

**MINUTES FOR THE  
NOVEMBER 10, 2025  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING**

**1. Call to Order and Recording of Quorum.**

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m. and a quorum was established.

City Council Members Present

Mayor John Low

Emmy Ballantyne

Bill Mitchell

Peter Mako

Kate Lanfear

City Staff Present

City Manager, William Foley

Executive Secretary, Kristyn Schones

Fire Chief, William Knupp

Asst. Fire Chief, Justin Seibert

Police Chief, Gail Baham

Asst. Police, Chief, Gabriel Ortiz

Director, Rick Baldarama

Attorney, Frank Garza

Others Present

Matt Stevens

Hannah Crabtree

Collier Bashara

Allison Hayne

Frank Burney

Richard Peacock

**2. Review/Action of minutes from:**

- a. **October 14<sup>th</sup> Regular Meeting**
- b. **October 14<sup>th</sup> Budget Meeting**

The minutes were reviewed, Mayor Low asked for a motion to approve both the regular meeting and the budget minutes as submitted, Mako motioned, Ballantyne seconded, all voted in favor, and the motion passed.

**3. Comments by Citizens.**

Mayor Low opened the floor to those who wanted to address the council and advised no action could be taken.

Allison Hayne spoke of the pollinator garden by St. David and mentioned her time limit on the temporary fencing is lapsing and that she will be requesting permission to keep the fence up an additional six months. Ms. Hayne wanted council to know that she had a contractor donate compost and crushed granite for the garden. Mayor Low thanked Ms. Hayne and advised her to get with Foley about the fence.

Mr. Peacock wanted to thank Foley and city staff for assisting in draining standing water from the front of his and neighbors' homes. Mr. Peacock also thanked council and Foley for getting his street on the next round for street improvements and for all that they do.

Frank Burney advised he is supportive of the improvements on the ground cover on the Geneseo Esplanade and wants to share with the neighbors what is discussed today and willing to work with the city to help raise money for the project. Mayor Low thanked Mr. Burney and asked if there were any other comments from citizens. There were none. Mayor Low closed the comments by citizens.

**4. Discussion/Approval: Of Annual Employee Health/Life and Dental Ins.**

Schones presented the comparisons from last fiscal year to what is being projected for next year via the summary page submitted in the packets. Schones advised Ben Hobb ran the numbers and spoke to BCBS and BCBS originally came back with a 14 percent rate increase. Schones stated Ben then asked BCBS for a rate pass and not to raise anything at all because we have a good loss ratio, so they offered an 11.4 percent rate increase after July. Schones stated Ben then suggested he contact BCBS and advise that we are not going to market to see if they will give us a lower percentage, this worked. BCBS then said they could do 3 percent because we have only 7 percent credibility, a small headcount and that one claim could blow that loss ratio out of the water. We also do not have long commitment with them, so 3 percent was the best they could do.

Schones advised this is amazing compared to other companies and cities increases of 30 to 56 percent. Schones also pointed out another bargaining chip we could use to lower would be to do our non-medical insurance, but Ben advised us not to do that this year with BCBS so we could use it as a bargaining chip next year should we stay with BCBS. Schones also stated there was no change in vision costs, dental costs went down, and life insurance went up 4 percent and the package is basically the same as we currently have, there were two increases in deductibles, some of the co pays are little higher by \$5.00-\$10.00 increases and that the \$550.00 the city provides will continue to cover each employee. Schones advised, if approved, open enrollment will begin next week. Mitchell asked Schones how this increase will affect the budget. Schones advised this does not affect the budget as the coverage for each employee remains the same amount. Mayor Low asked for a motion to approve the proposal from BCBS of the 3 percent increase as presented, Mitchell motioned, Lanfear seconded, all voted in favor, and the motion passed.

**5. Discussion/Action: Improvements of the ground cover on the Geneseo Esplanade.**

Mayor Low stated that discussion has occurred with Frank and Boo over the last 6 to 9 months and has had landscape companies present ideas that they have looked at and decided to get a professional to develop a plan. Mayor Low stated the plan was received and confirmed that all had seen. Landscape Architect, Matt Stevens introduced himself and gave a presentation of this plan stating that he wanted to come up with a more comprehensive, sustainable plan that had low water use plants, merits for grass and a master planned hiking trail with ADA compliant curb ramps near the entry ways. Matt advised his thinking is the material would be decomposed granite that can be walked on, biked on and one option is to edge that with a steel edging that would separate and contain the granite or they could do cobblestone which is more expensive where the steel edging is more cost effective. Matt stated that the plant materials they recommend are minimal maintenance, shade tolerant, things that are low water use and are hardy, so a combination of plants, grass, and trails. Mayor Low asked Matt if there was shade tolerant grass. Matt advised there is, and that St. Augustine would be his choice and that in cases where grass cannot grow, they would come in with shade tolerant ground cover. Mayor Low advised Matt that there had previously been a test area of shade plants that did not do well after a couple of years. Matt advised could be irrigation or lack thereof. Mayor Low advised Matt of his concern with the water restrictions. Matt suggested when it comes to water restrictions, we could not only do sprays, when sprays in grass we are limited to once a week but could also do drip irrigation in the planting beds and could water more regularly during restrictions. Mitchell advised one of the comments he has heard is that people prefer to walk around and asked if there is a plan they could produce that would minimize the trails as people like the beauty of them, over the trails. Matt stated that their idea of the trails was to allow those to utilize and avoid vehicular traffic on the street. Mayor Low asked if anyone had anything they would like to discuss. Allison Hayne advised she loves the fact that there is a path through it, its inviting and she personally does not want to see grass with the drought that we are always in and the maintenance it would require to maintain.

Discussion continued. Mayor Low asked Burney if he would like to add anything, Frank Burney stated he thinks it is a great plan to start with and he would like to reach out to the community to get input. Mayor Low asked Matt to share the cost estimates. Matt advised preliminary budget numbers and breaking the areas into three, Island, 1, 2 and 3 and that all had the side preparations. Island one, \$166,000 with the cobblestone edging would be an additional \$50,000. Island two, \$219,000.00, cobblestone edging, additional \$68,000.00 and Island three, \$22,000.00, cobblestone edging, an additional \$13,000.00. Schones advised the council that there is also a contingency and management fee so all totals would be \$446,000.00. Mayor Low advised this is quite an expenditure for a town of our size and our budget and that Matt is prepared to work with us as we decide what is important to the community and what is the best use of the city's money. Mayor Low advised he would like feedback from the community and asked Knupp to post to the website and to the app for this. Mayor Low thanked Matt for his work and asked the timeframe for the work to be done, Matt advised 2 to 3 months. Matt also stated that the option to do the work in phases is available. Mayor Low asked if there were other questions, there were none. No action required.

**6. Discussion from monthly reports as submitted in the council packets.**

Mayor Low asked if there were any questions for any of the department heads on their monthly reports. There were none. Knupp advised Foley wanted him to give an update on the new fire truck and the difficulties that they have had with it. First issue was the tank, it went back to Palestine, and the tank was replaced. Knupp advised since the truck returned to service, there has been a lengthy list of things that have been going wrong with it, various scene lights that were inoperable and these were taken care of when the tank was replaced. The second issue, which was major due to a light coming on in one of the compartments causing his team to stop the truck, once stopped, they noticed smoke and then found an oil leak., therefore, the truck was taken back to Cummins for repair. Once returned, the truck was taken back to Cummins for the same issue as the first repair did not fix the problem. Knupp advised the third, another major issue that has since occurred was the air conditioning unit went out and the cab had to be disassembled to replace the unit, three days later the unit went out again and it was discovered that the company sent all the parts for the air conditioner except for the compressor and Cummins has since replaced every part by tearing out the inside of the cab. Knupp advised once received back the truck began having electrical shortages in the dash and inside the cab, the technician came back and got one of the electrical shortages repaired and the other is a major electrical shortage that he has been working on since the 17<sup>th</sup> of October. Knupp stated that he has been in contact with Frank to seek legal advice as well as he has been speaking to the owner of the dealership and the person who was second in command at Sutphen, his name is BJ and had a conference call on Wednesday of last week. Knupp stated he voiced all frustrations and all the issues with BJ and that BJ has assured him that the company and the dealership are going to stand by us and make sure they make this right. Knupp stated this was only step one as there are things that need remedied, one was the part that was thought to be bad, finally arrived, and installed, this did not repair the truck. Knupp stated he was on the phone again with Sutphen today, Sutphen will be sending a technician out tomorrow and Sutphen are also mobilizing a team from Ohio to come down and start working on the truck, if the truck is not repaired, a plan is in place to take the truck back to Ohio to be reworked and back to a condition that is acceptable to us. Mayor Low asked Knupp how long the truck has been in service, Knupp advised, since May. Mayor Low asked how much of that time had been out of service. Knupp advised on and off throughout those five months and the longest in service was about a week and a half. Mayor Low stated having a fire truck that the fire department has confidence that it will work when it is needed, is everything, without it, we cannot provide fire services to the city. Mayor Low stated if the truck is out of service and out of warranty the truck is no good for us and if we are not happy once we are told the truck is ready, he would like for us to investigate what our rights are. Mayor Low thanked Knupp for staying on the companies involved. Mako brought up safety concerns for the firefighters. Mayor Low advised we would be in a bind if truck 2 were to break down. Knupp advised he has been in contact with Alamo Heights and has them prepared to back us up if the other truck is down or if on another call. Knupp also advised prior to the council meeting he had emailed Sutphen and the dealership requesting a second fire truck and both are working to try and accommodate us.

**7. Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

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MAYOR

ATTEST:

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SECRETARY-MANAGER