
MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL, CITY OF CONWAY, ARKANSAS

Conway, Arkansas
Wednesday, 12:00 pm
February 22, 2023

On this date the City Council of the City of Conway, Arkansas met in a *special session*. The following members being a quorum were present and acting: Councilman Hawkins, Councilman Grimes, Councilman Ledbetter, Councilwoman Mehl, Councilwoman Tucker, Councilwoman Webb, Councilman Jones, and Councilwoman Isby. Also, present and acting: Mayor Bart Castleberry, City Attorney Charles Finkenbinder, City Clerk Michael Garrett.

Call to Order: Mayor Bart Castleberry

Roll Call: Michael O. Garrett, City Clerk

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

1. Consideration to approve the request to provide match grant funding for the Conductor to apply for the MBDA Readiness Program.

Mayor Castleberry presented Item A1 to the Council. He reminded them that his was a request for \$150,000 per year for four years for a total of \$600,000 to the Conductor should they receive the grant to be applied for. Councilwoman Tucker asked Jeff Standridge of the Conductor if they had exhausted all other options for support for the matching funds. Mr. Standridge replied that they are gathering together support from other sources as well. Councilwoman Tucker made a motion to approve the request to provide the funds. Councilwoman Isby asked if the request were to be granted where the funds would come from. Mayor Castleberry answered that the funds would come from the General Fund. Councilwoman Isby voiced concerns that costs for current approved projects were coming in over projected estimates. Mayor Castleberry said that since the start of the Community Center project, prices of materials have increased 30% and 45%, as well as the costs for the new soccer complex. Councilwoman Isby expressed concerns that the City is having to deal with these increases on projects that voters have approved, and other possibly unforeseen issues because it is early in the year. Councilwoman Tucker pointed out that only a portion of companies that would benefit are actually Conway businesses. Councilman Ledbetter spoke in support of the Conductor and the assistance it provides to small businesses. Councilwoman Mehl asked if the Conductor would qualify for any CBDG funding. Shawanna Rodgers of the Mayor's Office replied that if so, there would be a process to go through for such assistance. Jeff Standridge told the Council that while 70% of businesses served through the Conductor would be Conway based, this is a nationally competitive award that would bring national recognition to the City of Conway for its involvement. Councilman Grimes pointed out other immediate major needs within the City that would require funding. Mr. Standridge told the Council that if they were not comfortable with the amount of funding requested, they could suggest a more comfortable level of support for the match funding should it be awarded. There was no further discussion. A vote was called, and the motion to approve failed 1-7 with Councilman Ledbetter voting in favor.

Adjournment-----

PASSED this 22nd day of February 2023

APPROVED:

Mayor Bart Castleberry

City Clerk Michael O. Garrett