



## **City Manager's Report**

June 9, 2020

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

I am pleased to announce that I have filled the position of Director of Public Works. Mr. William Beliles will be starting with the City of Garnett on Monday, June 8<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Beliles has education and experience that will be beneficial in his leadership of our Public Work's Department and we are excited to have him join our team. I am also pleased to have Wes Skillman as our new Fire Chief as Chief Pat Tate just retired last week. I would again like to thank Chief Tate for his numerous and invaluable years of service to our community. Mr. Tate saved multiple lives over his career as a firefighter, police officer, and medical professional, and he always had a positive outlook and made your day better if you had the opportunity to visit with him. We will miss Pat and I wish him the best in retirement, he's earned it. Mr. Skillman has some wonderful ideas for the Department and I look forward to working with him to continue to move our fire department forward.

We held our pre-bid meeting for the airport apron project, funded through the FAA grant on Tuesday. We will have our bid opening for the project here at City Hall on Wednesday at 11 a.m. I am pleased to announce that both the City of Garnett and Anderson County have received a grant award of \$132,000 from the CDBG-CV program that we applied for at our last meeting. As you know, we applied for \$300,000, but given the number of applicants (106), the maximum award given was \$173,600, with the most common grant award amount being the \$132,000 we received. A total of sixty-six (66) Kansas communities (cities and counties – out of 732 total) received this grant. I appreciate the extensive work of Director of Economic Development Julie Turnipseed, County Clerk Julie Wettstein, and County Commissioner Jerry Howarter to bring

these resources to our communities and to help our local businesses. We will be issuing a survey to local businesses on Monday to start the process of determining eligibility for the grant program (at least 51% of their employees must qualify as low-to-moderate income for their household). We will advertise to get the word out there about the program and hope to have as many eligible businesses as possible apply. We have up to a year to expend the money. I would also like to mention that, as you might have noticed in the June 2<sup>nd</sup> *Anderson County Review*, our unemployment rate has unfortunately increased fairly significantly (from 2.8% to 6.5%). While this is obviously unfortunate, I do believe it is worth noting that Anderson County has by far the lowest unemployment rate in the entire eastern part of the State (as of the latest data – April). In comparison to the rest of our twelve-county Southeast Kansas region, the highest rate for a County is 18.6% and the next lowest rate is 8.2%. The average unemployment rate in our region is 10.03% and the median of the twelve (12) counties is 8.85%. I have to largely attribute this to our wonderful area businesses and the tremendous work ethic of the people in our communities. In many cases, our businesses kept their employees on even though they transitioned into a negative cashflow position. I would also like to thank Ms. Turnipseed and Chamber Director Kris Hix for their tireless work to educate our local businesses regarding the various programs and resources available to them to assist during the painful shutdown and ongoing recovery period.

I am meeting with Department Heads and finalizing draft budget proposals as we await the assessed valuation number from the County Clerk's Office. We should have that number by June 15<sup>th</sup>. I hope to have a draft budget to you for your review by the end of next week. I would then like to schedule a budget workshop as soon as possible to try and have a budget approved for publication by July 16<sup>th</sup>. As you have probably been made aware, we have had two candidates file for the open Commission seat that will be left once Mayor Brecheisen-Huss completes her term at the end of the year. The two candidates are Eugene Grimes and Cody Gettler. We are sad to see Mayor Brecheisen-Huss leave but we are excited for her family and their new adventures!

On this meeting's agenda, the first item is a presentation from the Garnett Country Club that was tabled at our last meeting due to the absence of the Mayor. I have included the proposal from the Country Club Board. Secondly, we have an Airport Lease Agreement with Don Fairfield, also attached. Item C for your consideration is Ordinance 4211 that Attorney Solander has

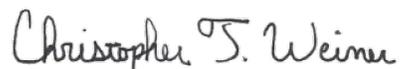
prepared concerning Food Truck Licensing. We have left the fee as proposed blank for your consideration. Item D is the consideration of the status of our municipal pool this summer. I have included a report from Director Phil Bures, recommending the closure of the pool this year. You will notice I have asked him follow up questions to provide an opportunity for him to articulate responses concerning an obviously very controversial situation. I have also provided this information to the Anderson County Reopening Task Force and asked for a recommendation from the task force as well, but as of writing this, we have not had an opportunity to meet, discuss, and provide such a recommendation. I also spoke with Director Bures regarding our plans for the recreation center and he plans to reopen the facility for 24-hour use (for members) on June 9<sup>th</sup>. We will continue to staff it for extra hours to provide enhanced cleaning and will continue to have the high-risk hour in place from 10 – 11 a.m. Showers will also continue to be closed for the time being and rentals will not be allowed past 10 p.m. Item E is a discussion concerning the Chamber Players Community Theatre. I met with the Chamber Players' Board this past week and had a conversation with them regarding the availability of their land, if we need it for the park land conversion project. A quick side note here, we have received word that the proposal we submitted to the Kansas Department of Parks, Wildlife, and Tourism is expected to be approved. However, it must now be submitted to the National Park Service (NPS) to actually receive such approval. The typical timeline for such approval from the NPS is several months and NPS staff are apparently still working from home which has caused a backup of work for them. As such, approval of our proposal will likely be toward the end of 2020. Item F is consideration of waiving late fees further into 2020. The Kansas Corporation Commission (which only regulates non-municipal utilities – so not us) has issued a ruling waiving all late fees for utility bills from entities that they have jurisdiction over for the rest of 2020. We could elect to waive the fees for another month as we have been, for the rest of the year, or not at all. As previously mentioned at our last meeting, we will resume disconnecting utilities for all delinquent accounts not under a payment agreement on June 25<sup>th</sup>. As usual, the last item for your consideration is the approval of the semi-monthly bills and payroll in the amount of \$189,979.94.

Included in the informational items are the departmental reports and May 2020 financials. Also included is our new Fire ISO rating and report – thankfully, we improved slightly!

As a follow up, I included the completed water tower inspections for both towers. As you may recall from our last meeting, the Westgate Tower is in need of interior repairs which I hope to have scheduled at some point this autumn. I will have more information for you concerning Clean Up Week as I am on the agenda for Monday's County Commission Meeting, to discuss this. May's Employee of the Month is Andrea Sobba. Even though the library has been closed during the COVID shutdown, Andrea has kept the library resources available as much as possible. She has used social media to keep our community informed. She and her staff have continued Storytime for the young and old alike by live streaming it on Facebook. They have continued to change the stories on the storybook walk. When you walk/drive around town you will see 16 letters to unscramble for a special message. She has installed drop boxes for pickup of books. Her staff have chosen favorite books for parents to check out without going into the library. Thank you Andrea for your dedication!

Safety and health to all your families, and if you have any questions or concerns please let me know.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Christopher T. Weiner". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Christopher T. Weiner, City Manager