Wednesday, August 19, 2020, Minutes
11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
VIRTUAL

At 11:33 AM the thirtieth meeting of the LR CENT Committee was called to order by Peter McKinney O’Connor, co-chair. Committee Members present during the meeting were: Dr. Sybil Jordan Hampton, Andrea Neal, Steve Strickland, Musheerah Tharpe, and Stacy Tierney.

Committee Members Not Present were: Erma Peterson, June Matheny, Ken Gill, Don Shellabarger, Troy Laha, and Tim Daters.

Also present were: City Manager Bruce Moore; Mayor’s Chief of Staff Charles Blake; LR CENT liaison Scott Whiteley Carter, and other City Staff.

Welcome: Mr. O’Connor welcomed everyone at 11:33 am.

Approval of Minutes:
The approval of the February 2020 minutes was delayed until the November 2020 meeting.

General Financial Report
Sara Lenehan, the City’s Chief Financial Officer, reviewed sales tax collection through May 2020 (based on the report to the City by the State of Arkansas through July 2020). After a 3.74% increase in January and a 6.89% increase in February, as would be expected, the revenue decreased during the early months of the COVID-19 pandemic. The year to date total shows 2020 to be down 0.31% as compared to 2019. Considering projects in March, this is favorable news.

As Finance looks at the conclusion of the original 10 years of projects, all projects will be completed. Those unfinished projects will receive between 95 to 96 percent of their original allocation. But due to budget estimates and other cost savings, the projects will still be finished.

Mr. Strickland asked Ms. Lenehan if she had a reason that the sales tax loss due to COVID was so minor. She explained that the stimulus checks and unemployment checks probably contributed to people being able to spend money which lessened the impact. In addition, the first six months of 2019 did not include the internet sales tax collection, whereas it was collected every month in 2020.
Community Programs
Director Dana Dossett reviewed the Reentry opportunities from January to July of 2020. So far this year, 20 persons have been hired. She also informed the Committee about the new Restore Hope Arkansas 100 Families initiative, which helps families move from crisis to career.

The Paul Philia Charity Fund was highlighted. This is a new scholarship created by Derrick Clark, an alumni of the Reentry program who is now a licensed truck driver. The Arkansas Community Foundation is managing the fund which will offer scholarships to others to be able to receive their CDL license.

Due to COVID, the Department’s Summer Youth Employment Opportunity was cancelled. However, prior to the cancellation there were 1136 total applicants ranging in age from 16 to 21.

Parks
Director John Eckart updated the Committee on Parks and Recreation projects. At Kanis Park, six new pickleball courts were installed on unused tennis courts. In MacArthur Park, an unused court has been transformed into a multipurpose court for things such as bike polo and other hard court sports. Lastly, a new concrete and asphalt trail from Allsopp Promenade to the softball field was completed.

Police
Chief Keith Humphrey updated the committee on plans for the new Police headquarters building. Construction is currently on hold due to COVID-19.

Recruit Class #96 began February 17, 2020 with 19 members and graduated with 13 members as of July 31, 2020. Recruit Class #97 will begin August 17, 2020. Class 98 will start in February 2021; the process of finalizing that class is underway.

Public Works
Director Jon Honeywell presented the Public Works update. As of July 2020, the in-house Sidewalk Program crew has completed 234,615 square feet (approximately 46,923 linear feet) of new sidewalks since July 2012. Sidewalk constructed by the contractor with Sidewalk Program funds totals 157,556 square feet (31,511 linear feet) since September 2015. A total of 392,171 square feet (78,434 linear feet) of sidewalk reconstruction. That is approximately 14.8 miles of sidewalks.
Regarding the 2016 to 2018 Street Drainage Improvement Program, there were 38 street/drainage projects: all design work is completed, two projects are under construction, three projects are pending close-out, and 33 are complete.

The 2019 to 2021 Street and Drainage Improvement Program is underway. $56 million was allocated for Street, Drainage, and Resurfacing projects. All 68 Street & Drainage projects for the 2019 – 2021 program have been funded. Public Meetings to receive input from neighborhoods are complete and resurfacing work under construction in all Wards.

- 10 Projects are in design.
- 19 Projects are in the Right-of-Way Phase.
- 10 Projects are in the Bidding and Award Phase.
- 20 Projects are under construction.
- 9 Projects are complete.

The 2019 Street Resurfacing Program has completed asphalt resurfacing on 73,360 linear feet of City streets. The 2019 Street Resurfacing Program is 60% complete.

**Little Rock Zoo**

Zoo Director Susan Altrui reported the construction continues on the new Colobus/Serval Cat exhibit. It is scheduled for a grand opening at the end of September. The Trails project is underway and construction crews are on site daily. The renovated pathway near the bear habitats is nearly complete.

The Zoo is planning to construct a central hay barn, so they won’t have to have trucks drive over the newly constructed public paths. Another project is to improve storm water drainage. The Zoo has completed installation of the majority of system hardware, including speakers, power sources, and Ethernet connections.

**General Comments**

City Manager Bruce Moore expressed his appreciation to the LR CENT Committee for their continued support. He also thanked the IT and LRTV staff for all they have done to make not only this meeting possible, but all the City meetings since the beginning of the pandemic.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:27 pm.