

MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL, CITY OF CONWAY, ARKANSAS

Conway, Arkansas
Tuesday, 6:00 pm
September 3, 2026

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

Call to Order: Mayor Bart Castleberry

Roll Call: Denise Hurd, City Clerk

A. Personnel

1. Discussion of the health benefits for the City.

Mayor Castleberry opened the meeting. Tiffany Maddox, Purchasing Manager briefed the Council on the proposals received in response to the Health Insurance Benefits Solicitation. She stated that the City had received seven responses. Of the seven, two did not meet the minimum qualifications established. That left five qualified; two carriers and three brokers for consideration. She asked the Council for their guidance in choosing between proceeding with the current solicitation process or canceling the current solicitation and issue a new solicitation for broker services. Councilwoman Isby, who served on a committee established to research health benefit options added that the information gathered by the committee was overwhelming and difficult to work through. She said that if the City secured a broker's services, the broker would be able to sort through and report the information to the City. She said that if the Council agreed to move forward in seeking a broker, the RFQ could be published, and negotiations could begin with the City's current carrier for renewals for 2027. It was asked if our current carrier would work with a broker with regard to the benefits the City has currently, and Ms. Maddox said that they would. It was clarified that if the City secured a broker, the broker would secure quotes from carriers for the City to consider. Mayor Castleberry clarified that insurance companies were hesitant to quote prices directly to the City, but they would work through a broker. Charles Finkenbinder told the Council that anytime a City puts out a request for bids, they are in control of the bidding and can decide what information goes into the request. He clarified that a general request for bids is different than what information a City can request of a carrier. He said if the City has a contract with an insurer, it can require them to produce more information per the contract. There was discussion about broker's fees and how those are arranged. Councilwoman Mehl stated that she was aware that employees were happy with the current benefits and felt it was important to be able to provide the same level of coverage in the future. It was asked of Councilwoman Isby, as a member of the Committee, what the Committee's recommendation was. She said that the Committee would recommend going with a broker's services because they could work through all of the details and collect and organize information from carriers more efficiently. It was confirmed that the carrier would pay the broker's commission, but it could not be determined that using a broker would not cost the City additional money until each broker was evaluated in the RFQ process. Ms. Maddox stated that some are submitting as a broker on commission, and some are proposing as a broker as consultant. She said it would be one or the other and would be determined through the process. Councilman Grimes made a motion to go with Option #2, to issue a new solicitation specifically for health insurance broker services, and Councilwoman Isby seconded it. Councilman Ledbetter questioned why after receiving these proposals would we start over because

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the results were not satisfactory. Ms. Maddox stated that it is not uncommon in the procurement process, and Mr. Finkenbinder stated that even in competitive bidding, which is the strictest procurement process in Arkansas, the City can reject any and all bids and start over.

(Councilman Grimes left the meeting.)

Councilwoman Isby stated that the original request was for proposals and this would be a request for qualifications for a broker. Councilman Ledbetter asked how much time this would add to the process, and Ms. Maddox stated that with either Option 1 or 2 it would be done by the end of September. She added that if Option 2 is chosen, the HR Department would begin negotiating with our current carrier for possible renewal options for 2027, and once a broker was awarded, they would step in and help with that process. There was no further discussion. A vote was called and the motion to approve Option 2 passed 5-1, with Councilwoman Mehl, Councilman Hawks, Councilman Jones, Councilwoman Isby, and Mayor Castleberry voting "yes", and Councilman Ledbetter voting "no".

Adjournment-----

PASSED this 3rd day of September, 2026

APPROVED:

Mayor, Bart Castleberry

City Clerk, Denise Hurd