CLEARWATER CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
OCTOBER 13, 2025

1. **Call to Order and Pledge of Allegiance: 7:00 p.m. at City Hall**

– Mayor Lawrence called the Clearwater City Council to order Monday, October 13, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Members present were Mayor Lawrence, Council Members Schwinghammer, Crandall, and Everett. Council Member Senn arrived at 7:12 p.m. Also present were members of the public, staff, and guests.

2. **Approval of Agenda**

– **MOTION** by Schwinghammer to approve Agenda as presented, seconded by Crandall, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

3. **Wright County Sheriff's Report**

– Deputy Marschel gave the sheriff's report, which included updates about an incident at the Travel Plaza that requires a response from several agencies and a recent arrest involving drugs and weapons. Marschel stated that most incidents do not involve local residents but people passing through the area.
– Member Everett asked about a car accident on County Road 75. Marschel did not have details about that item. Fire Captain Repke who was in attendance stated that there were no major injuries in that incident.

4. **Public Forum**

– None.

5. **Consent Agenda**
   a. **Claims/Accounts Payable in the Amount of $ 383,397.41**
   b. **Approval of Minutes from 09-08-2025 Regular City Council Meeting**
   c. **Approval of Sewer Authority Director Contract Renewal**
   d. **Res 2025-48 – Approving Hire of Seasonal Worker**
   e. **Res 2025-49 – Approving New Hire for Fire Department**
   f. **Approval of Pay Voucher #2 – Spring Street Storm Sewer Project**
   g. **Ord 2025-08 – Amending Chicken Ordinance**

– **MOTION** by Crandall to approve Consent Agenda as presented, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

6. **Old Business**
   a. **Consider Options for Splash Pad Installation**
   – Smythe gave an overview of the cost estimate for installation under a state bid contract, along with three proposed add-on options for a special base surface, colorized concrete, or canvas shade features. The Park Commission recommends accepting the state bid contract along with the colorized concrete and rejecting the other two options.

Council Member Senn arrived at 7:12 p.m. and joined the splash pad discussion in progress.

   – Members discussed the add-on options.

- Members agreed the base surface add-on, at an estimated cost over $100,000, is simply too expensive.
- Members also agreed that staff could probably create the shaded areas at a lower cost and would match other park amenities.
- Members like the idea of the colorized concrete, however, are concerned about the costs of repairs, as special concrete batches would need to be made for repairs.

– **MOTION** by Lawrence to authorize the state bid contract for installation and reject the three add-on options, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**

7. New Business

a. Fire Relief Association – Jim Repke

– Fire Relief President Jim Repke outlined the request to raise the fire department pension benefit to $3,000 per year of qualified service from the current $2,000. He shared a handout outlining several cost options and the impact to the city's required contribution. Based on the cost estimates, the city does not currently have a required contribution and would not expect to have one at the $3,000 benefit level. Smythe noted that the city has not had a required contribution for many years and that the department is below the benefit levels of others in the region.

– **MOTION** by Lawrence to authorize the increase to $3,000, seconded by Senn, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

– Repke noted that the state will need a resolution from the City Council to make this change. Smythe will bring a resolution to the next meeting.

b. Authorization for Fire Department Pension Contribution

– Smythe explained that the budget had been increased to $13,000 for the voluntary contribution to the fire department pension. Staff are requesting authorization to make this payment.

– **MOTION** by Crandall to approve pension payment of $13,000 to PERA, seconded by Everett, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

c. Ord 2025-05 – Portable Storage Units

– Smythe explained that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this proposed ordinance but did not make a recommendation. The motion to approve failed for a lack of a second. Members discussed the potential uses of storage units in residential areas and the concerns about property values and aesthetics.

– **MOTION** to approve by Schwinghammer, seconded by Crandall, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

d. Ord 2025-06 – Financial Guarantees

– Smythe noted that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this proposed ordinance and recommended approval.

– **MOTION** to approve by Lawrence, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

e. Ord 2025-07 – Mobile Food Units

– Smythe noted that the Planning Commission recommended approval.

– **MOTION** to approve by Lawrence, seconded by Senn, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

f. Discussion Items

i. Local Option Sales Tax Extension

– Smythe outlined the new legislative process and deadlines. Members agreed to pursue this as a 2027 project.

ii. Spring Street Assessments

– Smythe asked if the City Council wants to move forward with assessments for the Spring Street stormwater improvements. Members' consensus was to move forward.

iii. Food Shelf Escrow Fee Dispute

- Smythe explained the food shelf is disputing an escrow bill as their contractor reached out to a city consultant without authorization by the food shelf. Members' consensus was that the food shelf is still responsible for the bill and should pursue the contractor for reimbursement.

iv. Lions Pavilion Suggestion

- Smythe explained that the city had received a complaint about how noisy the rental facility is at Lions Park and asked if the Council would like to pursue options for sound panels. Members' consensus was to look at some artistic options and bring back cost estimates.

v. Request to Consider Sale of Huber Ave Property

- Smythe informed the Council that the city had received a letter from a realtor expressing interest in purchasing the city-owned land on Huber Avenue. Members would like more information, such as amount of land desired, price, planned use of the property. Staff will research further.

vi. License Fee Waiver

- Staff received a request from a resident, along with documentation, to waive the animal license fee for a service dog. The fee amount is $10.
- **MOTION** to approve fee waiver by Lawrence, seconded by Everett, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

8. Committee Reports

a. Mayor and Council

- Mayor Lawrence asked if any Members were interested in having a table at the Trunk or Treat event on October 25. Members Crandall and Everett stated they could attend with Mayor Lawrence.

b. Boards

- Fire Relief Board – Met in September, update already provided by Mr. Repke.
- Sewer Authority – Did not meet.
- EDA – Meets next week.
- Planning Commission – Met to discuss and hold public hearings for ordinances considered earlier in the meeting.
- Park Commission – Met and discussed the splash pad installation options, plans for Phase II of Veterans Memorial Park, received an update on Depot Park design in progress, and discussed the Local Option Sales Tax future plan.

c. Staff

- Smythe reported that a city resident has asked the city council to reconsider the accessory building ordinance, which limits residential properties to two accessory uses per property. The resident has a large lot and would like the council to consider an ordinance that uses an area coverage ratio like other cities use instead of a flat number regardless of the size of the lot. Member Everett stated she believes Monticello uses an area ratio. Members were willing to consider this change and asked staff to work with the Planning Commission to develop a draft text amendment to the accessory ordinance.
- Smythe stated that staff were asking about the security deposit required from renters of city facilities and its purpose. Members noted that it acts as a deterrent for damage and would cover any cleaning charges, if needed. Members would like to keep it in the fee schedule.
- Smythe updated on the state's new Paid Family Leave program that is effective January 1:
    - She noted that regulations for this new law have not yet been issued by the state. Based on available information from the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), the city will need to adopt a policy governing the plan.

- The city has the option to cover 100% of the required contributions under the program or have staff contribute up to 50% via payroll deductions. If the city covers 100%, the difference would be taxable income to the staff.
- The program will function similar to the workers' compensation program, with employers deducting employees' share from paychecks and submitting both the employee and employer contributions to the state.
- Updates to the city's payroll system will also be needed in order to comply with the new law.
- The city budget currently includes 100% of the costs because the City Council did not have time to review this before the preliminary levy was due.
- Members had several questions that are still unknown items. Member Everett stated that she will be attending a class on this soon and will have more information on the topic at the next meeting. She suggested revisiting then.
- Mayor Lawrence suggested keeping the program at 100% city cost for now so payroll systems could be updated, then modifying if the City Council changes their mind once more information is obtained.

– Members discussed a written staff complaint sent confidentially to Members regarding a recent incident involving inappropriate conduct by a board member. After discussion, Members appointed Members Crandall and Everett to sit on a committee with a staff member to review applicable city policies and develop a plan for addressing with the board member. Members stated there should be a warning given with the potential for removal from the board if the conduct is not addressed by the board member.

9. Other Business

a. Next Regular Meeting – November 10, 2025 at 7:00 p.m.

b. Reminder – Special Election November 4, 2025

– Next meeting date confirmed.

10. Adjournment

– **MOTION** to adjourn by Lawrence, seconded by Senn, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED.**

– Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

ATTEST

Annita M. Smythe, City Administrator

APPROVED

Andrea Lawrence Wheeler, Mayor