

CITY OF KNOB NOSTER
Board of Aldermen Session
Meeting Minutes—September 19, 2023

1. MAYOR CARTER called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. All present included: ALDERMEN PALMER, CHARRETTE, STAUFFER-BAUM, BYERLY, THERING and BRENT. A quorum was verified.
2. ALDERMAN BYERLY made a motion to approve the agenda, with a second by ALDERMAN THERING. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.
3. ALDERMAN BYERLY to approve the consent agenda, as amended, consisting of a motion:
 - a. Approving minutes of the September 5, 2023, Board of Aldermen meeting.
 - b. Approving minutes of the September 6, 2023, Board of Aldermen meeting.

ALDERMAN THERING seconded the motion. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.

4. The Board of Aldermen reviewed the bill list.
5. ALDERMAN BYERLY stated that there were some potholes on Lucas Street, East Division Street and at the intersection of Lincoln and Wimer Street on McPherson Street that needed repaired. He said Open Air Market was large and keeps growing. He thanked the KN Chamber of Commerce. ALDERMAN PALMER stated that the downtown area is looking great with all the new signs and lights. ALDERMAN BRENT inquired about the status of the wall at 102 North State Street. The City Administrator said that he was getting 2 estimates for the repair. He also said that, while patrolling, the Police Department could start reporting potholes to fill before winter. ALDERMAN THERING said that the deer population within City limits needs addressed. They are tearing up flowers, yards and gardens. He is wondering if patrons are having the same trouble. ALDERMAN CHARRETTE said that Lucas Street needed repair. He relayed information regarding the Smithsonian will be exhibiting our rural community in Knob Noster at the library December 18, 2023, through January 29, 2024. ALDERMAN STAUFFER-BAUM said that there would be an Art Walk and Wine Stroll on September 30 and, at 6:30pm, he is holding a fundraiser for the Spirit Trail and taking donations to place bike racks downtown. He has also been searching out grants for downtown paths/trails. MAYOR CARTER relayed that the canceled "Movie at the Park" night is to be rescheduled for September 30, 2023. The Budget Committee had had their initial meeting with department heads for FY2024.
6. The City Administrator presented his report.
7. Motion to pass Bill No. 091923-A: An Ordinance Amending the Process for Filling Vacancies in Certain Appointed Offices in the City of Knob Noster, to its first reading, by title only, was made by ALDERMAN BYERLY, with a second by ALDERMAN CHARRETTE.

Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.

Discussion was held.

MAYOR CARTER had the City Clerk present the Bill by title only.

Motion to pass Bill No. 091923-A: An Ordinance Amending the Process for Filling Vacancies in Certain Appointed Offices in the City of Knob Noster, to its second reading, by title only, was made by ALDERMAN BYERLY with a second by ALDERMAN CHARRETTE. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.

Roll Call Vote

Alderman Brent	Aye
Alderman Stauffer-Baum	Aye
Alderman Charrette	Aye
Alderman Palmer	Aye
Alderman Byerly	Aye
Alderman Thering	Aye

Bill No. 091923-A passed 6 ayes to 0 nays. Ordinance number 898 was assigned.

8. ALDERMAN CHARRETTE relayed the staffing and expense issues with the PD. He suggested the Board of Aldermen make a task force with 2 Aldermen and 2 residents of the city to work out just what does policing look like in Knob Noster. They can take their recommendations to a public hearing and finally to the board, understanding that the PD is running short staffed.

Joe Burnor, 205 South State Street, stated that Knob Noster is growing and outsourcing our Police Dept. would take away from the City's progress. Moving violations, U-turns, speeding, running stop signs, burglary, DUI/DWI, violent and non-violent crimes are not the "growth" the citizens want. Local police officers keep the City safe from drugs, violence, gangs, domestic abuse and many more crimes. If the Board is serious about disbanding our local Police Dept., what other services to our community would be considered for outsourcing?

Sonya Weston, 300 East McPherson Street, asked to be skipped.

Chris Dennis, 204 Sunset Street, relayed that Odessa, Mo had dropped their PD due to staffing issues and they had to restart it within 2 years due to increased crime and response times. He is opposed to outsourcing the PD and feels that the City needs to bring back dispatchers to Knob Noster. At the very least, the City needs to support our officers that we have.

Sharla Allen, 603 North Adams Street, relayed that the Knob Noster PD, FD and all 1st responders keep our community safe. She said numerous WAFB retirees have decided to stay in our town because of our low crime rates. She loves that the PD is active within the community and they protect our schools. The suggestion of a Resource Officer for the school district is a good one. She thanked the Board and Mayor for listening to the citizen's issues.

Randy Grievebiester, 708 East McPherson Street, thanked Alderman Charrette for laying out all the issues facing the PD. He feels that crime will go through the ceiling without PD in town. Is there a viable split of shifts that can be done with Johnson County? Can overnight shifts be covered by the Sheriff's office? The Sheriff's Office is facing the same staffing issues as the City is. He thinks a Task Force to figure these issues out is a good idea.

Ralph Bledsoe, 398 SE 981 Road, thanked the Board for allowing him to speak. He is new to our area from but has been in State law enforcement for 30 years and has interacted with numerous small agencies. He has found that when smaller communities get rid of Police Departments, criminals (drug dealers, thieves, abuse, etc) move in to these areas because of long response times from County. Sheriff's Depts. are understaffed as well. With a school, it is imperative that PD is in our town for safety. He does NOT want to outsource PD.

David Mayhugh, 1134 NE 75 Road, has 25 years of law enforcement experience and says outsourcing law enforcement is a horrible idea. When he hears outsource, he hears defunding the police. This is not a money problem to retain officers. It is a leadership problem. If you want someone who cares about our community, then the next Chief needs to be from this community. He feels that Acting Chief Van Vickle would be an excellent Chief for our PD. Good cops are hard to come by. These officers have a direct impact in this town every day.

Paul Bertschy, 309 S. Madison Street, said that putting "outsourcing the Police Department" on the agenda on Facebook was a bad idea. It sends a wrong message to the community. He feels that the problems within the PD are leadership issues. The hiring committee for Police Chief, last time, did a bad job. He thinks that the turnover within the PD was because of who the Chief was. Seat belt and parking violations are not what Knob Noster needs. He was chastised by the Mayor regarding being aggressive and speaking of personnel. He thinks that Karl Van Vickle would be the best Chief of Police. He can't understand why he wasn't considered for the position last time they hired. If PD is outsourced, it will be a catastrophe.

Alex Buck, 604 Angus Lane, as a resident here and a business owner in LaMonte, he has seen the difference between PD and Sheriff's Dept. The Sheriff's office is undependable to respond in a timely matter. If there was an incident at school and the Sheriff's office would take a while to respond and minutes matter. He says the City needs the PD and should not be outsourced.

Rick Morris, 70 NE 791 Road, asked the Board why they are considering outsourcing. Was it money? The Sheriff's Office response time would not be feasible for an emergency in our town. He says that the Board was elected to take care of these types of problems. Alderman Charrette says that help is needed to figure out this problem.

Daniel French, 786 NE 95 Road, has lived in Knob Noster for 17 years. He appreciates the Board's effort to try and solve this problem. Community policing is necessary for our small town. He says children and patrons are out and about in our town and, with no police, who would protect their rights? Someone could get killed. Many patrons rely on our PD for their safety. He says there is NO department right now that isn't having some type of staffing issues.

Ben Liechti, 628 Hillcrest Street, stated that he knows the PD was not being disbanded. It should not have been placed online with misleading information. He stated that as a former Alderman, disbandment had been brought up a couple of times with certain issues occurring. He feels that outsourcing the PD is an unwise solution. Proper leadership is necessary as "a house divided cannot stand." How many officers did we have when the Chief quit. CA said 3. Why didn't any officers come to management with the problems?

ZOOM—Elizabeth Funk, 105 Hardy Street, messaged on Zoom: "I'm not in favor of outsourcing the Police Department. I think our police officers do a fantastic job making their presence in the community known. Which, in my opinion, helps keep the crime down and builds community trust in our law enforcement."

ZOOM—Taigan Plummer, 437 NW 21 Road, Warrensburg, thanked the Board for their time. When residents move to our area, they want law enforcement in our town to keep them safe. She would love to be on a Task Force to try to help solve this problem. There are various agencies struggling to staff their departments. She said, with Sheriff's response, it could take a half hour or more for them to drive here. Possible connecting with the Police Academy at UCM might help. Communication with the community needs to be priority one.

ZOOM—Rodney Kennedy, 107 East 12th Street, spent 10 years in law enforcement in Hickory County. He thinks a Task Force is an excellent idea to get the community involved. He said that taxes can be increased if needed to fund staffing. He also said that a hybrid model coverage, using Sheriff's officer to bridge the coverage gaps until full staffing can occur.

ALDERMAN BYERLY stated he was not in favor of outsourcing the Police Department and as long as he is Alderman, he will continue to support our Knob Noster PD. He is amazed at the community participation at the meeting tonight. ALDERMAN CHARRETTE said that, while speaking with the Johnson County Sheriff's Office, they do not have the personnel to assist the City. ALDERMAN STAUFFER-BAUM is frustrated by the PD employee turnover. Since he has become an Alderman, he said it seemed the City was constantly seeking new officers. He feels that the PD structure had not been effective and the Board was blind-sided by this issue. The PD needs more communication before the employment situation gets so drastic.

Part-time Officer Burch addressed the Board saying that most departments he knows of are short-staffed. The most important item in the PD is an effective Chief that communicates and receives feedback.

Motion was made by ALDERMAN CHARRETTE to establish a Task Force with two Board members, two Knob Noster citizens (Aldermen select one and the Mayor select one), and a KN Police Officer with a second by ALDERMAN BYERLY. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.

9. Discussion was held regarding the proposed School Resource Officer (SRO) application prepared by the City to submit to the Knob Noster School District. Motion was made to approve the submittal of the SRO application to the KN School District with the costs to be split in half between the City and the school district by ALDERMAN BRENT with a second by ALDERMAN PALMER. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.
10. Discussion was held to consider approval of the Request for Qualifications for engineering services submitted by AllState Consultants for the 2023 Sewer project. ALDERMAN BYERLY made motion to allow the City Administrator to enter into contract negotiations with AllState Consultants with a second by ALDERMAN THERING. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.
11. Motion was made to adjourn at 7:33 pm by ALDERMAN BYERLY and was seconded by ALDERMAN BRENT. Motion carried 6 ayes to 0 nays.

Respectfully submitted by,

Amy M. Schouten
Knob Noster City Clerk