

CLOSED SESSION MINUTES
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 6, 2023

The City Council met in a closed session at 7:07 p.m. on Monday, November 6, 2023, during a recess of a regular meeting. The Clerk reported that the following Council members were:

PRESENT: David Ayres
 Bill Dettmers
 Jeremy Plank
 Scott Tweedy
 Tom Stalcup

PERSONNEL:

Councilman Dettmers stated that last week the council discussed Kristen Burns, specifically regarding the Wood River Economic Development Committee which is now the Business Alliance. At one point the Wood River Economic Development Committee's website linked to the City's website and/or Facebook page. Complaints were lodged and City Manager Steve Palen had Mrs. Burns remove the link. Councilman Dettmers stated that it was done to show a connection between the two entities. Recently, materials distributed for the Wood River Economic Development Committee listed the City's name as presenters for the chili cook-off. Again, City Manager Steve Palen talked to Mrs. Burns about not using the City's name in Wood River Economic Development's materials.

Councilman Dettmers stated that invoices submitted for payment to Mrs. Burns are \$600 four times a month; the assumption being that the payment is for \$600.00 a week. Councilman Dettmers stated he received a copy of the invoices earlier in the day and they list the following.

- 9/25-9/30- Marketing 20 hours at \$30 an hour for \$600.00.
- 10/2-10/6- Marketing 20 hours at \$30 an hour for \$600.00.
- 10/9-10/13- social media, marketing, website changes, contact changes, HR/finance job posting 20 hours at \$30 an hour for \$600.00.
- 10/15-20 website changes, code changes, marketing, social media, business updated, requested update Plank, RFP, business license, livestream update 20 hours at \$30 an hour for \$600.00.

Councilman Dettmers stated that he suspects that this has been typical over the last year of submitting invoices. He stated that he does not believe the first two invoices can be approved as there is no substantive evidence of what was done. Councilman Dettmers stated he intends to object to those payments. In the last closed session, City Manager Steve Palen said Mrs. Burns is doing a good job. Councilman Dettmers asked City Manager Steve Palen what this statement was based on as Councilman Dettmers does not see that Mrs. Burns is doing the job at all according to the invoices. Councilman Dettmers requested an explanation of what is going on and why City Manager Steve Palen thinks she is doing a good job when there is no documentation that she has done any work.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that he had Mrs. Burns put together a quick rundown earlier that day of what she had been doing. Mrs. Burns is always reliable for events, if City Manager Steve Palen or a Department Head needs something on social media, she is good at getting it out, along with handling

press releases. The City Manager stated that the list presented is not all-encompassing. City Manager Steve Palen said Mrs. Burns is doing well; none of those items were done before, and that is why she was brought on. He stated the City could hire a company for these items, but rates are about double, and he feels that the City is getting a hometown rate as she loves to volunteer and be a part of the community. He stated that he, along with the Mayor, Department Heads, and City Clerk all deal well with Mrs. Burns and therefore he believes she is doing a good job.

Mayor Tom Stalcup stated that when he first became Mayor the website had minimal information. What he wanted to do is what it looks like now. He stated that one night after a council meeting, he had a conversation with Mrs. Burns, and she asked for the ability to look at the website because the Mayor was told the City would have to purchase a new website to do the things they wanted. When Mrs. Burns came in, Chief Stahlhut was the City Manager, and he gave her the okay to look at it. She said there was plenty of room to add what they wanted and within a couple of weeks she got it established and online. The Mayor stated he believes that Fire Chief Wade Stahlhut, acting as Interim City Manager, is the one who offered up the pay and if the invoices are not detailed, it is because that is what she was asked to do. Mayor Tom Stalcup stated that Mrs. Burns would give more details if asked. He stated that he has worked with Mrs. Burns on several projects and gone to meetings to establish communication with other communities, the county, and the state. He said he does not think that she asked for \$600.00 but rather that it was offered to her. He then stated that she is a huge part of how city hall runs today.

Councilman Plank asked if more detail could be provided for the two weeks.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that he could ask for it to be more detailed. He did ask for more information recently, however, what she had been providing is what had been required of her by Fire Chief Wade Stahlhut.

Mayor Tom Stalcup stated that Fire Chief Wade Stahlhut would not have brought her on if he did not see the benefit to the City.

Councilman Tweedy stated that he appreciated Councilman Dettmers wanting more detail, but he must rely on the Mayor and City Manager for Mrs. Burns's job performance.

Councilman Dettmers said that he regrets not asking for the invoices sooner and that the council should not have been approving invoices with no detail.

Councilman Plank again asked if the invoices could be amended.

City Manager Steve Palen stated that he believed they could.

Councilman Dettmers stated that while he is not an expert on web development, he has paid for it and \$2,000.00 is a lot of development so he finds it hard to believe that 20 hours are spent on the website each week.

Discussion ensued regarding a contract and whether the payment could be stopped if the work was already done. Councilman Dettmers suggested that the payments not be approved without the details. City Manager Steve Palen assured him that details would be provided even if they were passed.

Councilman Dettmers then asked that the services be put out for bid. He does not believe that the price is competitive. More discussion ensued related to an RFP and what services would be needed.

Councilman Dettmers stated that if City Manager Steve Palen agreed to go out for an RFP, Councilman Dettmers would vote yes on the bills. City Manager Steve Palen said that he would investigate it but would not agree to anything at this time. More back and forth discussion continued between council members regarding the vote. Councilman Dettmers warned that FOIA's for previous invoices would be sent if he votes no as that will bring attention to the issue. Mayor Tom Stalcup and Councilman Tweedy defended Mrs. Burns's work. Councilman Dettmers stated he believed Mrs. Burns is not the person for the job and does not have the experience required and the council is closing its eyes. He then reiterated the need for an RFP and the council's involvement in the decision.

There being no further business, the closed session adjourned at 7:33 p.m.