



## City Manager's Report

November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Honorable Mayor Brecheisen-Huss, and City Commissioners Cole and Gwin,

While we remain short-staffed at City Hall due to illness, many of our other positions are being filled across multiple departments. We have hired Chase Lee to join our refuse department as a crew member as previous refuse employee Tyler Reynolds is shifting into a Public Works Laborer position. The police department has hired Nick Goodwin to fill Detective Tom Johnson's position when he returns to Coffey County as the newly elected Sheriff at the end of the year. We are also currently advertising for an open position in the Housing Authority's Maintenance department and hope to fill it as soon as possible.

Staff is working on multiple levels to help assist the community with COVID-19 related questions and preventative measures. The Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) is partnering with Kansas Governor Laura Kelly in an effort to encourage behavior that will help our State and communities get the COVID outbreak under control. KLC has asked us, as a Leadership Transformation Grant partner, to help host meetings of (8-15 people) that will be facilitated by KLC. These meetings will allow participants to brainstorm challenges and create calls for action to stop the spread of COVID-19. We will receive a \$500 grant, for each meeting that we host. We are in the early stages of this project and I hope to have more details soon.

City Clerk Travis Wilson has been working with Tyler Technologies to begin the process of implementing the email billing module. There is a lot of paperwork to complete but Mr. Wilson is hoping to roll this out in January. The insurance committee met this week to discuss employee insurance plan options for 2021. Employees continue to assist when possible with the Harvesters Emergency Food Distribution and Meals on Wheels. These are great programs that our employees are proud to assist with. Several employees are attending trainings, either in person or virtual, and I encourage you to read the next issue of Town Talk to see the list of all professional development endeavors.

I would like to thank each of you for making time to attend the Municipal Code Workshop. We are getting closer and closer to achieving our goal of having this new Municipal Code passed and in effect by 2021. As we discussed during the workshop, our next planned workshop dates are December 3<sup>rd</sup> and December 17<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully, if we can get through chapters nine (9) through eleven (11) at this meeting, we can tackle the larger chapter twelve, dealing with public property, on the third (3<sup>rd</sup>).

I met with a resident this week who has a complaint regarding there being a dirt bike track in a neighbor's yard. From what I can ascertain, we don't currently have any ordinance or zoning regulation which deals with this scenario. This resident has provided a video of the disturbance and asked that the commission consider adopting an ordinance prohibiting such activity, at least within a residential area. As previously mentioned, we currently do not have any prohibition on any kind of dirt bike track or ATV usage on private property. We also do not currently have a noise ordinance which could also help to alleviate some of the issue created by the track. <https://youtu.be/P11ii1Un37o> is the link to the video provided.

We recently performed a series of pressure tests on our water lines. As previously discussed, these tests were necessary in preparing for the construction of the new water treatment plant. While we obtained most of the necessary information that we needed, the testing did result in several water leaks across town. We may need to conduct additional testing of the system over the next few months to continue to gauge the integrity of our existing distribution system.

We have received two claims for damages from residents due to electrical issues resulting from the outage which occurred last week. I, along with the Electric Department, am researching these claims and plan to present them at our next regular meeting on December 8<sup>th</sup>.

The first item on the agenda is the consideration of a supplemental agreement from Professional Engineering Consultants (PEC) which modifies the original agreement contracted on March 31, 2016. The payment provisions are outlined in section D of the supplemental agreement and outline a total cost increase of \$63,800. \$50,000 is the cost of the design for a new high service pump station, \$7,000 is for construction administration associated with this new pump station, and \$6,800 is for the assistance they have provided with the park land conversion process we have been going through. In your packet you will see some questions I asked of PEC regarding this supplemental and the need for it, and their responses. With the second item on the agenda I am asking for your input regarding increasing the franchise fee we assess to Evergy. Our franchise agreement with Evergy has expired and we are working with them to renew the agreement. They currently serve a number of customers inside the City limits for whom they pay us franchise fees for the right to serve. This franchise fee is currently 5% of the gross receipts they obtain from those customers. Except for governmental, religious, educational, non-profit, and similar organizations who are exempted from the franchise fees. Franchise fees are typically added to a customer's bill as a pass-through cost. As we have our own electric utility, I am working with Evergy to try and take over some of the services that they current serve inside the City limits, including for our north welcome sign, the high school, KDOT's offices, among a few others. They also serve East Kansas Agri Energy (EKAE) who we are not attempting to provide service for as it would introduce challenges for our system to serve them at this point in time. As many other cities have chosen to do, I am recommending that

we increase the franchise fee percentage from 5% to 6%. These franchise fees are receipted into the General Fund and help keep property taxes and utility transfers as low as possible.

Item C on the agenda is a claim for damages request from Commissioner Gwin in the amount of \$6,934.16 for KPERS contributions from 2008 through the end of his term which expires in January of 2023. Mr. Gwin indicates that the City failed to issue him the KPERS enrollment form when he became an elected official in 2007. As Mr. Gwin mentions in his claim, when he was first elected, neither he, nor the rest of the Commission, qualified for KPERS due to KPERS' annual income requirements. As such, it is believed that due to Commissioners not qualifying for KPERS, the City did not provide Commissioners with the KPERS documentation which is required to be submitted within ninety days of the beginning of your term of service. When the Commission voted to increase the pay for serving on the City Commission shortly after Commissioner Gwin's election, the pay increased to a level which was qualifying for KPERS participation. The claim and supporting documentation is included in this packet for your consideration. The final item on the agenda is the consideration of semi-monthly bills and payroll in the amount of \$201,906.56.

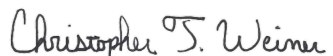
Unfortunately, the Garnett Chamber of Commerce's Annual Christmas Parade has been cancelled or at least postponed this year. Due to concerns regarding spread of the COVID-19 virus amongst a large, concentrated crowd, the Chamber Board made the difficult decision to call off this year's parade. Hopefully, they may be able to hold some type of parade event after the first of the year if the situation surrounding the pandemic improves. Similarly, we will not have the annual City employee Christmas dinner this year. We obviously cannot risk having a significant percentage of City staff contracting the virus all at the same time at such an event as services must still be provided. I hope to be able to have some form of employee appreciation event come spring or summer.

As of Thursday afternoon, Anderson County was down to thirty (30) active cases COVID-19. This is half of what it was the previous week. Thankfully, we have been trending in a positive direction although Kansas as a state is definitely struggling. According this week's weekly report from the White House Coronavirus Task Force, led by Vice President Mike Pence, eighty-four (84) Kansas counties (out of 105), including Anderson County, are in the "red zone". The White House's Task Force recommends the cancellation of school sports and the recruitment of "local influencers" who can help deliver the message about the need to wear a mask in public and social distance. The White House report also calls for increased enforcement of mask mandates, which the Governor's mandate earlier this year was lacking in enforceability as you may recall. Additional "red zone" recommendations from the White House report include reducing indoor capacity at restaurants to 25%, limiting bar hours, and increased testing and contact tracing efforts. As you know, Governor Kelly issued a new "mask protocol" this week which will take effect next Wednesday. This "protocol" is essentially the same protocol for mask wearing as has been recommended all along; although the purpose in the week long delay before the order

becomes effective is to give local counties an opportunity to institute their own “protocol” – if they haven’t already (ours has not). I expect this topic to be discussed in depth on Monday morning at the County Commission meeting and as I mentioned previously, the feedback received thus far from the local Reopening Task Force is in support of the Governor’s protocol. You will also notice in your packet that I included a report from the University of Kansas who tested our wastewater for indicators of the COVID-19 virus. According to the report, “While it is premature to draw conclusions from the results of a single sample, these data do provide some insight on possible viral presence in Garnett. The signal of detection was strong in concentration for both markers in this sample, and combined with the moderate influent volume, the viral load detected in the wastewater is viewed as high.” The University expects KDHE to conduct another round of sampling at the beginning of 2021 to provide more context to the results. I spoke yesterday with the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Anderson County Hospital, Rich McKain, and Mr. McKain indicated that he and his counterparts around the region are talking daily about their ability to accept patients. Regional hospitals, especially in the metro, are struggling to keep beds available. St. Luke’s has apparently received transfer requests from Colorado, Arkansas, and Tennessee due to the lack of availability in those states as well. If this trend continues, our local and regional hospitals will likely need to cancel or postpone elective, or non-emergency, services to keep beds available. I am personally concerned that as we continue into colder weather and we see the emergence of the normal flu alongside COVID, we will have large numbers of people showing flu and COVID like symptoms without enough tests for them, and as such, a significant percentage of the population will be quarantined by KDHE to prevent potential COVID spread. The White House and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommend wearing masks while in public to cut down on spread; I encourage everyone to do so in order to keep the aforementioned situation from happening. We need to keep our businesses open, our schools in session, and our families and community as healthy as possible. I wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving and for a safe and healthy family gathering.

As always please let me know if you have any questions, and thank you all for allowing me to continue to serve this wonderful Garnett community as our City Manager.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Christopher T. Weiner".

Christopher T. Weiner, City Manager