

STATE OF TEXAS
COUNTIES OF POTTER
AND RANDALL
CITY OF AMARILLO

On the 6th day of July 2015, the Amarillo City Council and the Amarillo Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors met for a special meeting at 10:00 a.m. at Happy State Bank, 701 South Taylor Street, Virgil Patterson Auditorium, Amarillo, Texas.

The following members present:

AMARILLO CITY COUNCIL:

PAUL HARPOLE
ELISHA L. DEMERSON
BRIAN J. EADES

MAYOR
COUNCILMEMBER NO. 1
COUNCILMEMBER NO. 2

AMARILLO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION:

ROY BARA
TOM BIVINS
BRIAN BRUCKNER
JOHN KRITSER
GINGER NELSON
RICHARD "BUZZ" DAVID

Also in attendance were the following administrative officials:

JARRETT ATKINSON
MARCUS NORRIS
FRANCES HIBBS

CITY MANAGER
CITY ATTORNEY
CITY SECRETARY

Mayor Harpole established a quorum, called the meeting to order, welcomed those in attendance and the following items of business were conducted:

1. Mayor Harpole and John Kritser welcomed all in attendance. Introductions were made. Mayor Harpole stated he was very concerned about the recent activity and the need for the community to become engaged for the future of our City.
2. John Kritser, President of AEDC, introduced the AEDC board members-- Ginger Nelson, Roy Bara, Tom Bivins, and Brian Bruckner. He further stated they were here today to consider the removal of AEDC board members and inquired what the Board has done to cause this action. Mayor Harpole replied sadly he did not know why, and it would not be answered by the folks that are here today. Councilmember Eades stated he wanted to hear more from the public and invited citizens to come forward.

Councilmember Demerson stated he welcomed any input and the open discussion. He stated he asks for openness and transparency and would request an audit of the projects that have been completed, including the number of jobs AEDC has brought into the community.

Ginger Nelson presented the procedure for when a project comes before the AEDC. After vetting the project a dialogue is brought back to the Board and the City Council is given a report. The two organizations receive feedback from the in executive session not in a public open session. The main reason is the potential business and clients, asks for it to be secret, for their benefit, any competitors, it's a strategic move, possibly expanding or moving the workforce, to get a bigger hold on the market, while not letting their competition know, to get more of the marketplace. The AEDC welcomed questions on projects that are complete, and have been funded with City sales tax. They constantly struggle to keep the projects confidential so the client process is not damaged.

Roy Bara stated he has served on numerous boards for many years and he was in shock and disbelief today. Brian Bruckner stated AEDC was governed by the Open Meetings Act and the great things potentially to happen in Amarillo. Tom Bivins congratulated the staff on the huge amount of work done before projects are brought to the staff and continue working together to make things happen, Elisha Demerson stated he has spent 20-30 hours a week at City Hall and any input he receives is invaluable. He has a better understanding of the workings, does his due diligence and will be present at any future board meetings operating under the City Council.

3. Public Forum

DJ Stubben, 6700 Wentworth Street, stated she is so proud to have this meeting today and the need for the Boards to be very careful about the Open Meetings Act. Matthew Sherwood, 4803 Spartanburg Street, stated there is a lot of support from the community and the many wonderful things AEDC has done in this community. Gordon Ramsey, 7906 Continental Parkway, stated he was upset the other two councilmembers were not present. He stated the AEDC Board members were all successful business owners.

Howard Smith, 1606 Polk Street, stated years ago the community decided to tax themselves to attract business. He applauded the community for doing that. He thanked Ginger Nelson for reviewing the AEDC process and further stated that everything cannot be made public upfront. Nancy Tanner, Potter County Judge, stated Ginger Nelson urged her to run for office. She stated we needed to leave a footprint for our future. Edmund Johnston, 2116 South Hayden Street, stated he was disappointed in Mr. Burkett not being present. He further stated Mr. David has done a wonderful job at AEDC. These issues have gotten out of hand and the need to get the facts.

Bill Harris, 7802 Stuyvesant Avenue, thanked the AEDC Board for their job and furthering the success of the City. Sharon Baker 3120 Linda Street, stated she has served on the city council in Guymon. She stated a person cannot be sworn-in and within a few hours make major decisions. Bob Juba, 515 Avondale Street, thanked Councilmember Demerson for attending and missed seeing the other Councilmembers. He stated the AEDC Board was the highest quality the City has ever had and some things have to be done in secret. The City Council cannot dismiss a project that is on the cusp of signing a great deal. AEDC needs continuity. Allen Finegold, 2601 North Grand Street, asked that the AEDC board provide answers as to why they should keep the current AEDC Board.

David Craig, 6612 Raleigh Road, stated as a manager, a person cannot walk into a new position without learning it first, it is wrong until you have time to learn the facts. He looks forward to the growth of downtown. Wendi Swope, 2112 Travis Street, stated the new councilmembers have not had an open discussion, but have started with threats which is an embarrassment to the City. Facebook and Amarillo Globe News has made many negative comments. She stated the need to fight for our city, our town. Mayor Harpole stated Vicki Covey has worked for the City for 41 years. He wanted it clear that she is retiring and it is not a forced resignation. Eddie Scott, 2412 Lipscomb Street, stated removing the AEDC Board would be the dumbest thing we could do. Paul Borchardt, 3915 Killeen Street, stated he was proud to have served on the AEDC Board and during that time they were criticized for a loan to Hilmar Cheese. Mayor Harpole stated Dr. Eades had to change surgical appointments with patients to be here today, but that he must leave early. Councilmember Eades stated his desire for the AEDC Board was to move forward and be productive. Councilmember Eades left the meeting at this time.

William Ware, 3012 South Ong Street, stated AEDC is the single most important organization in our city and attracts jobs for our future. Belinda Watson, 904 North Lincoln Street, stated Amarillo is the best city in which to live. She also stated that when she first moved back to Amarillo all the buildings were being boarded up. Ms. Watson invited the negative citizens to attend AEDC meetings. Austin Jones 6104 Glenwood Street, stated there were ripple effects of the AEDC.

George Herring, 14520 Halsey Trail, stated it was important that the City continue to grow and continue to challenge themselves. He further stated that Bell Helicopter would not be here if not for the AEDC. Michael Graham, 5825 Andover Drive, inquired if any of the newly elected Councilmembers had met with any AEDC employees or board members. Ginger Nelson answered that she had initiated a telephone call to Mr. Nair to open communication and get a dialogue started. Buzz David stated he had met with Mr. Demerson for 1 1/2 hours before he was elected. Carly Dumenil, 6200 South Bonham Street, stated she was concerned about the City's negativity, and was discouraged on the lack of participation.

Laura Street, 5204 Spartenburg Street, stated she was disappointed in the other Councilmembers not being at the meeting. She was also disappointed in all the negativity, and believed it was tearing Amarillo down. Mayor Harpole thanked Laura Street in starting the Globe News Center. He further stated the money that finished the Globe News Center was provided with HOT tax funds, a portion of the state's money to be allowed for certain things. Mandy Abernethy, 8100 Knoxville Street, stated she was a school counselor and stated the need to continue to work to do great things. Andrew Holly, 51st Avenue, stressed the need to be carefully in the direction we are going. Beth Duke, 3141 West 28th Avenue, stated AEDC was governed by set of a laws on what they can and cannot do. The Medical Center is a great example on what the City can do when working together. She further stated Centerport was an economic driver for the City. She stated there is a rotary saying, 'that sometimes you have to plant trees under which you will never sit.'


Rev. Rupert C. Brashears, 2422 Poplar Street, inquired how long Amarillo has been in existence. He applauded Councilmember Demerson for being the first black councilperson in 100 years. He also stated that Mr. Atkinson was a fine man. Gary Purser, 7709 New England Parkway, stated that many people have given their time and talents to make these dreams come true, and move into the future. Businesses want to see a community that has a workforce, and a young workforce. People are retiring and those jobs will need to be replaced. Alan Abraham, 7205 Southwest 35th Avenue, stated the modus operandi for the election was transparency.

Ginger Nelson stated anyone who wants to attend a meeting can attend. Once a project is complete they would encourage questions. She further stated that AEDC's website has tons of information, including, financial documents, and minutes available for anyone who wants to spend the time to research them. She asked that personal characters not be dragged through the mud. Jesse Pfrimmer, 5723 South Milam Street, asked that the projects be put to a vote. Jane Juett, 2400 Southwest 26th Avenue, stated this is why we have elected officers. Judy Stark, NE Amarillo, stated she voted in the last election and for two of the current people, and has asked herself what she has done. It is sad for Jarrett Atkinson. She has found him to be very astute, informative, and not making snap decisions on anyone. The change is calling for heads to fly, voters asked for a change, but not be crazy. Listen and became more acclimated, not walk in swinging. H.R. Kelly, stated he was amazed at what is happening. Councilmembers want to fire somebody without doing their investigation. Mayor Harpole stated there was not a reset button and it is out there, and we have to deal with it. H. R. Kelly stated that things have taken place, too quickly and they need to reconsider and take everything into consideration on downtown development. Councilmember Demerson stated there has been no vote on the downtown project, or the GRI contract. Dean Downey, 1119 Avondale Street, stated he was concerned and ashamed. He applauded Councilmember Demerson for showing up. Mayor Harpole stated Councilmember Demerson did not ask for Mr. Atkinson's resignation, but asked for the discussed. Jimmy Presley Hammonds, 1514 South Pierce Street, stated he will not be around to pay the debt. He would like to see the downtown project put on a ballot for everyone to vote on and would like to see the Herring Hotel redone. Mayor Harpole stated it was time to stand up, speak up or shut up.

Ginger Nelson stated she was surprised she did not hear more about the white elephant in the room, the Commerce Building and the WT campus. The disputes and questions have not been answered and someone even called the FBI. Many projects are rejected because we do not have a business school in the city limits which includes a 4-year or masters degree programs within the city limits. Mayor Harpole stated anonymous ads in the newspaper, have tarnished our city and the FBI has not brought forth an indictment. Kelly Utsinger, stated he was happy to speak to the any of the Councilmembers regarding the Commerce Building. Mayor Harpole stated the new owners of the Barfield Building are not proceeding unless the downtown plans go forward, and the Firestone Building will not proceed either. Alan Abraham inquired if there were any political or political powers, in not bringing legal recourse to the investigation. Kelly Utsinger replied they did not control the FBI or its investigation. John Kritser stated the need to wrap up. He asked that the City Council to table Item No. 5 on the City Council agenda and wait to get to know the AEDC Board and to grow this town together.

4. Meeting was adjourned by Mayor Harpole and John Kritser.

ATTEST:



Frances Hibbs, City Secretary



Paul Harpole, Mayor