

The City Council of the City of Mattoon held a special meeting in the City Hall Council Chambers on December 27, 2011.

Mayor Gover presided and called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Gover led the pledge of allegiance.

Physically present were: Commissioner Bob Becker, Commissioner Randy Ervin, Commissioner Rick Hall, Chris Rankin and Mayor Tim Gover.

Also physically present were City personnel: City Administrator Sue McLaughlin, Police Chief Jeff Branson, and City Clerk Susan O'Brien.

Mr. Herb Meeker of the Mattoon Journal Gazette requested comment on the announcement of Sears and Kmart closing stores nationwide. Mayor Gover stated he had not heard anything from the local Sears. Administrator McLaughlin added all anchor stores in the mall had renewed their leases.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Gover seconded by Commissioner Hall moved to approve Council Decision Request 2011-1280, authorizing the hiring of one additional full time police officer to start employment with the City by or about March 1, 2012 at the entry-level salary.

Mayor Gover opened the floor for discussion. Commissioner Becker questioned the addition of a new police officer with the previous elimination of two officers. Administrator McLaughlin responded with increased sales tax revenues, cutting of police department budgets, reduction of police department clerical staff, utility reductions, and running a leaner police department in combination with a better economy. Commissioner Becker inquired as to the total cost of benefits for the second year. Administrator McLaughlin noted approximately \$75,000. Commissioner Hall questioned whether the reduction of overtime would offset the cost of the officer. Administrator McLaughlin stated the need for additional officers to offset the overtime costs. Chief Branson stated the force would require a total of four officers to fully staff the police department compared to other communities. Administrator McLaughlin noted the increase in revenues and ambulance revenues. Chief Branson stated the officers are working four or five days of 12-hour shifts and need relief. The new officer would not be fully trained for about seven months. Commissioner Becker noted approximately seven thousand dollars in reserves once the new officer is hired, and the first priority should be to hire more police officers; but requested more discussion on the hiring and planning in the budget. Mayor Gover noted during the planning session, there were not four officers out of commission. Administrator McLaughlin announced on January 17th, the Council will be asked to determine the direction of the City in another planning session. Commissioner Ervin noted no controversy on the position of assistant fire chief and additional firefighter; and reiterated the four officers not in rotation due to injuries and the necessity of the new officer. Commissioner Hall rebutted the fire department's decisions and noted the budget's dynamics, but agreed the necessity for more planning. Mayor Gover called for further discussion with no responders.

Mayor Gover declared the motion carried by the following vote: NAY Commissioner Becker, YEA Commissioner Ervin, YEA Commissioner Hall, YEA Commissioner Rankin, YEA Mayor Gover.

Commissioner Hall seconded by Commissioner Ervin moved to adjourn at 6:56 p.m.

Mayor Gover declared the motion carried by the following vote: YEA Commissioner Becker, YEA Commissioner Ervin, YEA Commissioner Hall, YEA Commissioner Rankin, YEA Mayor Gover.

/s/ Susan J. O'Brien
City Clerk