TOWN OF KIOWA MINUTES

FOR SPECIAL MEETING

February 15, 2022 TO BEGIN IMMEDITELY AFTER SPECIAL FINANCIAL MEETING

AT KIOWA CITY HALL

813 S. HARRISON ST

KIOWA, OK

All items on this agenda, including but not limited to any agenda item concerning the adoption of any ordinance, resolution, contract, agreement, or any other item of business, are subject to **amendment**, including additions and/or deletions. This rule will apply to every individual agenda item without exception, and without providing this same **amendment** language with respect to each individual agenda item. Such amendments should be rationally related to the topic of the agenda item, or the governing body will be advised to continue the item.

The governing body may adopt, approve, ratify, deny, defer, recommend, amend, strike, or continue any agenda item. When more information is needed to act on an item, the governing body may refer the matter to its City/Trust Manager, staff, Attorney or to the recommending board, commission or committee.

**CALL MEETING TO ORDER:** Mayor Peterson called meeting to order @ 6:22 P.M.

**ROLL CALL:** Hatridge present, Hall present, Peterson present, Vanblaricom present, Nichols present.

1. **Discussion about the fire department procedures and issues.** Peterson stated she wanted to start with asking Patrick Johnston (fire chief) where he was when 911 called and dispatched him to the fire on Friday February 11th, 2022. Johnston stated he was at his house. She asked how long it took him to get there and he stated about 4 minutes. Peterson stated she received pictures and several phones calls stating 911 was called at 12:05 P.M. and then received a picture at 12:56 P.M. and he still was not on scene and two council members also stated he wasn’t there. Johnston states that he was there 4-5 minutes after receiving the page at 12:07 P.M. and then he was in route. Stated he had several fire departments calling Ashland, Savanna, and Blanco asking him what he needed. Hall states that the first fire department that showed up was Savanna and they had 3 vehicles and 9 men out before anyone else showed up. Our police officer Dustin Wall was the first one at the fire. Pittsburg fire department showed up after Savanna. Johnston states again that he was there but he drove his personal vehicle to the fire and was setting in it and directing Savanna and telling them where the fire hydrates were at. Vanblaricom states she has a question and says that when she showed up on the scene there was no one from Kiowa there and the fire had been going for at least 15 minutes or more and she asked the police officer on duty that was there where the fire department was at and he stated that he didn’t know and he had been trying to get ahold of someone to find out if they had even been dispatched or not. States that she immediately came to the city hall and called Patrick Johnston to see if they had gotten the page. Patrick’s phone went straight to voicemail each time, so then we called the second in command which is Josh Johnston and the first thing he says is “we’re a volunteer fire department.” Vanblaricom states in the city ordinance it says that yes you are a volunteer fire department but anytime there is an alarm for a fire or an emergency you will respond. Patrick Johnston states that every one of his guys has a job and they can’t just up and leave there job whenever they want and the fire department doesn’t make any of them a living. Cody Johnston states that they did respond and him and Clifford Sexton were the first ones from Kiowa fire department on scene and according to his dispatch log from the time that the 911 call was given to them and the time they were on scene flowing water was 18 minutes. Patrick Johnston questions the home owner asking him if he thought there was anything that could have been done differently to save the house. The home owner Lynn Deshazer states no you should have let it burn. William Ellis states he wants to speak and begins to state that he had to make the call at 3:45-3:50 P.M. that we had to stop water or the town will not have any water for the citizens because our tower was very low. Ellis stated it took him 16 hours to fill the tower back up, we have two pumps at the lake the big one pushes 250 gallons a minute and the little one pushes 234 gallons a minute, both of them do not run at the same time or we would blow our lines out. We can only push about 225 gallons a minute to town because of our filters. If I run it at 250 then we are pushing water out faster than we are treating it, and that is why we had to stop the water. Peterson stated we didn’t want to see something like this happen but 6 months ago we had a meeting with the fire department and discussed what we could do to get more people on the fire department, what are we not doing as council to help and what can we do to help and with all of that came discussion of firefighters sitting in our office telling us that if there is a fire in town your house will burn down before we can respond. Hatridge stated that she has had several different fire departments including Savanna inform her that they are not coming to help our fire department anymore because of the way they have been treated by our fire fighters and there has been several citizens that are wanting to be on the fire department but will not because of who is in charge right now and the way they treat people. The fire fighters brought with them Sherry from Oklahoma Firefighters Association and Patrick Johnston requested if we have any questions to speak to her because she is here on their behalf. Vanblaricom thanked Sherry for coming but stated that most of our concerns and questions have to do with who we have volunteering for our fire department. She stated that she didn’t like that she made a phone call to the assistant chief and the first thing he says is “we are only volunteers” and if that was my home that was on fire and I was told that I would be very upset because I believe that is why we have a fire department and I guess volunteer has a totally different meaning to me and our ordinance than what these guys think it means. I think if you are going to be on this fire department you are making a commitment to respond when there is an emergency and that is what the city ordinance says. Hall states the night of the fire she was told by the fire chief that he didn’t know if we would have a fire department after that night because they were upset and it was threatened several different times to several different council members. Vanblaricom states she has concerns and wondering what needs to be done to get new members added to the fire department because she knows we need more volunteer firefighters and she goes out and talks to different individuals and asks them why they are no longer on the fire department and they all said that there was conflict, there are people on there that are hot headed and some individuals say they never got off the fire department they just quit receiving calls and didn’t get paged anymore. Patrick Johnston states that most of Oklahoma is having trouble getting volunteers. Peterson states her concerns with Johnston not answering phone calls so she wonders how he handles calls. She states we only have 4 or 8 on the fire department and most of them live in a different town so she has concerns about that which were addressed 6 months ago at a meeting with the fire department and she quotes Josh Johnston saying in the officer with several witnesses that “If you house catches on fire it will burn down before we can respond.” Josh Johnston speaks up and states that yes we are a volunteer fire department that we are not a career department and we don’t have guys staged all over and I apologize for that, I had to pay someone out of my pocket so I could respond to the fire in this town. Vanblaricom states that she doesn’t know when the ordinance for the fire department was done but she suggests everyone that is on the fire department get a copy of it and read it because until it is amended that ordinance is what we will go off of. She says that if you are not going to be able to respond then we need to get individuals on the department that is able to respond and be there when needed. Ellis asks the fire department how many they have on their roster and Johnston says 8. She asks if the 8 that are on there are active and he says that they are all active. Jess Wilson says that he applied for the fire department and he took the agility test and did all other requirements 3 months ago and states that they called him one night to attend the meeting and he couldn’t that night because he was with his son and was told by Josh Johnston that he get back with him to set up another time and he never heard from him. Wilson stated that he went and fought a fire by himself in their fire truck and gear because the fire department didn’t have anyone that could respond. He knows several people that want to be on the department but the members won’t let them on. Wilson states there was another fire here in town that he and William Ellis responded to because the fire department didn’t. Wilson states that he already has several trainings from working at a previous fire department.

Cody Johnston states that he loves the community and people that live here and the town and citizens mean a lot to the firefighters and they try their hardest to respond in a timely manner and whenever they can because they do care. Hatridge states that no one ever said they didn’t care, that tonight we are trying to figure out how to make things better and figure out why there have been applications turned in and the ones that have applied are still not a part of the fire department. Vanblaricom asks if it is legal for one individual to run a tanker or brush truck to a call. Sherry from Oklahoma Firefighters Association states that it is according to the town protocols. Cody Johnston states that he believes that in their SOG if staffing permits that one person can drive and operate a vehicle alone. Peterson asks if they have been having monthly meetings and doing minutes and requesting the records from September 2021 to now. Josh Johnston says yes and he will get them to us by the 21st of February. Vanblaricom asks the fire department if they post their meeting somewhere so citizens and everyone are aware that they are having meetings and can attend if they would like and Josh states that they yes they do post they are having meeting and post it on the door at the fire station. Vanblaricom states that she would like for them to bring a copy to the city hall so we can post it here.

Sherry from Oklahoma Firefighters Association informed us for a town our size there is a minimum of 6 and a maximum of 25 volunteer firefighters allowed.

The council had no more questions or concerns about the fire department procedures and issues.

**NEW BUSINESS:** N/A

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION:** Peterson stated she is going to call on each person individually that signed in to speak on the issues or had concerns and was given 3 minutes each to speak. A list of individuals will be included but all that signed in may not have stayed for public discussion or might not have spoken. A flash drive will be added to the file with the minutes if you would like to hear what was said in the public discussion. Public discussion on the recording begins @ 1h16m33s.

1. Body Jameson
2. Cody Johnston
3. Sheri Nickel
4. Josh Johnston
5. Lynn Deshazer
6. Ron Nichols
7. JoAnn Humphreys
8. W. Clark Kelley
9. Maverick Danley
10. Jeremy Furr
11. Bambie Danley
12. Mason Danley
13. Chris Birchfield

**ADJOURN:** Peterson made the motion to adjourn @ 8:22 P.M. Seconded by Hall. Hatridge- yes, Hall- yes, Peterson- yes, Vanblaricom- yes, Nichols- yes. Motion carries.

**TIME ADJOURNED:** 8:22 P.M.

IF ASSISTANCE IS NEEDED PLEASE NOTIFY THE CITY HALL AT 918-432-5621, 24 HOURS IN ADVANCE.