

Council Meeting  
April 4, 2022

Members Present: Mayor Buddy Duke, members Terry McClain, Greg Paige, Walter Cowart, Celestine Hayes and Jody Greene.

Others Present: John Flythe, Rhonda Rowe, Tim Tanner, Chad Castleberry and members of the public.

Invocation was given by Rev. Tim Lewis, new pastor of St. James AME Church.

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Minutes: Councilman Paige made a motion to approve the minutes of March 21, 2022 as presented. Councilman McClain seconded. All were in favor.

Letter from Advanced Cylinder & Tank: A response has been received from Bruce Roberts, General Manager of ACT, following the city attorney's inquiry on the odor control and mitigation plan. Mr. Roberts stated that after working out a few issues in the initial startup phase, their plan has been working to full effect and they have been greatly pleased with its continued success. Responding to the question about relocation, Mr. Roberts advised they are not opposed to moving the location of their facility; however, moving the business would require significant resources. Also, with the current job-market challenges, they are reluctant to relocate for fear of losing valuable staff members. He will continue to keep a watch for a larger location.

Discussion on Salaries of Elected Officials: Following the discussion at the last meeting, city attorney Tim Tanner has researched the legal framework to increase the salaries of elected officials. He noted that it would require a "notice of intent" to introduce the ordinance for a change to be ran in the paper for three consecutive weeks before a vote is taken. He noted that we would need a salary target for the notice; although this amount could change before a vote is taken. The ordinance can be presented at the first meeting in May, with a vote taken at the second meeting. He further noted the increase will be effective January 2024, following the next election to be held in November 2023. Councilman Cowart proposed a salary of \$13,500 for the council and \$18,900 for the Mayor, with the difference in the mayor's salary being based on the same percentage basis spread as it is now. During discussion, Mayor Duke confirmed that reimbursement for actual and necessary expenses would be made following the presentation of receipts and mileage would be paid as per the IRS rate. Councilman Cowart then made a motion to proceed with the process of increasing the salaries to \$13,500 for the council and \$18,900 for the mayor. Councilman Paige seconded. All were in favor.

Update on Billing: City Manager John Flythe advised the council we are expecting the bills for Cycle 1 to go out by the end of the week. This cycle is the most complex as it includes billings for demand meters as well as commercial and industrial accounts. As we proceed with subsequent billings, we will establish a work-out plan and he is suggesting no interest or penalty. He noted we do expect people to pay; we have a large number that are making payments and accumulating a credit toward their bill. As the bills go out, the credit will be reduced. We continue to encourage people to do make payments on

their account. We expect the next bill to be paid and then we'll work out a schedule as the remaining bills are created. Mayor Duke noted he hoped they would go out as well; everyone has been inundated with questions and phone calls. Mr. Flythe noted again that we are one of seven cities having this issue. Staff is working after hours, at nights and on the weekends to try to get this accomplished. He noted that he cannot begin to tell the problems recreating a system and billing system.

Councilwoman Hayes stated she had talked with the city manager, obtained information and she felt the public deserves an explanation as to "how did we get to this problem?" Mayor Duke stated it has been discussed several times and basically it's a malfunction between the computer systems. She stated the information she has doesn't say that. There was information given back in 2016 of this migration proposal. Are you all saying that what this is saying and what yall are saying is two different things? Mayor Duke stated we can't do anything now but fix it. Mr. Flythe added that as stated earlier today, it was over five years ago that the SGRC began converting to a web-based system for the financial side. Within the last 2 years, the utility portion came on. It took the SGRC over five years to get the accounting system up and going. It's frothed with problems we've had to cope with every day. The SGRC is to serve the cities; they have not served us, nor the other 5 communities. They just cast us out. We took the person and the firm they recommended to do all of this conversion. He's been working very hard; however, the fact is the SGRC still did this. We begged them not to do that and they did it anyway; so this is where we are. Councilman Hayes stated that the information she has began in 2016 and she has 10 pages of emails that were sent back and forth dealing with this problem. Even if we knew 2 years in advance, why did it take so long and the public is suffering from this? Mr. Flythe again noted that it took 5 years for the SGRC to do the conversion and that's the first thing you are required to have is the accounting system because you have to attach your billing system to it. You can't do the latter without the first being there. As I said, it was frothed with problems so it took them 5 years. Beginning 2016, 2017 all the way forward to where we are; I consider them giving us that problem. We asked them not to convert, not to change, not to drop us and they did anyway. We did take who they recommended. We looked at a number of companies; we even looked at the City of Thomasville because they have services that we have. They were leaving their system because of problems and they've not completely converted over yet. They're still having issues with their brand new system. Councilman Hayes stated that she understood we received a refund that was issued to the City of Adel. The City Clerk stated yes, we received a partial refund. Councilwoman Hayes asked what was done with that? She was advised it was placed back into the general fund, where it originally came from. She then asked what is actually going to be done to help the citizens with this problem? Mr. Flythe advised we're working on get the billing out so we'll work with the citizens as we need to. She stated at one time we cut off utilities and she understood that was not going to happen but it did anyway. Mr. Flythe stated the letter went out telling what they needed to do, when they needed to do it or a cut off would be at a certain date, and that's what happened. She asked what would happen this time? He stated we do expect them to pay the first bill and then we'll work with them on the rest of it. She questioned if they would be cut off? He advised that would be up to the Mayor and Council on what different things they want to do.

Tom Thomas – Mr. Thomas addressed the council stating that he is here to talk about what Mr. Flythe was just talking about (billing). He has a vested interest in the City of Adel and Cook County. His family has lived here for over 100 years. His granddaddy was the first superintendent of schools and was also

the Mayor of Adel around 1940. He's here about the citizens. He has an investment here and he still lives here. He is in the mobile home business. If you cut off one of his customers, he'll have to go in and repair it and re-rent it. That's not a big deal; he's not going to miss a meal, the Lord has blessed him. He wanted to tell a story that only his family knows. He can somewhat identify with some of the people in the community. He was born in 1942; his dad was in World War II and was gone from home for 3 years. His mother's only mode of transportation was a bicycle. They lived in a small house and didn't have air/heat, no television, no washer/dryer, no telephone (had a party line). Later he got married while in school, had a baby and lived in an apartment for 2-1/2 yrs that cost \$65 per month. They paid the utilities but couldn't afford a television; they did get a 15" tv that cost \$125. He's not complaining, he's just stating that he has some identity with what's going to happen with some of the people in the community. He went into service, was sent to Vietnam, brought his family back here and rented a house from Mr. Smith for \$65 per month. He couldn't hardly afford a refrigerator and stove, so you can imagine what kind of condition it was in. After that, if you knew me today, you know the good Lord blessed me and I'm not going to miss a meal. What he is interested in is the people in the community. If you have a retired couple, 70 yrs of age, making \$1200 per month, the inflation rate is 8%, that's \$100 per month. What are they going to pay or not pay. They'll have to miss some food. Then if you have a couple that makes \$2400 per month, that's \$200 per month inflation and let's say they have 3 kids. Everything comes in 30 days, we all know that. Where I'm headed is I'd like to see us pay, when we do pay, is every 30 days. Week before last I went to the gas station and the person ahead of me pumped \$7 worth of gas, this week the person ahead of me pumped \$11. I've also read that food is going up 10%. If you take \$100 for the old couple or \$200 for the married couple, they're going to be cutting back on milk, bread, peanut butter and jelly. Here's my recommendation for what it's worth. The city's definitely got a problem and the city is going to lose money. The average person that hasn't paid, he's going to be hard pressed to pay one month or get ahead. Those that live in the new apartments out there, in 4 or 5 months they'll get out of there. For people that's lived here for 40, 50 or 60 years, I don't know what's going to happen. Here's my recommendation for what its worth. I'd like to see a 30 day pay period. Everything comes every 30 days. If its sooner than that, its going to be a problem. There's some mention about an extra 10%, I don't have a problem with that but my bottom line is every 30 days. They Mayor has mentioned working something out. Some people can afford to pay 2 months; the average person can't afford to pay that. Poverty rate in Cook County is 20%, possibly worse in Adel. He thanked the council for their time.

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Rhonda P. Rowe, City Clerk

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Luther L. Duke III, Mayor

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