial side, revenues ended up \$2.4 million over budget and expenses were \$500,000 under budget. He was pleased to report the city was \$2.9 million ahead of budget at the end of the year. He reported that Phase 1 and 2 of the Town Center Complex (living quarters for firefighters and offices for city administration and fire department) came in almost \$600,000 under the budget (guaranteed maximum price). Residents approved the Sales Tax Extension in November by a more than 70% positive vote. The sales tax bond would be at 3.76% and if the city sales tax stays even, it will be paid off in only 7.5 years. That bond will cover further projects at the Town Center, finishing up the Planning, Permitting, and Development areas and adding some new bays for the Fire Department. It will also help

for Fire Department growth and Fire Station #5, three new radio towers for the Police, Fire, and Streets, and also some street resurfacing, among other things.

On the transparency front, the Communications Department worked hard last year to get JustFOIA in place, a software platform that helps to respond to FOIA requests. The Planning and Development Department had more than 4,000 applications of various types, and almost 1,000 GEC (Grading and Erosion Control) permits. They established a GIS database, which helps to show where parcel lines are, property info, and zoning. The Planning Department had an impressive year with the completion of the new Zoning and Development Code, following two years of study and work. The Building Department had 787 housing permits, a 24% increase over 2024. They had 1,965 total permits, so they were working very hard. The Street Department completed 1,240 work orders, and they paved and slurried 46 miles of roads. They paved 35 streets that were gravel, as more building is happening on streets that aren't paved. The Street Department also got a grant for \$300,000 to pave Bethel Road, which will take place this year. The Police Department experienced a lot of success, and we are still one of the safest cities in Arkansas. They added a full-time Warrants Officer, and a full-time Resource Officer at Cooper Elementary starting this year. The Police Department does all kinds of outreach, including Police Night Out and The Citizens Police Academy. The Fire Department had almost 5,000 calls in 2025. They held a very successful Kid's Day in October at the Fire Training Tower. The Fire Chief was very involved in the ongoing construction at the Town Center. In the future, the City will build Fire Station #5, and two new bays at the Town Center. The Library had a great increase in programming, kids programming in particular. They established a new social area with a coffee bar and the Teen Advisory Board helped with remodeling the teen area. He is pleased with the way things are going at the Library. Mayor Flynn is looking forward to another year of progress in 2026. His goal is to ensure our city remains a safe, desirable, and well-managed community for those who live and visit here.

Monthly Financial Report: Mayor John Flynn stated the year-end report for 2025 was available. Revenues were \$2.4 million over budget and expenses were \$500,000 below. Total fund balances were still at \$11.5 million, so the city is in good shape with funds. On the revenue side, property tax had an increase of 14.7% over the prior year. The city sales tax increased by 12%, and the county sales tax by 2.5%. Local permits and fees were up 32% and that reflects much of the hard work accomplished in the Building and Permit area. Total operating revenue was up 8.7% over the prior year while operating expenses, in contrast, were up 5.4%. Expenses were \$500,000 below budget. He stated he was very pleased with the finances in 2025, and he is encouraged by the city departments' ability to control their costs

and stay within budget.

(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.)
*Motion approved by Council Member Larry Wilms and seconded by Council Member Travis Harp. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays:0) Passed: 5-0.***

Consent Agenda

Mayor Flynn introduced the items on the Consent Agenda. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Hughes. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

Approval of Minutes: February 23, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting

RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH FORVIS MAZARS, LLP IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$61,000.00 FOR AUDIT SERVICES FOR THE YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2025

RESOLUTION: AMENDING THE 2026 CITY BUDGET TO RE-APPROPRIATE UNSPENT DONATION REVENUE TO VARIOUS DEPARTMENTS FROM 2025

Unfinished Business

New Business

ORDINANCE: AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2021-23 TO MODIFY AND SET NEW DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES *Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the first time. Council Member Wilms asked several clarifying questions, answered by Mayor Flynn. Council Member Newport asked if an emergency clause might be in order for this resolution to pass quickly. Mayor Flynn responded saying he was going to ask the Council to move to 3rd and final reading, and then the Emergency Clause, in order to avoid a logjam in Permits. Council Member Harp said he was not in favor. Mayor Flynn proposed an amendment that would include the Emergency Clause, which was passed out in writing. Council Member Hughes made a motion to amend, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4/Nays: 1 Harp) Passed: 4-1.** Council Member Honchell made a motion to suspend the rules and move to 3rd and final reading, seconded by Council Member Newport. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4/Nays: 1 Harp) Passed: 4-1.** Mayor Flynn read the amended ordinance title for the 3rd and final time. Council Member Honchell made a motion to adopt the ordinance as amended, seconded by Council Member Hughes. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.** Council Member Hughes made a motion to adopt the Emergency Clause, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4/Nays: 1 Harp) Passed: 4-1.***

ORDINANCE: WAIVING THE REQUIREMENTS OF FORMAL COMPETITIVE

BIDDING AND AUTHORIZING A CONTRACT WITH SUPERIOR AUTOMOTIVE GROUP IN A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$60,000.00 FOR THE PURCHASE OF A 2026 FORD TRANSIT VAN FOR USE BY THE POLICE DEPARTMENT Staff requests move to 3rd and final Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the first time. Council Member Hughes made a motion to suspend the rules and move to 3rd and final reading, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.** Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the 3rd and final reading. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

ORDINANCE: PROHIBITING CAMPING AND VEHICLE HABITATION ON CERTAIN PUBLIC PROPERTY, PROVIDING DEFINITIONS, ESTABLISHING ENFORCEMENT PROCEDURES, PROVIDING EXEMPTIONS, PROVIDING PENALTIES, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the first time. Council Member Harp explained why he proposed this ordinance, and why it offers protection for our residents. Although Bella Vista may not need this today, he believes it will eventually and this ordinance will take care of the problem. Council discussion followed, and it was determined that more time to deliberate was needed. Council Member Wilms asked if a survey could be completed by the City Clerk to see if a similar ordinance may be in place in other northwest Arkansas cities. The Mayor suggested moving the ordinance to the 2nd reading for the April meeting.

ORDINANCE: AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 2025-16 ESTABLISHING A BUSINESS LICENSE TO EXEMPT SHORT-TERM RENTAL MANAGEMENT BUSINESSES FROM THE LICENSING REQUIREMENT, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the first time. Council Member Harp said he believed there is confusion over the exempt classes listed in the original ordinance. He mentioned conversations he held with Attorney Kelley and Planning Director Robertson that he found to be conflicting. Council Member Wilms spoke about the original Ordinance 2025-16 and the amendment he had made in Section 4 (f) which states: "Short-term rentals as defined in the City short-term rental ordinance, Property management businesses, even though managing short-term rentals as part of their operation, shall not be exempt." Council Member Honchell asked clarifying questions and voiced concerns about carving out special interest groups from the Ordinance. Attorney Kelley suggests waiting on this for the Planning Director to return. Mayor Flynn stated that he does not like ambiguity and wants laws to be clear, so residents can read them without calling their attorneys for clarification. Council Member Harp said he was fine with waiting to have these conversations with Planning Director Robertson next month. Mayor Flynn said it would be addressed in April.

ORDINANCE: REQUIRING THE BELLA VISTA ADVERTISING AND PROMOTION

COMMISSION TO PUBLISH FINANCIAL STATEMENTS ON ITS OFFICIAL WEBSITE, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the first time. Council Member Harp explained his reasons for this proposal, and expressed regret that this wording was not added to the recent ordinance requesting the Minutes to be published. He believes that taxpayers should have access to the financials, without going through the FOIA process. He says it is a transparency issue for him. Council Member Honchell wanted confirmation that the FOIA procedure was the appropriate way to have access to the financials at the current time. Attorney Kelley said yes, a request for information is a FOIA request, and it can be done by phone or in writing. Attorney Kelley said the A & P Commission's financial records are public, and all anyone has to do is request to see them, and they would be presented to the requester. This ordinance would require the Commission to post them online for ease of access to residents. Council Members discussed a variety of thoughts and differing perspectives on the proposal. Council Member Honchell said he thinks this request is redundant, and not necessary, which was also echoed by Council Member Wilms. The Mayor said the ordinance would be moved to the 2nd reading on the April agenda. Council Member Newport said, with all due respect, that the mood in the room felt vindictive, and she was concerned if one wasn't successful in abolishing the A&P, then one might just continuously pass regulations as a form of punishment which would be crossing a line.

RESOLUTION: EXPRESSING THE WILLINGNESS OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA, ARKANSAS TO UTILIZE FEDERAL-AID FUNDS FOR A TRAIL EXTENSION PROJECT FOR BLOWING SPRINGS PHASE 2 Mayor Flynn read the resolution. He called forward Megan Workman, from the Planning Department to provide background on the resolution. She explained that this resolution requested the Council's approval to submit a grant application to the Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission for a trail extension project in the amount of \$3,539,264.30. This is to cover the estimated construction costs of Blowing Springs Phase 2 from the Metfield Skills Park to Sleeper Lane, about 1.6 miles of new trail and 10 feet wide. The entire Blowing Springs Greenway with the extension would be a little over 4 miles long. Federal funding would be at 80% and private grant funding at 20%, which the City has applied for. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Wilms. Megan noted that the deadline to apply for this Regional grant is April 2nd. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

RESOLUTION: CHANGING THE MEETING TIME FOR CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSIONS FROM 5:30 PM TO 6:00 PM Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Newport, who proposed the resolution, explained that working Council members and residents usually work until 5:00 pm. She proposed moving the start time of Work Sessions to 6:00 pm to keep both monthly Council Meetings with the same start times. Council Member Hughes made

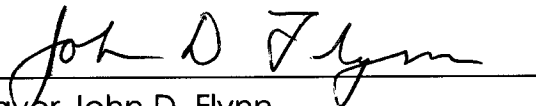
a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Newport. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 5/Nays: 0) Passed: 5-0.**

Announcements

- Next City Council Work Session: 6:00 pm Monday, April 20, at Bella Vista District Court
- Next City Council Regular Meeting: 6:00 pm Monday, April 27, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Work Session: 4:30 pm Thursday, April 2, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Regular Meeting: 4:30 pm, or immediately following BZA, Monday, April 13, at Bella Vista District Court
- Board of Construction Appeals: 3:00 pm Tuesday, April 14, if necessary, at Fire Station #1 Conference Rm, 103 Town Center.

Adjournment by Mayor Flynn at 7:06 pm.


City Clerk Wanda Lepillez Krug


Mayor John D. Flynn

