



## **City Manager's Report**

November 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020

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

As we have just concluded our annual election cycle and the tumultuous environment that often causes, I would first like to thank each of you for consistently being a model of professionalism in the face of never-ending adversity. As she will soon be leaving us, I would specifically like to thank Commissioner Brecheisen-Huss for the tremendous effort she has put into her position as a City Commissioner these past three years. The research, commitment, and accountability she has graced our organization with has been commendable. Thank you, Commissioner Brecheisen-Huss, for your service and I hope to be able to continue working with you to improve our community. As you are likely aware, Mr. Cody Gettler has won this year's election for City Commissioner to replace Mrs. Brecheisen-Huss, and as such, Commissioner-elect Gettler will be sworn in and take his seat for our first meeting in January. Congratulations to Mr. Gettler and I look forward to working with you.

Over the past couple of weeks, I have continued to research our options with regard to a potential transfer station for our refuse utility. I would like to acknowledge Commissioner Gwin for his efforts in researching what other area refuse utilities do and how much they charge to explore our options. Today, Thursday, Director of Public Works Burkhart and I traveled to Lawrence and toured the landfill and recycling center ran by Hamm Companies. Hamm's Vice President of Waste Services, Charlie Sedlock, provided the tour while we also discussed our potential options with our engineer from HDR, Bill Severns, and Hamm's Director of Business Development, Mike Curry. While it doesn't appear that partnering with Hamm will be a solution for us in trying to contain our costs, I do believe we obtained some valuable insight into how to go about establishing our own transfer station. It very well may not end up being feasible from a financial standpoint due to the upfront capital costs, but we are still working on developing those projections. I do appreciate Hamm for taking the time to provide us with the tour and valuable knowledge, as well as Mr. Severns for orchestrating the meeting. Mr. Burkhart is continuing to work with our water plant engineer, Amelia Jordan, to refine and ensure our new water plant is exactly what we need, while cutting out some items that we should be able to reuse or may not need. Mr. Burkhart is also researching options to outfit our public works personnel with uniforms to better outfit them

for the challenges of the department as well as to improve their safety. If the uniform program idea works like we believe it will, it will be in lieu of the annual clothing allowance these personnel have traditionally received.

As you know, we have unfortunately had a minor outbreak of COVID-19 in City Hall and are on reduced staffing levels as of now. Thankfully, all affected staff are doing well, and we hope to avoid a more significant outbreak. As I mentioned earlier this week, in the event we have another staff person become sick or need to be quarantined, we will need to transition to drive through service only for the time being while we recover to normal staffing levels. Also on the topic of staffing, I am pleased that we have both James Howard and Zach Smothers will be testing for their class III Kansas Water Operator license next month. While our long-time Water Plant Operator, Brian Dykes, will be leaving us at the end of the year, I am glad to see other staff members stepping up to become certified water operators so that we can be sure to have multiple, licensed operators. I would like to thank Mr. Dykes for his many years of service to the Garnett community where he has ensured we all had quality water to drink and utilize.

We continue to have multiple staff members, including myself, participate in the Kansas Leadership Center's (KLC's) Lead for Change program. This program is part of the Leadership Transformation Grant that the City received from KLC at the end of last year. We will continue to have staff members go through this program and I would again like to offer this program to any of you as Commissioners who may be interested in participating. I would like to thank all of the volunteers who put on the Halloween events this past weekend to make sure that our community's children could still enjoy a fun and safe – even if socially distanced - Halloween. As usual, I also attended the meetings of the County Commissioners, another couple of meetings with Mr. Severns on the transfer station project, our monthly Work Ready Community meeting, the annual KMEA and KMGA meetings, multiple meetings with our water plant engineer, our monthly safety meeting, two days of KLC leadership training, and interviews for our open public works crew member position.

I would like to thank Bo Harris for his dedication to getting the downtown speaker system working properly for microphone use at the gazebo. As you may recall, this system was made possible through donations from the Lake Garnett Grand Prix Revival, Garnett Rotary Club, and Garnett Lions Club. I would also like to thank Robert Salazar for continuing to help us out with multiple maintenance improvements around the community. He just recently completed further improvements at the Rail-Trail Depot, the North Lake picnic tables, and pillars along the North Lake Dam, among others; and has agreed to repair the deteriorating bridge over the lake on "Muleshoe Corner" (the northeast corner of the lake road). This stone arch bridge is starting to collapse in the same manner as did the bridge we replaced last year. Repairing it will obviously be significantly cheaper than needing to replace it. We have been working with both KwiKom and Kansas Fiber Network (KFN) to facilitate development of their fiber networks throughout the community as soon as possible. You should see a significant amount of this work progressing here shortly.

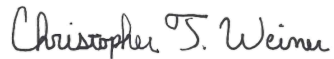
Additionally, as we have discussed in the past, Director of Parks and Recreation, Phil Bures, will soon be moving down to the Recreation Center to be closer to his staff as well as to provide better overall staffing of the Garnett Recreation Center. We are in the process of having the flooring redone in both that office area and what has been the office of our Building and Zoning Official – as both areas have carpet in very poor condition. As Director Bures has vacated his office, Director of Community Development, Susan Wettstein, has moved into his previous office where she will now be right next to her assistant, Kris Hix. I have moved into Director Wettstein's previous office while my assistant, Desiree Donovan, has moved to the drive-up window to ensure more consistent and efficient service at our drive-up window while still being able to provide valuable assistance to all staff and myself. As that vacates both my office and Mrs. Donovan's, my previous office is the new office of the building and zoning official, providing for significantly more space and much needed storage area. Additionally, while handling code enforcement responsibilities, the Code Enforcement Officer shall have Mrs. Donovan's old office. The Community Development Department will utilize the vacated Building and Zoning Official's office as a work and conference room for various purposes. I believe that overall, this arrangement of office space and personnel shall allow for much more effective and efficient communication and better service delivery.

This month's Employee of the Month is one of our Public Works employees, Water Plant Operator James Howard. James has been training with our Water Plant Foreman, Brian Dykes, to be able to take over for him when he leaves at the end of the year. James has exhibited quick, capable learning from Brian and has proven his ability to keep the water plant running seamlessly when Brian isn't there. He is also putting in significant effort in to becoming a certified Class III Kansas Water Operator. As for this meeting's agenda, the first item of business is the Consideration of Resolution 2020-9: Affirming Support for Garnett's Community Heart and Soul Community Visioning Project. As I mentioned after our last meeting, while the Steering Committee you appointed is still meeting and working on these same goals, I must admit, this project is moving forward faster. As both efforts are working toward the same end result, a community driven vision and strategic plan to realize the vision, I am certainly supportive of this effort and hope to see it succeed. However we come up with it, the end result is what matters. I have also placed on the agenda for your discussion and consideration is the topic of annual Christmas bonuses for City staff. As we've discussed in the past, the City has traditionally provided Christmas bonuses of \$200 (less taxes) to City staff. If the Commission desires to increase this amount to \$225 or \$250 as has been proposed in previous years, there is sufficient budget room available in all funds for such an increase if so desired. Lastly is the approval of the semi-monthly bills and payroll in the amount of \$286,077.44. This billing cycle is a little larger than normal due to a few sizeable expenses including for laptops as part of our SPARK award to facilitate work-from-home efficiency (all of these will be reimbursed), the first half of our fiber grant to KwiKom, a couple of new pieces of equipment for the Recreation Center, our payment to Proseal for the Reclamite street work they did earlier this year, a transformer for the automotive trade school project

completed last year (was obviously significantly delay-billed), trash truck brake repairs, among a few others. As we are coming up on the end of the year and still have yet to pay for the majority of our engineering fees for the new water plant as was expected, I am planning to pay off our KDHE water loan – planned to pay off early next year – before the end of this year. Doing so will not only pay off the water debt even earlier using this year’s available budget authority, but it will free up budget authority next year to pay for the engineering fees as the work is completed and costs are incurred.

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