

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL, CITY OF CONWAY, ARKANSAS

Conway, Arkansas

Tuesday, 6:00 pm

June 23, 2026

On this date the City Council of the City of Conway, Arkansas met in regular session. The following members being a quorum were present and acting: Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Spurgers, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Hawks, and Councilwoman Isby. Also, present and acting: Mayor Bart Castleberry, City Clerk Denise Hurd, and City Attorney Charles Finkenbinder. Councilman Jones was not present.

Call to Order: Mayor Bart Castleberry

Roll Call: Denise Hurd, City Clerk

Minutes: May 26, 2026

Councilwoman Isby made a motion to approve the minutes of the City Council meeting on May 26th as submitted. Councilman Hawkins seconded the motion. The motion carried 7-0.

Monthly Financial Report: May 31st, 2026

Tyler Winningham addressed the Council explaining that as in past years, large expenditures at the beginning of the year cause the general fund to suffer early on. He added that usually by this time the fund has turned around some but due to the operations of the two new departments, the Community Center and the CEOC, it has made that turnaround a bit more difficult. He said that the Community Center is just now getting into its busy season and that revenue should become more apparent and will help to know what to expect in the future. He said that the CEOC has the large radio project that was taken on last year, which was an expense but not an ongoing one. He added that in addition, the 911 fees that come from the Board only come in quarterly and should be received this month. He said that sales tax for May was up 3.3% which puts us up 3.4% for the year which is on budget. He corrected some previous information in that while the turnback from the state comes in regularly, the portion related to LOPFI is not as regular but should start coming in July. He reported that the first big receipt for property tax had been received from the County. He turned their attention to the Street Fund account stating that that fund would start to improve when the Connect Conway reimbursements start coming in. He added that the Sanitation and Animal Welfare Fund both look healthy. The Mayor added that the Street Fund is in debt by about 2 million dollars due to the Connect Conway project, which will be reimbursed, however, the federal government has paused the program and therefore the City has put a hold on the project until the time that reimbursements are received. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to approve the monthly financial report and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The motion carried 7-0.

Report of Standing Committees:

A. Community Development Committee (Airport, Community Development, Code Enforcement, Permits & Inspections, Transportation, & Planning & Development.

- 1. Consideration to approve waiving all three readings for the ordinances on the June 23rd City Council agenda.**

Councilwoman Isby made a motion to approve waiving all three readings and Councilman Grimes seconded the motion. A vote was called and motion carried 7-0.

- 2. Ordinance approving the private club location for Longshot Lounge Golf Club, LLC located at 1012 Oak Street.**

O-26-36

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A2 to the Council. Brandon Proenza, co-owner, addressed the Council. Councilman Drew Spurgers made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilman Ledbetter seconded the motion. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Hawks, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Spurgers, Councilman Hawkins, and Councilwoman Isby. The Ordinance passed 7-0.

3. Resolution to approve the proposal for Ridge Lighting and holiday décor for the A&P Commission.

R-26-26

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A3 to the Council. Rachel Shaw of the Conway Chamber of Commerce and representing the A&P Commission, addressed the Council stating that the idea came about to increase the Christmas décor in downtown Conway, including ridge lighting throughout downtown. She said the Downtown Partnership reached out to some vendors to discover what was available, and the Procurement Department sent out RFQs, and selected two vendors, one to provide holiday décor and the other to provide the ridge lighting downtown. The A&P Commission chose the vendors based on prices quoted. Councilman Hawkins clarified that the ridge lighting could be used throughout the year as well. Councilman Grimes clarified that the funding for the lighting would come from the A&P Commission's tax fund. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Resolution and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. A vote was called and the Resolution passed 7-0.

4. Consideration to approve a conditional use permit to allow a Stationary Store in the O-3 zone for property located at 703 Donaghey Avenue.

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A4 to the Council. Anne Tucker told the Council that the use requested would require a conditional use permit in that zone and that the Planning Commission approved the request unanimously. She added that the applicant had agreed to all of the conditions set forth. The applicant, Eric Kinsfater told the Council he and his wife would like the opportunity to give residents of Conway a unique shopping experience. He told the Council some of the products and services the business would provide. Councilman Spurgers made a motion to approve the consideration and Councilwoman Isby seconded the motion. A vote was called and the motion carried 7-0.

5. Ordinance amending the boundary for the City by releasing certain property (deannexation) located in Section 23, Township 6 north, Range 14 west, off of Highway 25.

O-26-37

Councilman Hawkins presented Item A5 to the Council. Troy Rice told the Council the applicant is requesting the stated property be released from the City and committed back to the County. He described the location and said that most locals would refer to it as the Earl Rogers property. He said the Allen Family and the Hill family have made this request on behalf of the current owners, the Earl Rogers family. He added that the request is made due to the lack of City services and the expense to extend water service due to the sparse number of inhabitants in the area. Councilman Spurgers asked if there were any plans for development and Mr. Rice stated that there were plans for residential development for a few families, and if the property remained in the City there would be additional expenses such as road improvements, etc. He added that it is a large property with a very small road frontage. One of the applicants, David Hill, addressed the Council. He stated that the plans for development included two, possibly three single family homes. There was no further discussion. Councilman Hawkins made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilwoman Isby seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Grimes,

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Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Spurgers, Councilwoman Isby, Councilman Ledbetter, and Councilman Hawks. The Ordinance passed 7-0.

Mayor Castleberry asked Anne Tucker to present to the Council a matter that will come before them in the future, regarding fees for Commercial Temporary Certificates of Occupancy. She said they are currently \$500 a month and according to the old zoning code, for only 12 months. She said that the time limit is very hard to enforce, so they searched for a way to mitigate ongoing issues, and the easiest way was through fees. Councilman Spurgers clarified that the goal was to simplify enforcement and to not be overly punitive. She added that the Permits Department bills for the fees, but other departments have to sign off on a final certificate of occupancy. Mayor Castleberry told the Council that the matter would not come before them for another month and they could contact Ms. Tucker with any further questions.

B. Public Service Committee (Physical Plant, Parks & Recreation, & Sanitation)

1. Ordinance appropriating funds for the Conway Animal Services from Best Friend Animal Society Grant.

O-26-38

Mayor Castleberry presented Item B1 to the Council. Spencer Clawson told the Council that David Mitchell, Director of the Animal Welfare Department, was invited to a conference to learn some strategies to help our animal shelter and this is a reimbursement for a scholarship grant that the Society provided. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilman Hawkins seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilwoman Isby, Councilman Hawks, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Spurgers, and Councilman Grimes. The Ordinance passed 7-0.

C. Public Safety Committee (Police, Fire, CEOC, District Court, & Information Technology)

1. Ordinance appropriating reimbursement funds from various entities for the Conway Police Department.

O-26-39

Mayor Castleberry presented Item C1 to the Council. Chief Harris told the Council that most of the items were from extra duty work and asked that the funds be re-allocated to their various accounts. Councilman Hawkins made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilwoman Isby seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Spurgers, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Hawks, Councilwoman Isby, Councilman Ledbetter and Councilwoman Mehl. The Ordinance passed 7-0.

2. Ordinance appropriating asset forfeiture funds for various equipment within the Conway Police Department.

O-26-40

Mayor Castleberry presented Item C2 to the Council. Chief Harris told the Council that they recently acquired an armored vehicle from the Bella Vista police department through the state lease program. He requested to use funds from the asset forfeiture account to upfit the vehicle. He said the vehicle would be used for high risk situations and can also be used during natural disasters such as flooding, debris removal etc. Chief Harris gave several examples of how the vehicle might be used. Councilman Spurgers asked for clarification on where asset forfeiture funds came from and Chief Harris stated that those funds were from drug seizures and that no taxpayer money would be used. Chief Harris presented a second item stating that the Taser contract expires next December, and if the contract is

renewed it will cost roughly \$900,000 for five years. He told the Council about a new system similar to the old pepper spray canisters but instead of a spray it resembles a paste, so it provides better control and more distance. He said the department has eight canisters and requested asset forfeiture funds to purchase 4 more. He added that he wanted to try this method out and see how it works before renewing the Taser contract which is not sustainable due to cost. There would also be a cost for training to use the canister system. He stressed that this is a trial only and a decision regarding use of canisters or Tasers would be forthcoming. There was discussion among the Council as to the cost of the Tasers and how that fee is paid out, and also the possible use of a few Tasers in conjunction with the canisters. There was no further discussion. Councilman Hawkins made a motion to adopt the Ordinance and Councilman Hawks seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Ledbetter, Councilman Spurgers, Councilman Hawkins, Councilwoman Isby, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Grimes, and Councilman Hawks. The Ordinance passed 7-0.

D. Finance

1. Ordinance approving the restructuring of the Department of Sanitation.

O-26-41

Mayor Castleberry presented Item D1 to the Council. Adam Robinson with the Sanitation Department presented to the Council an Ordinance proposing the restructuring of the Department's compensation plan and updates to the authorized position list. Mayor Castleberry told the Council that the cost for funding of the restructuring would come from the Sanitation fund in the amount of \$350,000. Mr. Robinson pointed out the amount was for an entire year and that only half would be required for the remainder of 2026. There was no further discussion. Councilman Grimes made a motion to adopt the Ordinance with the emergency clause and Councilman Ledbetter seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Spurgers, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilwoman Isby, Councilman Hawks, and Councilman Hawkins. The Ordinance with the emergency clause passed 7-0.

2. Ordinance approving the restructuring of the Department of Transportation.

O-26-42

Mayor Castleberry presented Item D2 to the Council. Kurt Jones of the Transportation Department presented an Ordinance to the Council stating that the structure was similar to the Sanitation Department and also that the funding would not come from the general fund but from the Transportation fund. He added that this restructuring would provide room for future growth for positions that are currently dead-end positions. He said that annual cost for the restructuring would be \$143,643 and roughly \$70,000 for the remainder of 2026. There was no further discussion. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Ordinance with the emergency clause and Councilwoman Mehl seconded it. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilwoman Isby, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Hawks, Councilman Spurgers, Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Grimes, and Councilman Ledbetter. The Ordinance with the emergency clause passed 7-0.

3. Ordinance appropriating funds for employee pay adjustments for the City of Conway.

O-26-43

Mayor Castleberry presented Item D3 to the Council stating that these adjustments would be funded by the General fund in the amount of \$375,000 and \$5,500 from the Airport Fund for the remainder of the year. He reminded the Council that at the end of last year he had stated that they would come back mid-year and see what could be done for City employees if the numbers allowed it. He said that

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sales tax revenue is up and thanks to the passage of the Public Safety Sales Tax, certain capital equipment purchases that would normally come from the General fund are no longer placing the same pressure on that fund. He added that this would allow responsible adjustments for employees across the City. Felicia Rogers, Chief of Staff, addressed the Council to make two corrections on the agenda. She stated that the Police Department has an Investigation Assistant that should be listed as \$48,951, and in the City Attorney's office, Deputy #1 should read \$86,000. She confirmed that those changes would not affect the overall number of the amount to be appropriated. Councilman Spurgers asked Ms. Rogers to explain in more detail why these steps were being taken at this time. Ms. Rogers stated that they met with the departments and looked at some positions that were below market pay and that the department heads felt like needed a boost. There was discussion about raising salaries in some of the top positions to prevent compression at the top and allow other positions' salaries to be able to increase over time. There was discussion as to how these salary adjustments compared to the adjustments made to the Fire Department salaries over the last year. The Council was encouraged by Chief Winter to continue with regular cost of living increases and periodic salary adjustments to keep the City competitive with regard to pay. Councilman Hawks asked Tyler Winningham how a shortfall in other departments such as the Community Center would affect the City's ability to continue to provide salary increases. Mr. Winningham stated that our cushion is in our reserves, as in the \$8.9 million shown on this month's balance sheet, which was the reserve at the end of May. He said there is also the true reserve of \$2 million which could not be utilized without Council action. He added that any shortfall at the Community Center would require a discussion among Council as to how to deal with it. He said that if this restructuring is passed it could make cost of living raises across the City more difficult in the future unless sales tax revenues and our local economy increases. Councilwoman Mehl asked Mr. Winningham to remind them what is anticipated from the Public Safety Sales Tax. He replied that based on current sales tax levels it should bring in about \$6 million a year with a projected 3% growth. There was discussion among the Council as to funds being made available in the General Fund due to this tax revenue which can be spent on items that previously were purchased from that fund. Councilman Hawkins asked if they could be provided an operational report on the Community Center at the July meeting, since it has been about 1 year since the Center began operating. There was more discussion among the Council as to the issue of salary compression at the top levels, creating little room for increases in lower paying positions. Councilwoman Isby made a motion to adopt the Ordinance with the emergency clause and Councilman Ledbetter seconded the motion. The Clerk called the roll with the following voting "Aye": Councilman Hawks, councilman Grimes, Councilman Hawkins, Councilwoman Isby, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Spurgers, and Councilman Ledbetter. The Ordinance with the emergency clause passed 7-0.

Adjournment-----

PASSED this 23rd day of June, 2026

APPROVED:

Mayor, Bart Castleberry

City Clerk, Denise Hurd