

Memorandum

Date: May 19, 2023
To: Mayor and Council Members
From: Lisa Taylor, City Manager
RE: Report

Greetings, Mayor and Council Members

By now you should have received your final copy of the proposed budget, which we hope will be adopted at the Regular Council Meeting on June 13, 2023. Please be sure to reach out with any questions.

At this time, I want to share the following updates:

- **Audit Information** – Auditors have been requesting various information from our Finance Department. One request came in for payroll information for the months of June and July 2022. The processing of payroll is carried out by the Human Resources Department. During retrieval of that information, it was discovered that one employee was overpaid during the months of June and July 2022. It was also learned today that overpayments were made to two employees in February 2022.
- **Budget** – The Proposed Budget Summary has been sent for publishing. To date, outside of the Special Council Meeting, we have received no questions about the proposed budget from Council Members. As you know, the budget will be on the June agenda for your consideration and approval. Please, if you do have questions ahead of time, it would be helpful for our team to have those in advance of the meeting so we can do our best to answer everything that day. We are down to the wire, and we must get a budget approved at the regular meeting, or hold a special meeting later in June.
- **Collective Bargaining Agreements (CBA)** – The City of Durant has Collective Bargaining Agreements with the Fraternal Order of Police Union Lodge 113, as well as with the International Association of Firefighters, Union 3061. Negotiations updates will be provided to Council Members during Executive Session at the June Council Meeting. The City of Durant is working through three grievances from the FOP. An arbitration hearing was scheduled for earlier this week; however, it was postponed because the Arbitrator did not arrive for the hearing. It has been postponed for dates later in August 2023. That was not my preference, but was the earliest that attorneys and the arbitrator will be available. We currently have two additional grievances, one from April 2023 and one from May 2023. A hearing for the April grievance has been scheduled for later this month, and the other grievance hearing will be held in June. Our legal representation is currently reviewing both new grievances and will provide guidance as we work to address each.
- **Open Records Requests** – Over the last year, the City of Durant has received an unprecedented number of Open Records Requests. Many of these requests are blanket email requests, and equal to tens of thousands of pages each. We are currently awaiting review and redaction, and will release the information to the requestors once it is received

from the City Attorney. Our team will be providing requestors a login id and password, unique to their respective requests, which will allow them to log into one of the public computers at the Donald W. Reynolds Library to retrieve the information. We are initiating this option due to the significant size of each request that cannot be sent via email.

- Organizational Review – HR Solid Foundation is finalizing the Wage Analysis, and will be providing much needed training for City of Durant employees over the next few weeks. As you may remember from my previous report, the City of Durant has no standard hiring/ termination processes, no onboarding process, no training programs (not even those required by law), and no employee retention program. This was revealed through an organizational review that I sought out for the City of Durant. Of note, we are still seeking qualified applicants for the position of HR Manager. We cannot hire an inexperienced person for the position of managing such an important department because it places our organization at risk of legal liability.
- University Project – Our team met with the owner of Schiralli Construction earlier this week to discuss the project and make minor decisions about the next change order request. During that meeting, we did discuss the narrow entry onto Larkspur, and Wall Engineering agreed to make modifications to the design so that Schiralli Construction can widen that entry. I was pleased to hear that the owner of Texoma Auto Spa had withdrawn his request to omit sidewalks that had been planned for his property located on University Blvd. Our community has been very vocal about the desire for a walkable community, so much so that whole studies and strategic plans have been dedicated to the cause.
- Airport –The Benefits Cost Analysis for Air Traffic Control should be completed within a few weeks. We are still waiting to hear whether we will receive any support from Oklahoma ARPA funding.
- Waterline Upgrade – We have been working with Senator Bullard to provide information to the State Appropriations Committee about our need to replace waterlines to the South side of Durant. This project is estimated to cost approximately \$20 million, and will be required before we can continue to grow on that side of town. We believe our funding request will be included in the new budget.
- Employee Management – Our new Deputy Director of Emergency Management started earlier this week, and our new Public Safety Director will arrive the first week of June. There were rumors that we had hired a Chief of Police, but that is not the case. It has been difficult to recruit someone for that position mainly because the salary range maxes out at several thousand dollars less than Captains are paid at the Durant Police Department. Hopefully, the wage analysis will address this issue.
- Department Reports – Department reports were published on the City of Durant website ahead of the regular Council meeting. Please let me know if there is additional information you would like to see included in future department reports.
- Community Planning – As a result of the Community Perception Survey, six areas for improvement were identified by the public. Transparency was a concern voiced many times throughout this process, and our team has been working toward greater transparency with the public through social media management, presenting at civic/ community meetings, and with updates to the City of Durant website. On the website, you will find that links have been added for things like contracts, current budget,

In addition to the above highlights, I want to take an opportunity to respond to the results of the Special Council Meeting held on Wednesday, May 17. Let me first start by stating that I do not have any concerns about an investigation of the Office of the City Manager. That being said, I have been bombarded with questions for clarification about what Council actually adopted. It is my understanding that the agenda item should have referenced giving investigatory authority to an individual/ individuals. It should have also included a scope for the investigation. It appears that the Council voted to give themselves the authority to investigate, which is already a right granted to Council by statute. From this perspective, it appears that this was merely placed on agenda to create the appearance of wrongdoing by the City Manager. This has caused unwarranted suspicion, hateful comments and public embarrassment to me. Our team at the City of Durant has just begun to heal from the events of ten months ago, and Wednesday's meeting has caused all of those emotions to return. Again, I welcome any inquiry you may have, and I have every confidence that there will be no misconduct found. I have answered every question asked of every council member, with the exception of an inquiry into a personnel matter. I will attach that original email to this memo for reference to refresh your memories.

On another note, I hope each of you understand now why I would not sign off on the request made by Texoma Auto Spa. I was ready to explain my position, as requested by Mayor Tucker (email attached). But I was happy to hear that the owner of the company requested no action on the item. Sidewalks are important to our community, but Citizen engagement and transparency will always be at the top of the list of priorities.

As a reminder, we will be conducting a Family Fun Day event for employees and their families tomorrow. I encourage you to stop by if you get a chance.

Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you

LT

Lisa Taylor
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