

Employee Advisory Committee (EAC)

APPROVED

Regular Meeting Minutes
September 8, 2015
Mayor's Conference Room @ 9:00 a.m.

The meeting was called to order by Judy Franco @ 9 a.m.

I. ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sir Allen (Chew) -Wastewater Collection
Judy Franco-GIS
Britt Hubbard - SSC
Scott Golden-MPWTP
Jorg Stefan Kidd - Building Maintenance
Wade Lewis - SEWTP
Denise Ezell - City Clerk
Jeanie Wheeler - Parks & Recreation

MEMBERS ABSENT:

* Albert Ozuna - Streets

*Excused

**Unexcused

OTHERS PRESENT:

@ 9:01 a.m. Doug Wells - Councilman
@ 9:08 a.m. Jerry Ihler - City Manager
Chase Massie - HR Director
Courtney Cacho - City Manager's Office

2. MINUTES

A. Approval of minutes for August 11, 2015

Motion to approve minutes by Jorg Stefan Kidd with a second by Britt Hubbard Ayes: Allen, Franco, Kidd, Lewis, Hubbard, Golden, Wheeler, Ezell Nays: None Motion carried.

3. OLD BUSINESS

A. Sick/Terminal Leave:

Franco said Jerry Ihler will email her and let her know once they have something proposed. Franco said it's the same for right now. Massie said he wouldn't look for anything on that until probably the fiscal year. Massie said he thinks the plan is to look at any changes or adjustments for next fiscal year, so you probably won't see any updates or proposals until the Spring. Wheeler said she had a few people who made a comment as far as how to do it, on the terminal leave. Wheeler said they want to know why it just can't be like longevity was, if you're hired after this date you won't accrue it that way, you'll accrue it this way but grandfather everybody else who have been doing it this way. Massie said he thinks that is definitely something that's probably going to be considered or is being considered. Massie said as we look at different changes or different options it'll be what is in the best interest for the City employees, which will be more cost sufficient for the City, but also taking into consideration we just can't take in employees who had this for 25 years and all of a sudden say sorry everything that you earned is gone. Massie said there will be some type of grandfather, it'll just depend on are we going to grandfather in and leave those who are grandfathered in the same and nothing changes or if theirs is going to change in a way and we're going to incentivize whatever their going to get to make that change. Wells said based on what we talked about before, which he was in support of what the committee wanted to do, was to cut it off June 30th of next year. Wells said everybody who's got terminal leave will go into the historical leave bank then, per you all, you'd want to use your current accumulation if you took any sick leave and leave that historical there. Wells said anybody who doesn't have greater than 576 on the 30th of June will go back to the old system. Wells said they would go back to the 576, the one's that accumulate greater than 576 that year you get paid for,

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that is what we're pushing for. Wells said just like it was before 2004. Wells said anybody that has terminal leave now will be able to keep that. Wheeler asked they'll at least have to have 576. Wells answered at least 576 to qualify.

Golden asked if you would keep everything that you had accumulated but after a certain point you wouldn't accumulate it anymore. Wells answered as of June 30th of next year, anything above 576 will go into a historical bank; that next year if you accumulate 96 you'll be paid for that 96 end of the next year; that's the way it was before 2004. Wells said all we're trying to do is get equality with police and fire like it use to be, that's what we were pushing for. Hubbard asked were there some changes that needed to be made was it with police, there's a little bit of a different, police or fire was a little off. Wells answered he wasn't sure those would have to be negotiated; they are both still getting paid for their sick leave. Wells said longevity will probably never come back and the only one who got screwed were general employees. Wells said police and fire to give it up both got 5% pay raise which is about how longevity is new, they don't call it longevity that is paid now, but general employees got cut off without a 5% increase. Hubbard said one comment he'll make is anyone who has any ideas with what we want to do with that, if we as a committee wanted to make a proposal that it would go to Massie or Ihler, which is something that's always out there. Hubbard said if someone is getting ideas from the general employees we think that it's reasonable that can follow through and that's an option that's out there. Wells said we loved police and fire as general employees because whatever they got we got and that all changed in 2004; whatever the committee wants to do he'll try to support.

4. NEW BUSINESS

A. **Morale Fund:**

Franco said she did talk to Ihler about reinstating the Morale Fund and he was looking for funds so we can have our Meet & Greets again; she hadn't heard any word back. Ezell said we need to look at having one in between the holidays, maybe the 1st of December; we need to pick a date so we can get the Banquet Hall. Franco said we need a place where everybody can sit down and spread out. Ezell said she would like to push police and fire to be apart of it also. Franco said she talked to Pete over at Fire and he said just give him a call and he'll get some of his guys out there, they were even willing to help out too. Ezell and Franco said they don't know anyone in Police very well. Ezell said but they'll find somebody. Franco asked Ihler are we going to get any money for our Morale Fund. Ihler answered possibly, he said he was talking with Hushbeck in City Clerk's Office and there maybe a little money left over that was budgeted for elections and depends on how much we have to pay in November's election. Ihler said that's kind of what we're shooting for, possibly a little bit from there; he won't know until after the election on how much he'll need to pay.

B. **Approving 2016 Meeting Dates:**

Motion to approve 2016 Meeting Dates by Denise Ezell with a second by Jorg Stefan Kidd Ayes: Allen, Franco, Hubbard, Kidd, Lewis, Wheeler, Ezell, Golden. Nays: None Motion carried.

C. **Discuss Recommendations For Personnel Policies:**

Franco said she knows some of you have brought forth changing how we classify our groups, we need to work something out so we can have that in since that will be in December. Franco asked is there a possibility to get email setup for our groups, like if Massie could get a list of how each employee is classified. Massie also asked and break them down into email groups. Franco said she knows I.T. can break them down into email groups, just for them to pull the employees classified under each group. Massie answered yes, we should be able to.

D. **City Bucks**

Franco said she knows a lot of employees have been coming to claim their City Bucks and are signing it over to other employees who currently have longevity; it is a rule that they can transfer it to another City employee. Wheeler said a person who gets longevity says nobody tells me how to spend my longevity so why should someone tell me how to spend my City Bucks, they kind of look at it that way. Ezell said City Bucks was made up for those who don't get longevity and she understands both sides. Franco said some people don't approve of it but if you're an employee giving it to another employee who is receiving longevity, that's their choice. Kidd said he doesn't think you can tell an employee how they can use their City Bucks, if we're giving it to them, they earned it. Kidd said he can see both sides of it but if I want to give somebody my City Bucks there's no conditions on it; he doesn't think you can tell an employee who you can give your City Bucks to and how you can spend your City Bucks. Wheeler said having received City Bucks she's had several situations; there are people who have a buddy who's not a City employee and he says "Oh, I'll get that pavilion for you." Wheeler said they come in and get the permit, they pay the City Bucks and it's not even for them it's for someone else. Franco asked we just need it limited to City employee's period; is that what you're saying. Wheeler answered it wouldn't make any difference. Lewis said they are still responsible for the permit, damage or whatever. Wheeler said she tells them that they will be the ones responsible for the permit. Lewis said we have made it transferable for showers and room rentals, 95% of them were wasted last time because it was so restricted, so if you have enough money, departments are going to use them for that. Allen asked is everyone getting City Bucks now. Franco answered no, just according to years with the City. Ezell said it won't be long until everybody gets City Bucks because the longevity checks have gotten down to 200 people. Massie said he doesn't know the exact number but sound about right. Ezell said the turnover rate has been so big that there's very few Oldie Goldies here; she makes a motion that we allow City employees to give their City Bucks to any City Employee they chose to do so.

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Franco said that's an open rule and she just wanted to bring it up because some people were having issues with it, how they feel about it, she was just trying to get feedback from your employees and it's at your discretion. Massie said the bottom line, it's the employees benefit and if they want to share that benefit with somebody else that's their right, if they want to share it with someone outside the City it's their right to do so because it's their City Bucks. Franco said she had gotten some emails from some employees wanting to use it for other things, to expand what City Bucks can be used for; some of the items they suggested are cash value, like Friends of the Library; they sell those books in order to get money back to help improve. Franco said she doesn't see how you can use City Bucks. Hubbard said when City Bucks first came about it was in the intention that it would be expanded that other City products could fall into this, to expand this program. Hubbard said it wasn't just for hunting and fishing, it was for some point and time we could build that program and add things to it; a program for the City employees like longevity, something the City could get back. Hubbard said so any expansion on what we would be able to purchase with those City Bucks was initially. Wheeler said she had some suggestions to use it towards the water bill. Franco said that's cash value, like taking away from your paycheck. Wheeler said when people use 250 of them towards a run at the park it's taking away from City revenue also. Franco said true. Golden said if you're not using cash value you're still using City Bucks that's kind of the same purpose. Lewis asked he had a question about next month's auction, could we use them at the auction. Franco said she believed that was asked at the last auction. Lewis said last year. Hubbard asked Ihler if he had any thoughts about the use of City Bucks, how it's going to effect budgets for the number of City Bucks out there. Ihler answered he would have to visit with Frank Jensen; he doesn't think you can apply it to a water bill. Ihler said there was a gentleman who was trying to get a right-of-way for exchange to donate the land needed for a sewer line project, if we would adjust his water bill to a certain rate; we weren't allowed to do that so he doesn't see that as an area we could go to and even if we could he doesn't think that's an area he would want to go to on the water issue.

Ihler said the recreational areas, fishing, permits and things of that nature, he doesn't see a problem with but when they start falling outside that recreational area then he has some concerns. Lewis asked even the City auction, does that money go back into the general fund. Ihler answered it goes back into the general fund, he is not as concerned about the City auction even though in his mind it should be to go fishing/camping. Ihler said he would have to look at that, he doesn't have a clue what kind of money is generated for the auctions. Wells answered very little; there are bicycles and stuff like that. Ihler said those are recreational things and he would just have to go back and see what kind of revenues are generated but maybe the auction's a possibility. Ihler said he'll need a little more time to think about that and look further into it but he's not in favor of landfill, water fees; basically you're talking about giving employees who work for the City a deduction on their water bills and their services that the City provides, he would be concerned about that. Wheeler said we've done about 1600 City Bucks this year of what she's kept track of that has been turned in. Franco asked is that for runs. Wheeler answered runs, pavilions, town hall rentals. Massie said the big difference is if you use it towards a water bill everybody's going to do that and that's a loss to the City but doing it on recreational activities, if I can't use my City bucks there's a good chance I just won't do it, so it's not necessarily a loss because it was never going to be spent anyways. Massie said some may still be like "I'm still going to rent that pavilion even if I have to pay cash"; he's limited to "Hey, if I can get it for free, I'll do it but if I can't then I'll just have it at my house or I'll do it somewhere else". Massie said it's not so much a cash value we're losing on the recreation side. Wheeler said they are applying it to tournaments which lead to bigger bucks beyond Hotel/Motel Tax. Ezell asked what we decided last time about checking to see if License & Permits could issue the fishing licenses and things. Franco answered they still said to send it through interoffice mail to the Lakes and they will send one back, as long as they are signed by City employee. Wheeler asked Franco if she could pass that message on because we never see it. Franco said yes.

D. Employee Spotlight Nomination:

Motion to elect Bobby Cooper as the Spotlight Employee by Britt Hubbard with a second by Wade Lewis Ayes: Allen, Franco, Hubbard, Kidd, Lewis, Lewis, Wheeler, Ezell, Golden. Nays: None Motion carried.

5. COMMUNICATION/DISCUSSION

Allen asked Massie, Ihler and Wells, is the Morale where we need to be at, employees are asking when are we going to get a raise, to make at least the cost of leaving. Allen said 3 years ago in our Division it went from 11 guys to 9 guys to 4 guys and everybody's leaving but nobody's coming back in to get a job at the City like it use to be; he doesn't know how to answer them on that; he knows it's like a fiscal year and you would have to go through the budget but they don't want to hear that answer. Allen said City employees are leaving for more money because they know that they are going to get a raise. Ihler answered we have to monitor the revenues coming in, you're talking about water revenues being up but they're really not, we were down the first two months; we went out and reeducated everybody on water conservation now that we do have the water available people are still conserving because it saves their pocket. Ihler said with regards to the positions, we've had to downsize probably the last three years, he thinks we've cut some positions and Public Works got hit pretty hard. Ihler said we've always saw that cycle to where people leave out to Fort Sill or Halliburton or Oil Servicing Companies because they do get a better paying job, then they might work one or two years then get laid off because the price of a barrel of oil drops and they come back to the City because of the pay. Ihler said he's been really surprised with this go around with the price of a barrel of oil and people are starting to lay off in the oil business you haven't seen the people come back and apply for the positions. Ihler said we've been advertising for drivers since the end of June and he thinks we hired one and they have 7 positions that are still open and only could get one person who was qualified to apply for the job. Ihler said to answer Allen's question, we are monitoring our revenues throughout our fiscal year to determine are we in a position where perhaps we could do something; the bottom line is, he heard it and heard and didn't believe it until he came up here; we have too many employees for the amount of revenue that comes in. Ihler said he saw a report from the City of Norman, their last budget, where they show the number of employees for a 1000 population and Norman is in the neighbor of 6.97 employees for every 1000 people but City of Lawton is at 9.3 employees for every 1000

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people, now that can be deceiving. Ihler said we need to go out and verify why that is because you just can't look at the number on the paper; Norman doesn't have their own Landfill so they don't have employees to run their landfill. Ihler said there is a reason why we have so many employees; those are things that we need to continue to research.

Ihler said one of the things we're looking at is monitoring the revenue that comes in this year with the hopes that we can do something but right now the first 2 months have not been positive; from Morale wise, we need to come up with the funds and it's a small amount but small amount for the banquet to give everybody their pens that they deserve. Ihler said it doesn't put money in their pocket that they are looking for but for right now we don't have the funds to do that right now; as we continue to downsize we are going to get to that point where we can start paying employees more because we care working smarter or working with greater technology. Wells said Ihler is absolutely right, he said all along that we need to get some people to go to these other Cities and see why there's a difference in City employees; he's never seen it this bad. Ihler said he doesn't want to say that we may have too many employees for the services that we provide; he thinks we need to also look at services that we provide and determine do we really need to be providing that service. Ihler said we need to cut back on some of the services that we provide; he can speak for 25 years experience in Public Works; what he found over the years as we whittled down is that we've kept the same service. Ihler said instead of looking for an area and saying we just can't provide this service anymore, he's not saying for people to lose their job, let's move those over where there are vacancies. Ihler said there are a few things we can look at as far as giving up some services and once we do that we could be getting paid better money for those positions; like Wells said that last 7 years it's been flat, it's been down the last 2 years. Allen asked if it was probably going to take 2 or 3 years for the water to see a change. Ihler answered yes over time, he thinks that people went through 3-4 years of drought; he thinks they got into a habit and they are going to use less. Wells said these apartment buildings all have low flow showerheads and all these other features and homeowners are doing it.

Hubbard asked are there certain things with what you just said that the council is looking at now in regards to services but we as City employees have a lot of power with vote; as far as the council is set up and he doesn't know if we need some guidance or have a better understanding of what the City is looking at that we can get some of this back in order. Hubbard said where if the service is too expensive for the City to offer that we find a way that the City employees to help support that, by one is to promote and two show them the main core that the City of Lawton is protected because we see injuries that could have been prevented, because we have guys working longer hours or doing multiple jobs. Hubbard asked Wells as the liaison where can we as City employees help towards that. Wells answered you can help the City Manager by letting him know services that he may not be aware of that may not need to be done away with; what are we doing that we can do smarter to save money, until we get the number of employees in the range is needed to because of what funds we need available, support it, they're absolutely nothing we can do. Hubbard asked as far as cutting positions, how far are you in doing that. Wells answered hoping with Massie and Ihler here, his opinion, they are smarter about where they are cutting positions; we need to start looking at the position and saying do we really need to do this function, if so it's going to be done by somebody else differently. Wells said we only got so much money coming in but can we raise rates, absolutely we can; 51% of the citizens of Lawton are considered low income according to the 2010 Census, how much more can they stand. Wells said we start looking at the amount of revenue and we look at the budget, majority of the budget is in personnel cost; that's where you need to make the cuts; in the operations cost probably this year we developed a budget that really doesn't have enough funds to support the operation if we don't get some increased revenue from water and sewer or water and sales tax, which is his perspective. Wells said if we don't we'll have to do more cuts somewhere along.

Ihler said when we went to the budget we were really tight; we kind of budgeted for the demand wouldn't go up. Massie said we have to make sure our money is being used in the most sufficient way possible, some of the things we'll do this year, believes it was done a number of years ago, will launch in the next quarter a City savings program. Massie said we are going to ask the employees what are ways that leadership, Ihler and him, Russell, the council's not thinking of that we can save money. Massie said everyone in here are in the front lines of their own job and there's going to be things all the time that make you think if the City would just do this they'd save so much money; we want to know about those things; maybe there are things we can implement, how many of us have things plugged into our offices whether it's chargers, scentsies, or whatever it is, if you unplug those on the weekend, just having them plugged in uses electricity uses amperage. Massie said it starts to add up when you have 900 employees that might have something plugged in or like someone, like him, throughout the day has a laptop, a cell phone charger, iPad charger, a scentsy, those are all things that he tries to make sure every time he's going to leave at night or go on extended leave, just like we just had a holiday weekend, unplugging all of those things. Massie said so part of it is his office and health and safety doing a better job of educating our employees, here are some tips, some quick things we could do to help save a little on the electric bill; so we'll do the City Savings program. Massie said the other thing is looking at technology, it's here and it's not going anywhere, there are things out there that are involved in payroll; we have multiple people involved in payroll process, if all of the sudden you go to an online payroll system, you'll take maybe a job of three and now it's one person's job. Massie said he's not saying that we cut those other people but now they can shift and we don't fill vacancies or they can do something else to make sure we are providing the same level of services. Massie said there are a lot of technologies out there that would really enhance and make our jobs efficient in what we're doing instead of somebody having to kill themselves just to keep up. Massie said it's about spending our money wisely and he thinks that something that we'll look at over the next year as well of what services are we offering and where the exact positions we don't need are. Massie said he's gone through this transition before with other employers where you've gone from paper to online and the City does two payrolls a month, and one person does that, somebody else does the retirement payroll; somebody else does the benefits claim.

Massie said he comes from a system where we went online that one person did 6 payrolls a month and the claims and the retirement payroll; right now we have 3 doing less than that. Wells said the money's got to be there to get that technology. Massie agreed; you got to spend the

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money up front. Ezell said we have to remember that it's going to cost us up front but in the long run we'll maybe save a lot of money. Wells asked with the City Saving Program in the past didn't we give out an award. Ihler asked we had a program where we gave an incentive program. Massie answered it's still there and he will be looking at the policy and figure out, is it appropriate and what we can do; right now it's in there where it's constantly running. Massie said what we may look at doing is putting a time period on it so there's more focus; we roll out communication pieces on it and it's here the month you have send us all of your ideas and we're going to select the top three or something and those people will be incentivized in some way. Wells said a good idea would be to actually show the savings as long as they get some good incentive for that savings. Massie said correct. Hubbard said the biggest thing is we went through this with the last City Manager; we had multiple meetings here at EAC in reference to Cost Savings Ideas, the problem is it really wasn't publicized other than what we could get out as far as the EAC. Hubbard said the City didn't seem to be behind that idea, there wasn't any publicity and he thinks if you're going to make something like that work, if you're going to get ideas, there's going to be a lot of crazy ideas out there but you're going to get some good core ideas. Wheeler said she thought that when we went to GEMS and they said payroll was going to be done that way, no more timesheets, but no we're doing the same thing we've always did. Wells said Gems was the worst accounting, payroll system that the City could have bought. Wheeler said she has a cost saving plan for Ihler if he'd redo 9-2, just 6 months of City code sponsored events which is \$122,000. Ihler said that comes back to we have certain policies where we receive fees and it seems like every time a citizen comes before council they'll say we really need to waive these fees; some council members are in favor with waiving fees because it's an event for the citizen and we should be paying for the citizens, if that's the case then we need to do away with the policy.

Ihler said but if we have the policy, his position is we ought to receive the fees and bring the fees back into the revenue. Wells said two or three months ago he said exactly that at the council and he thought that we had appointed someone to start looking at that. Wheeler said she's looking at it this whole year by keeping track of it with the assembly permits and we need to put it on our City logo, to come to Lawton we give it away; she knows Spirit of Survival takes \$18,000 to support and we close down the park for 3 days just to let them set up. Ihler asked for having that event for that day the City sponsor's are helping that event how many hotels are full. Ihler said there's other benefits for the City to co-sponsor those things because every hotel is full; every person staying at our hotel is eating at our restaurants, paying sales tax, so there are something's we should sponsor and there are something's we should not. Wells said there are things that are valuable to the City and actually bring in revenue when we waive fees; there are some that have no value what so ever and maybe we need to stop supporting those. Wheeler said we have a lot of nonprofits who don't think they need to pay \$25 for a pavilion, which we only charge \$25 for the day and many parks in other cities like Norman or Oklahoma City are charging that an hour; that doesn't pay for our overtime for the guys who go out there and dump the trash that they make. Hubbard said he thinks it's a great idea that Massie is coming up with that idea, if we could get something like that out to the general employees and get those ideas, he thinks it's a good start. Massie said some of those may just be education pieces, we want employees that have ideas, if you unplug this it will save the City, we want those too; we will start with a HR newsletter coming out and the purpose of that newsletter, that starts this month, is to educate the employees on some things, on benefits, safety tips, on City savings, so that's going to more encompass than suppose to recipes and things like that which have been in the newsletter in the past.

Massie said look for that and hopefully that does a better job of educating the employees and getting everybody on the same understanding; as far as pay, we'll do a salary survey this year, his office has already started working on that and hopes to have that done before falls up. Massie said the City's pay may not be the best but it's not bad; we pay \$3 more for our sanitation drivers than LPS does; Cameron's drivers aren't even benefited part time and he doesn't know of too many places that have step programs anymore because budgets are so tight everywhere. Massie said they've gone to here's an allotted amount of money it's a merit based program, as opposed to steps; just the fact that you can get steps more years than not is a pretty good benefit. Wheeler asked one of the things we said we never saw was not getting the merit increases, which is true, she's never seen positions late until January, we might hire these one's that we didn't, she doesn't see that happening if our money is this way. Massie answered that its cost savings by freezing those positions for 6 months that's a huge savings that the City can budget in that savings for a fact and then the goal is to open those up in January. Wheeler asked if he thinks that will really be feasible. Massie answered it's too early to tell at this point, we are only 2 months into the fiscal year, he thinks that will be Ihler's call and the new finance director and he'll be in that decision hopefully. Wheeler said not that she has any say so, we would be doing more with less people, we've done alright for 6 months without this person and do we really need them. Massie said all things we will take in account; if you've gotten by this far without it can you get by without it period. Wells said he will continue to push for new employees for July 1st for 401K retirement plan because we can no longer afford to pay everybody's retirement forever and ever; nobody's doing that anymore, they want something they can take with them and we could actually save money that way. Massie said it's more portable and you invest quicker too. Ezell said she doesn't know if anyone knows but Ihler hired a new employee, there wasn't anything sent out that he had hired Mr. Bart Hadley as his Assistant City Manager. Ezell said Ihler is surrounding good people around him in her opinion

6. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn by Denise Ezell with a second by Judy Franco. Motion Carried
Meeting Adjourned at 10:05 a.m.