

BELLA VISTA CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

July 27, 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 Wilms, Isbell, Honchell, Harp, Hughes. and Newport were present. Mayor Flynn was present.

Proclamation Mayor Flynn recognized Mr. Brightwell's dedication as President of the BV Courtesy Van organization. Since 1992, the Courtesy Van has operated solely on the efforts of volunteers to provide transportation to BV residents who cannot otherwise drive themselves due to age, health, or other restrictions. Mayor Flynn thanked all the volunteers who give their time freely to continue this necessary service, which has become a trusted source of assistance within the community.

Citizen Input Mayor Flynn explained the 3-minute per-person rule for Citizen Input. He proposed a motion to extend the total Citizen Input time to more than 30 minutes, due to the 31 citizens who signed up to speak. Council Member Wilms, seconded by Council Member Harp. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed 6-0.** Mayor Flynn proceeded to call each person on the list, in turn. Donna Hutchinson, 24 Rillington Dr. Donna spoke on the subject of short-term rentals, suggesting an alternative solution of zoning open acreage for a short-term rental neighborhood. She stayed at one in an area near Broken Bow, Oklahoma that is thriving, with fewer amenities than Bella Vista. Tony Licausi, 53 Sunderland Dr. Tony came to speak out against the resolution to raise the number of short-term rentals. He referred to the difference between resident neighbors and short-term rental visitors, saying "we've changed the comfort of a community into a calamity." Susan Cofferty, 7 Ashwell Ln. Susan spoke out against raising the cap on STRs due to her experience with the STR next-door to her family's home. She has spent countless hours during the past 3 years dealing with a corporate owner, a Texan owner listed as a local host manager, and now an Idaho-based owner. She said the City permit office did void the STR permit on July 6, but since then they put the house on a waitlist for a new permit. She wishes the city government would

renew efforts to watch over current STRs before adding new ones.

J.B. Portillo, 3 Kirk Circle. J.B. spoke about the importance of being informed as a resident of Bella Vista. She believes that before asking citizens for their vote, prospective candidates should make every effort to understand how Bella Vista really works. The city, the POA, the ACC, the Planning Commission, and Discover Bella Vista each carry out individual roles that are connected. She urged municipal candidates to attend meetings, read official documents, ask thoughtful questions, and listen to those involved.

Betsy DiGiacinto, 77 Portsmouth Dr. Betsy came to speak against raising the STR cap and against adding a 200-foot density rule. Although she and her husband own and she manages an STR, she believes the city is at saturation based on her experience with bookings slowing down. She thinks raising the cap simply to reach 4%, without data showing a need for more STRs would be reckless governance.

Connie Jaquess, 15 Portpatrick Ln. Connie came to express her thoughts about her short-term rental home experience in Bella Vista. It has been positive and rewarding, and she considers her guests part of her extended family. She urged the Council to vote yes on extending the cap to allow other owners to have the same opportunities that were afforded to her.

Linda Oliphant, 5 Marykirk Ln. Linda came to speak against raising the cap on short-term rentals due to the saturation on her one small circle lane. She mentioned problems such as mail deliveries, building traffic, and boat parking on her property. She also spoke against adding recycling to the regular garbage route. Her experience in another city was that pick-up recycling meant increased pollution from open containers and blowing winds. They prefer to recycle once a month without a fee.

C. Quinn, 1 Teresa Dr. Carol spoke about STRs and the need for rational policy. She asked what the goals of a short-term policy are. She thinks we want economic growth, yet prevent overgrowth, and to combat displacement due to the unavailability of real estate. She said she looked into Arkansas law, and she thinks the state wants the tax money without handling very much regulation. The buzzer rang and she couldn't finish.

Joal Miller, 17 Humbleton Dr. Joal voiced her opinion that outdoor sirens are needed in Bella Vista to warn residents of imminent danger due to tornados or dangerous weather. She said, as a Garden Club representative, that they helped the city spruce up signage by planting flowers and new plants, with the promise that the City would water them. The plants weren't watered so they didn't make it. Joal stated the Garden Club is ready to help spruce up signage areas or to be on an advisory board to enhance signage areas, but they cannot keep up the watering.

C. Clemmons, 8 Rosenheath Ln. Mr. Clemmons, an Arkansas native and retired Bella Vista resident of 2 years, came to ask the Council two questions. As an elected representative, do you personally want to live next door to a short-term

rental? Who do you represent — the absentee landlords, builders, and developers, or residential homeowners of this city?

J. Czernek, 72 Overton Dr. Mr. Czernek came to share his concern about property rights and encourage the Council to vote yes on raising the STR cap and no on the 200-foot density rule. He also raised concern about A Flock cameras that read license plates.

Suzanne Saltz, 15 Marykirk Ln. Suzanne asked the Council to keep the STR cap at 600, to allow the Planning Commission to complete its work on density, and then to decide whether to increase. She also voiced her concerns about transferring STR permits automatically when the property is sold, and encouraged the Council against it.

Cathy Gier, 26 Rutland Dr. Cathy came to urge the Council to vote no on an increase in STRs in Bella Vista and shared her experiences as a resident living in a lake neighborhood. These included loud weekend bachelor parties, 12 motorcyclists coming for a rally, and one group with 10 cars in the driveway spilling onto the street. She voiced particular concern about the lack of supervision of septic system occupancy and capacity guidelines by the city. She discovered that it is the state's responsibility, but in speaking with a state representative, she learned there have been no inspections on septic tanks in BV for over three years.

Charlie Mears, 3 Howick Cir. Charlie introduced himself as owner, host, and cleaning crew at 3 Howick Cir., as well as a home builder. He said they chose short-term rentals over long-term for investments in BV because they believe the quality of guests is higher. His year-long experience so far has been so positive that he hopes to own more STRs and bring in great people to the community. He encouraged the Council to vote yes to raising the cap to 687, and vote no to the 200-foot density rule.

Sylvia Grabner, 69 York Dr. Sylvia and her husband are homeowners and licensed BV short-term rental permit holders. She came to urge the Council to vote no on the 200-foot separation density rule and yes on the ordinance to increase the permit cap. In her opinion, the issue isn't where the STR is located, but rather how it is operated.

Tim Sullivan, 3 Fulford Circle. Tim urged the Council to vote no to raising the STR cap to 687. He voiced his concerns about preserving the lifestyle of the community and the extra costs of code enforcement, permit issuance with delays and lack of responses from STR owners, and police responses when complaints are filed. Residents in BV pay for the increasing costs of STR-related issues, so he suggested putting this to a vote on the ballot in November. He is certain that the residents will tell the Council what they think.

Paul Zimmerman, 57 Pimlico Dr. Paul came to express his opposition to any proposal to increase the number of Airbnb and other short-term rentals in the city. He challenged the council members to think about what really happens every time a home is converted into a short-term rental. He said we lose people

who volunteer, support our schools, attend our churches, and invest their time and heart into this community. It replaces neighbors with strangers, stability with uncertainty, and community with commercial activity. He said it isn't about being against tourism, but about priorities. He believes that when financial gain for a few begins to outweigh the quality of life for everyone else, we've lost sight of what a residential community is supposed to be.

Don Sennett, 3 Glenwood Ln. Don spoke out against raising the cap on STRs based on a figure of 4% of water hook-ups. He talked about the fallacies of using that number and how hard it is to get an accurate number. He discussed the different scenarios of STR owners and investors as the cap rises, and the implications of a future hotel built by Blue Crane.

Ben Yost, 20 Manchester Dr. Ben respectfully asked the Council to vote in favor of increasing the STR cap to 687 and to vote no on the density rule. As an owner and operator of STRs in Bella Vista, he sees the benefits they bring to the city of increased tax revenue, and support of local jobs and businesses. He believes the answer is not to freeze growth, but to continue to enforce noise ordinances, parking rules, and property maintenance standards so that responsible operators can continue contributing to the community while bad actors are held accountable.

Linda Fieth, 71 Northhampton Dr. Linda has been an owner-occupied STR owner for the past 7.5 years and is a super host. She loves what she does and has had positive experiences with quality guests. Sometimes even her neighbors rent her place for their relatives coming into town. She suggested calling VRBO or Airbnb about problems they have with an STR next door and speaking to Customer Service about the complaint. They have the power to pull a listing that does not comply. She mentioned that STRs operate on reviews, and they must have everything clean inside and out, or they won't be competitive.

Tommy Breytan, 25 Pamona Dr. Tommy asked the Council to vote no on any increase in the STR cap, and to stand with the residents who live here and not with the investors who profit. He believes that the residents have clearly spoken, and they do not want more short-term rentals.

Kendall & Karisa Pope, 80 Rillington Dr. Kendall came to urge the Council to vote yes to the STR increase and no to the density rule. He and his wife own three short-term rentals and do everything themselves. They also have long-term rentals and have been residents of BV for 25 years. He mentioned that vacation rentals were the inventor of short-term rentals and that BV was built on that.

Greg & Donna Henry, 30 Brittany Ln. Donna said they purchased an Airbnb eight miles from their home in Bella Vista about a year ago as an investment. All has gone smoothly with neighbors and guests and they have frequent contact. On behalf of STRs, she urged the Council to vote yes to the cap increase, and no to the 200-foot density rule.

Rita Clemans, 1 Heatherbrooke Ln. Rita and her husband have been operating an Airbnb for seven years in BV. At nearly 82, she wants to keep doing what she's

doing because she loves it. She reported they have kept nurses, students, wedding parties, funeral attendees, and all kinds of people who came to enjoy Bella Vista. Rita stated they don't experience any problems at all, but they do put their guests first and her husband handles the landscaping and maintains the beautiful neighborhood. She said the neighbors have never complained. Staci Lamb, 8065 N. Lakeshore Dr., Rogers, AR. Staci came to ask the Council to consider looking deeper into the density issue, and to vote yes to increase the STR cap, as she said was promised by the Council several years when the 4% calculation was determined to be a reasonable number of STRs. She believes there is only an increase in demand for short-term rentals as northwest Arkansas grows and said BV had over 20,000 reservations last year with only 7 total police calls for the same period.

Peter Stevenson, 1 St. Helens Ln. Did not speak

Curtis Orpin, 4 Breton Ln. Curtis and his wife own an STR, and they have experienced zero incidents and they know all the neighbors on their street. They urged the Council to vote no on the density, and yes on raising the STR cap.

Kevin Kowalski, 14 Daviot Ln. Kevin and his wife are short-term rental operators whose goal is to inclusively serve people. They seek to give families and people long-lasting memories, so their children can come to a great place and have good memories. They wish Bella Vista would share the same vision and welcome people to this city. They request the Council to vote yes to the STR cap increase to 687, and no to the 200-foot separation, and please protect their property rights.

Kent Brown, 48 Wentworth Ln. Kent has owned short-term and long-term rentals in BV, and he said that more problems occurred with long-term rentals. He doesn't see a need to limit the number of short-term STRs when there isn't a limit on long-term rentals. He also voiced his opinion that he thinks the density rule is not fair to younger people coming in who need to make a bit of money out of their property.

Julia Denniston, 9 Applecross Pl. Julia is the owner of Julia's Lake House and has lived there for 10 years, and in Bella Vista for 16 years. She wants the Council to vote yes to an increase in the STR cap, and no to the 200-foot density rule.

Becky Parmelee, 2 Brougham Ln. Becky operates the Bella Vista Farmers Market and came to talk about the National Farmer's Market week coming up. She urges everyone to come out and support the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture's declaration for the first week of August. On August 2nd, the BV Farmer's Market will be celebrating with their live mural painting, a bounce house, face painting and temporary tattoos for kids, and a new launch of a recipe contest that includes 3 market ingredients. There will be giveaways and new merchandise launching at the top of the hour. The Market is open Sundays from 7:30 to 1:00 pm.

Council Member Reply Mayor Flynn called the meeting back to order following a 10-minute recess, and called for Council Member reply. Council Members Hughes and Newport thanked the citizens for coming out to speak. Council Member Newport told Joal she shared her concern for emergency weather sirens, and thanked Becky for her great job operating the Farmer's Market and serving the community. Council Member Larry Wilms thanked everyone who came out to speak, both for and against the Short Term Rentals expansion. He mentioned attending several conferences on STRs recently in Bentonville and Fayetteville. He stated that STRs are true businesses, and the city regulates them that way. Mayor Flynn thanked everyone who spoke and mentioned that many citizens communicated with the Council and himself prior to the meeting by email or phone. He said a lot of input had been received to inform the voting.

Reports

Monthly Financial Report through May 31, 2026: Mayor Flynn stated that the total operating revenues were up 7.1% from the prior year, and they were \$667,000 over budget. He reported that the city sales tax was up 9.4% and county sales tax was up 2.2% compared to last year. The total operating expenditures were \$501,000 below budget. The city was a little more than \$1,000,000 ahead of budget through May, which is almost half of a year. So the city's financial situation is positive.

2025 **GAAP** Audit Report: David M. Coleman, Partner, and Katie Flores, Senior Manager with Forvis Mazars, LLP. Finance Director Kim Hall introduced David Coleman with Forvis Mazars, and said the city was fortunate to work with them because they audit most of the larger cities in Arkansas. She mentioned the audit was completed two months earlier than last year due to the timeliness of the city directors and the auditors. David said it was a pleasure to work with Bella Vista and stated the objectives of the audit. The three objectives were to provide an opinion on whether the financial statements were fairly stated in all material aspects, to report on compliance with certain rules and regulations (*Government Auditing Standards*), and to issue a report on internal controls over financial reporting and compliance requirements (*Government Auditing Standards*). He clarified that the financial statements were the responsibility of Director Hall and city management, and the auditor's responsibility was to issue an opinion on whether the financial statements were materially correct. David summarized the Auditor's Report by stating they did not find any issues that rose to the level of significant efficiency or material weakness, nor did they find any issues to report on compliance with state laws. On July 15, Forvis Mazars issued a clean, unmodified opinion, which is the best opinion a city can get on its financial statements. The GAAP audit, a more modernized

approach, went off well for Bella Vista in its second year and places the city with the big cities in Arkansas who all complete the GAAP audit. He said, with everything taken into account, Bella Vista had a great year.

(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 Wilms, seconded by Council Member Harp. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed: 6-0.**

Consent Agenda Mayor Flynn introduced the item on the Consent Agenda. Council Member Wilms made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Isbell. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed: 6-0.**

Approval of Minutes: June 22, 2026, City Council Regular Meeting

Unfinished Business

Mayor Flynn introduced item E. under Unfinished Business. Council Member Newport said she would like to make a motion to suspend the rules and move Item G. ahead of Item E. on the Agenda, seconded by Council Member Hughes. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed: 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: REFERRING TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION FOR PUBLIC HEARING AND RECOMMENDATION A ZONING CODE CHANGE REGARDING DENSITY OF SHORT-TERM RENTALS WITHIN RESIDENTIAL ZONES Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Hughes explained that this resolution would request the Planning Commission to consider if density is an appropriate measure for our city and make a recommendation to the Council. They would hold a public hearing. She clarified that it would not impact owner-occupied STRs, and that all current non-owner-occupied STRs would not be impacted but grandfathered in. She thinks the Planning Commission's recommendation would be helpful before increasing the limit of STRs to 687. She told the audience that the Planning Commission could not address this until September and it may be October before the Council receives a recommendation. Council Member Newport made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Hughes. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4 Wilms, Hughes, Newport, Flynn/Nays: 3 Isbell, Honchell, Harp) Passed: 4-3. City Attorney Kelley told Mayor Flynn he may choose to vote since it was a tie vote. Mayor Flynn chose to vote.**

ORDINANCE: AMENDING SECTION 16-43 ACTIVE PERMIT MAXIMUM OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA TO INCREASE THE MAXIMUM NUMBER OF SHORT-TERM RENTAL PERMITS FROM 600 TO 687, 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 Isbell.** Council Member Newport asked Attorney Kelley if she could make a motion to table this item until September's meeting, and

he said it would not be in order due to the motion and second already made. They would need to be withdrawn first. Council Member Honchell spoke up to describe his interaction with his many constituents on this issue. He said the Council owes the voting public an answer now, and he cannot support any increase at this time. He encouraged residents to speak to our Arkansas legislators because when spring comes, they will be bringing STRs up again. Council Member Newport re-stated that she does not want this to be voted on tonight without the input of the Planning Commission and their recommendations. Mayor Flynn said he was amazed by the large amount of feedback received from residents, and it was overwhelmingly for staying at 600. He feels that now the city knows what the majority of residents want, and that is what the Council should do. Council Member Wilms said the feedback and emails he received from residents was overwhelmingly negative about increasing the number. However, he said he tries to base his voting decisions on how the issues affect the community overall and in the long-term. He said he personally cannot support this increase. Council Member Isbell explained why she will be voting in favor of this resolution to increase the number of STRs, and she also stated that she is against the 200-foot density rule. She believes that as a Council member who took an oath to uphold the constitution, she needs to defend the rights of the few, and the rights of homeowners. Mayor Flynn called for the vote. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 1 Isbell/Nays: 4/Abstain: 1 Harp) Failed: 1-4. 1 Abstained.**

ORDINANCE: REQUIRING ORIENTATION AND CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS OF THE CITY OF BELLA VISTA, ARKANSAS; ESTABLISHING MINIMUM TRAINING REQUIREMENTS; PROVIDING FOR REPORTING OF COMPLIANCE; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES. Second Reading Mayor Flynn read the ordinance for the second reading. He said he would be fine with going to the third reading next month unless someone wanted to push it forward faster. Council Member Harp said he can't support this until we can send all our firefighters, police officers, EMTs, and paramedics to the continuing education they need. Mayor Flynn moved this item to the third and final reading in August.

New Business

RESOLUTION: ACCEPTING THE FINANCIAL AUDIT REPORT PRESENTED BY FORVIS MAZARS, LLP FOR THE YEAR ENDING DECEMBER 31, 2025 Mayor Flynn read the resolution. Council Member Hughes made a motion to approve, seconded by Council Member Larry Wilms. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 6/Nays: 0) Passed: 6-0.**

RESOLUTION: AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY CLERK TO ENTER INTO AN AMENDMENT TO THE SOLID WASTE CONTRACT WITH ALLIED SERVICES, LLC DBA REPUBLIC SERVICES OF BELLA VISTA TO PROVIDE A THREE-YEAR

EXTENSION TO THE CURRENT AGREEMENT AND TO PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CURBSIDE RECYCLING IN THE CITY Mayor Flynn read the resolution and said he wanted to start by clearing up a few misconceptions voiced by residents. He clarified that the new extension of the garbage contract would be the same rate in 2027 as it is for this year. Residents will be able to choose to sign up for recycling or not to have recycling. A minimum of 1,250 residents must be signed up for recycling in order for BV to offer the option of recycling, and it would cost each resident an extra \$6.50 each month. Jennifer Fagan from Republic Services was available at the meeting to answer questions. She specified that it would work a lot like the yard waste schedule, that residents may choose the subscription, and it would run once a month. Cost would be determined by the number of containers one signs up for. Residents would have maximum freedom to use the current drop-off recycling center at any time, or use the proposed Republic recycling once monthly, or use both. Council Member Hughes stated she did research on Bentonville, Centerton, and Pea Ridge, and they all spent less than the proposed amendment contract price. She thinks we owe it to residents to put this out for bid. Attorney Kelley clarified the bidding process and said yes, we could, but it would change the timetable of the existing agreement. He said one unique piece about Bella Vista is that the company that collects the trash also sends out the billing. He added that Bella Vista is very large at 47 square miles and very hilly, which likely affects the cost. **Motion to approve by Council Member Harp, seconded by Council Member Wilms.** Several Council Members weighed in with their opinions, including that one recycling pick-up per month would be insufficient for most families. After a lengthy debate on the pros and cons of this resolution, along with input from Jennifer Fagan, Mayor Flynn called for a vote. **Roll Call Vote: (Ayes: 4 Wilms, Honchell, Harp, Flynn/Nays: Isbell, Hughes, Newport) Passed: 4-3. Attorney Kelly told Mayor Flynn he could vote since it was a tie vote. Mayor Flynn chose to vote.**

Announcements

- Next City Council Work Session: 6:00 pm Monday, August 17, at Bella Vista District Court
- Next City Council Regular Meeting: 6:00 pm, Monday, August 24, at Bella Vista District Court
- Planning Commission Work Session: 4:30 pm Thursday, July 30, at Bella Vista District Court **CANCELLED** due to lack of business
- Planning Commission Regular Meeting: 4:30 pm, or immediately following BZA, Monday, August 10, at Bella Vista District Court
- Board of Construction Appeals: 3:00 pm Tuesday, August 11, if necessary, at Fire Station #1 Conference Rm, 103 Town Center

Adjournment



Wanda Lepillez Krug
City Clerk Wanda Lepillez Krug

John D. Flynn
Mayor John D. Flynn