

RNR Hearing/Budget Hearing/Regular Council Meeting
August 25, 2025

1. **Mayor Amanda Milne called the Revenue Neutral Rate (RNR) Hearing to order at 7:00pm.** Present were Council members Robert (Bud) Erskin, Kale Dankenbring, Larry Finley, and Justin Lohr. Also present were City Superintendent Dan Blair, Interim City Clerk Lila Whitmore, City Treasurer Jennifer Blair, and City Attorney Lauren Reyelts. Council member Dara Carmichael was absent. The Mayor asked for public comment. Bernie Martin expressed his concerns regarding the increases in his property assessment and the overall increase in property taxes in a short amount of time. Mayor Milne explained that the Council has authority to levy taxes for the City but does not have control of property valuations, which are set by the County. The City's increase in ad valorem tax is kept at 3% or less for their budget. Mr. Martin did not have any questions specific to the City's budget or the RNR. With no further public comment, a motion was made by Justin and seconded by Larry to adopt Resolution 2025-3: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF ST. FRANCIS, KANSAS TO LEVY A PROPERTY TAX RATE EXCEEDING THE REVENUE NEUTRAL RATE: Bud – yes; Kale – yes; Larry – yes; Justin – yes. Motion passed. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Larry to close the RNR hearing. Motion passed.
2. **Mayor Amanda Milne called the Budget Hearing to order.** There was no public comment. A motion was made by Bud and seconded by Justin to adopt the official budget for 2026: Bud – yes; Kale – yes; Larry – yes; Justin – yes. Motion passed. A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Justin to close the Budget Hearing. Motion passed.
 - *Mr. Martin left the meeting.*
3. Mayor Amanda Milne called the **Regular Council Meeting** to order.
4. **Visitors/Audience:** Sheree Downs, Jessica Matthies, Kris Oldsen, Robert Grace
5. **Minutes** from the August 11th Council meeting were distributed and read. A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Kale to approve the minutes as written. Motion passed.
6. **Sheriff Report:** none
7. **New Business:**
 - a. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Larry to approve the special event application for BiketemberFest. Motion passed.
 - b. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Larry to approve the following building permits: First Christian Church – 118 E. Webster, concrete sidewalk/curb/gutter; Harvey and Carol Forsythe – 205 Valley St, metal building; Larry Hobbs – 500 S. Benton, pergola; Theron McCaslin/Paul Randall – 423 S. River, storage building; Cheyenne Center for Creativity – 202 W. Washington, concrete sidewalks/benches/raised stage area/brick columns; Travis Rogers/Mike Rogers – 601 S. Quincy, pro-panel fence; Travis Rogers/Mike Rogers – 714 S. Adams, concrete sidewalk/entryway/wheelchair ramp. Motion passed.
8. **Old Business:**
 - a. **IdeaTek** – Kevin Ingalls, Construction Project Manager, was present to explain the construction process for the installation of fiber in the City limits and to answer the Council's questions. Mr. Ingalls explained in detail what the installation would entail. The infrastructure will be 100% underground with various vaults and pedestals for the fiber optics connections. There will be a construction ticket process which every homeowner can utilize to report concerns or complaints during the installation. The Council discussed the need for a make ready audit of the poles if they will be utilized. Mr. Ingalls indicated IdeaTek would be agreeable to that. There will be a pre-construction meeting with IdeaTek, the contractor, and the City before work begins. There were no further questions.
 - *Attorney Reyelts stepped away from the meeting to work on finalizing the Ordinance required for the franchise agreement. Mr. Ingalls also left the meeting.*
 - b. **Property Cleanup** – no updates
 - c. **Streets Project** – no updates
9. **Pool Report** – Larry had nothing to report. Dan shared details about the pool painting. A quote of \$58,940 was received from Ashton Kate Sandblasting & Painting. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Justin to approve the quote to be paid out of Capital Improvement. Motion passed.

➤ *Attorney Reyelts returned to the meeting.*

10. Old Business Continued:

- d. **Theater Marquee Grants** – The City was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation for the Theater marquee sign. A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Justin to accept the grant. Motion passed. The total cost of the sign is \$22,150. The City also applied to the Cheyenne County Kansas Community Foundation (CCKCF) for \$5,000 which leaves a balance of \$7,150 that would need to be paid for from other funds. Lila shared that Since 2021 \$19,453.99 has been raised in donations primarily from the Theater employees volunteering their time at the Thrift Store. These donations are intended for Theater renovations which could include the marquee sign but also the larger Theater renovation project that is currently in the planning stages. Jessica Matthies, CCKCF Director, was present at the meeting and indicated that the CCKCF Board plans to award the City the \$5,000 that was applied for and may be able to help with more depending on how the Council decides to fund the remaining balance. After discussion, a motion was made by Justin and seconded by Kale to pay the full difference in the amount of \$7,150 for the marquee sign out of the Capital Improvement fund and out of cycle when the invoice is due. Motion passed. Jessica also spoke to the Council regarding how CCKCF could partner with the City on community development projects such as the Theater renovation project and the park improvements that have been discussed recently. She talked about creating a project fund through CCKCF to encourage community donations. The donations already raised could be used to start the fund. Jen had questions regarding interest rates and how the funds are invested. Jessica will get this information and will also put together the paperwork required to start a project fund and will bring this to the next meeting for further discussion. Regarding the park improvements, Kris Oldsen, with Cheyenne Community Development Corporation, indicated that the plastic brochure rack needs repaired. She has the replacement piece but needs to know if the painting was going to be done before she replaces them. Mayor Milne explained that the painting has been put on hold for now.

➤ *Jessica and Kris left the meeting.*

- e. **Distributed Generation/Solar Panels** – Jen shared an energy cost document showing the differences between the City's cost per KWH vs the avoided energy cost. Lauren stated that a decision needs to be made between parallel generation or net metering in order to create the ordinance for the policy. Parallel generation is required but the City may choose to do net metering. There was lengthy discussion and Robert Grace shared his opinions on the topic as well. Jen pointed out that as a municipality, because of the revenue generated from utilities we are able to keep our general fund ad valorem tax increase at 3% a year. Justin stated that he would like to see a benefit for the customer and community. There are currently two solar customers in St. Francis. Jen would like to get more information from Darren Prince with KMEA on how net metering would work for the City's billing. Mayor Milne recommended Mr. Prince be asked to attend the next meeting to assist the Council in making the best decision for the City.

➤ *Robert Grace left the meeting.*

- f. **KDOT/Access Road & Crossovers** – Attorney Michael Baxter joined the meeting via phone. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Justin to recess into executive session for the attorney client privilege exception with all City personnel present, the open meeting to resume at 9:00pm. Motion passed. The open meeting resumed. No decisions were made. A motion was made by Justin and seconded by Kale to go back into executive session until 9:05pm. Motion passed. The open meeting resumed. No decisions were made.

➤ *Attorney Baxter left the meeting.*

- g. **IdeaTek** - Lauren received an email response from IdeaTek, and they would like to include the pole audit as part of the pole attachment agreement. Lauren stated the pole attachment agreement can be modified to include this and it would apply to any future franchisee agreements. The Council agreed.

➤ *Lauren left the meeting to finalize the documents.*

11. Visitors - none

12. Superintendent Report

- They are running into some unexpected issues with the water main replacement and there will likely be additional costs. He will be purchasing a tapping sleeve for \$898.
- Dan shared a letter of resignation from John Larson, who is retiring after 45 years of service to the City.

- Dan will be contacting the State to determine how long the City has to get someone certified as a wastewater operator. There is a certification class and test in Dodge City in October and Dan will try to have two employees attend.
- There was damage to a gas meter caused by an equipment mishap.
- The street sweeper is having issues again.
- There is a well with a power supply issue.
- The forklift brakes may need replaced. Dan received an estimate of \$3,383. Dan will seek additional bids.
- A motion was made by Justin and seconded by Larry to accept and file the Superintendent report. Motion passed.

13. Clerk Report

- Lila has not received any responses from the Clerk link regarding the Council chambers sound system.
- LKM is offering a KOMA/KORA webinar in September. Lila will email details to the Council.
- A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Justin to accept and file the Clerk report. Motion passed.

14. Council Comments: Bud - none, Kale – none, Larry Reminded the Council of the Concert in the Park on September 6. Justin – Thanked the City Crew for their work clearing the streets of debris after the storms.

15. Mayor Comments – none

16. Executive Session: A motion was made by Justin and seconded by Kale to recess into executive session for the non-elected personnel exception to discuss the City Clerk position/applicants, the open meeting to resume at 9:36. Motion passed. The meeting resumed. No decisions were made. The Clerk position will be advertised again.

➤ *Lauren returned to the meeting.*

17. Treasurer Report: Jen explained new legislation regarding the CMB licensing procedures that will become effective October 1. Lauren stated there have also been changes made to the KORA that became effective July 1 which pertain to fees that may be charged for open records requests. Lauren will update both sections of the City Code. A motion was made by Justin and seconded by Larry to accept and file the Treasurer report. Motion passed.

18. Attorney Report: Lauren has emailed the updated pole attachment agreement to IdeaTek and received confirmation from John Terry of agreement to sign it in the event they need to attach to a pole. Ordinance 655 remains unchanged from what was shared at the last meeting. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Bud to approve ORDINANCE NO. 655: AN ORDINANCE GRANTING TO IDEATEK TELECOM LLC, A CONTRACT FRANCHISE TO CONSTRUCT, OPERATE AND MAINTAIN A TELECOMMUNICATIONS SYSTEM IN THE CITY OF ST. FRANCIS, KANSAS. Bud – yes; Kale – yes; Larry – yes; Justin – yes. Motion passed. Lauren will not be present at the next meeting but will join via phone or zoom. A motion was made by Kale and seconded by Justin to accept and file the Attorney report.

19. Adjournment: A motion was made by Larry and seconded by Kale to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed.



Interim City Clerk