



City of Jonesboro

Municipal Center
300 S. Church Street
Jonesboro, AR 72401

Meeting Minutes Public Services Council Committee

Tuesday, February 21, 2023

4:30 PM

Municipal Center, 300 S. Church

1. Call To Order

2. Roll Call by City Clerk April Leggett

Present 7 - Chris Gibson;Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant;Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

3. Approval of minutes

[MIN-22:114](#) Minutes for the Public Services Committee meeting on December 20, 2022

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Anthony Coleman, that this matter be Passed . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant;Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

[MIN-23:010](#) Minutes for the Public Services committee meeting on January 17, 2023

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Anthony Coleman, that this matter be Passed . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant;Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

4. New Business

RESOLUTIONS TO BE INTRODUCED

[RES-23:036](#) RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR AND CITY ATTORNEY TO CERTIFY FOR THE CITY OF JONESBORO FOR THE 2023 ANNUAL FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) CERTIFICATIONS AND ASSURANCES FOR THE JONESBORO ECONOMICAL TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM (JET)

Sponsors: JETS

Attachments: [Jets FY2023_C&A](#)
[Jets Sign Page FY2023C&A](#)

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Ann Williams, that this matter be Recommended to Council . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant;Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

[RES-23:040](#)

A RESOLUTION TO THE CITY OF JONESBORO, ARKANSAS TO ACCEPT THE LOW BID AND ENTER INTO A CONTRACT WITH ROCK SOLID TRAIL CONTRACTING, LLC FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE CRAIGHEAD FOREST MOUNTAIN BIKE TRIALS

Sponsors: Engineering and Parks & Recreation

Attachments: [RockSolid_Contract_020923](#)

A motion was made by Brian Emison, seconded by Ann Williams, that this matter be Recommended to Council . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant;Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter

5. Pending Items

6. Other Business

Director of Grants Department Regina Burkett approached the podium and said good afternoon, everyone. I just kind of want to go over what we're doing in the Grants Department to let you all know that sometimes it takes a little bit longer to receive a grant than what we really have anticipated. So I think that everyone needs to understand that. It's not like we receive the grant and then we just have the money within six weeks. It doesn't normally happen like that here; and I don't think everyone understands that. So I wanted to go over first and let you all know that last year, I want to let you know the total amount of money that we applied for in grants. It's a little bit lower than what we had in the past, but it was \$20,183,418.14. So that's what we've applied for, and we had the ARPA money before and the Covid money, which that's what kind of raised it up in the past two years. The funding is not out there like it was at that time. So we receive our CDBG funding every year. We're allocated that much. We got somewhere around \$621,000 last year. We will not receive that letter to see what our allocation is for this year until March or April of 2023. We did have public comment last week. We had one person show up. That's all we had, and it was really after the meeting that I met with her and talked to her about the funding that's available. Public comment is open now for the next 30 days, or it opens on Tuesday for the next 30 days, so if anyone has a comment to make on how the money is spent, then I would love for you to email us or call us or send something to my department at the city of Jonesboro, and we'll put it on our public comment notice.

So the CDBG, we receive that money every year, and what we do with that is we do the rehab housing. We do assistance for first time home buyers, and then we do public service grants and those are usually \$20,000. We did have to cut them back last year due to having so many people apply for so many groups. We did not want to stop them from trying to fund everyone. So we did have that. We put money into homelessness and then we had some infrastructure. We try to divide it up like that every year. Only 20% of that allocation can go to home rehab and assistance to first time home buyers.

So the grants that we have out right now that we're working on and waiting to hear back from are the reconnecting community grants. That's the one for the pedestrian overpass that we applied for, the smart grant that was a planning grant to look at our traffic lights here in the city. I hope we get that one. Railroad elimination grant, that's the one on Gee Street where we could not get through when they had the shooting at Riceland. So we're trying to get an overpass there if at all possible. And then the RAISE grant, which will go out on February the 28th which is next Tuesday. So we're working on those. We've got several COPS grants that are opening here pretty soon. We've had a couple of fire grants that we just applied for. They've been submitted this month, the month of February. Most of them are just now opening up for the month of March. We will be applying for the ARDOT grants which is the TAP grant, the RTP grant. We haven't received a TAP grant in probably two years, three years, something like that. I think it was 2019 the last time we received one. We are still working to close out the EDA, the railyard expansion that we have out at the industrial park. We're waiting to close that one out and get our \$2 million there. We just had a conversation about that, so that should be coming pretty soon on that one. We do have the 50/50 grant that's coming back open, and that's the one that we funded Union Park with, which I'm excited to apply for that one. Danny's got some ideas. We're going to have a site visit here probably the first week of March with the Parks Department, which is wonderful because we can show them all we have here.

We've got our JETS that we apply for every year. We've got the low emission and the bus stop grants that are coming open once again. On those grants, we haven't closed out the ones we've gotten, so I've got to be sure that we can sign that agreement before we can apply again. But I really want to apply for those two so we can move forward on what we need to rebuild and restructure, rehab our other bus stops that we need here in the city. And it would be nice to have more hybrid buses if at all possible, so I'm hoping to move forward with that one. Several police grants are coming open, bullet proof vests, public safety grant, COPS hiring grant. We have a couple of JAG grants that aren't real big, but we use them for things like overtime and we have them for police that take care of seatbelts, child seats, be sure they are installed correctly. It pays for different things like that. We do have a recycling grant that we usually get every year, and we work with the sanitation department on that one. Then we've had several mini grants from State Farm, BlueCross BlueShield, and there's some other ones from the National League of Cities that we get sometimes. It's only like \$2,500 that don't have a match for small things throughout the city. So anyway that's where we are right now. Are there any questions?

Chairman Chris Gibson said hey, Regina, on the RAISE grant, I know you had a public forum today at the chamber. How did that go? Director Regina Burkett said the room was full. It was absolutely full. I think it went wonderfully well. Everybody was positive about the trail. We showed them where it was going to go, the whole trail, not just the area of Jonesboro. I do want everyone to understand that this is the same RAISE grant that we've applied for every year, but we went for \$25 million each year. And what we did is we've written a grant for the pedestrian overpass, and that's when we decided to partner and make it a regional grant. Because I think that they look at those. They love to see community partners come together when you apply for grants, but it's the same amount of money. It's just a little bit less. It's \$18 million, but it's the same thing we applied for the last two years except Craighead County has a gravel trail, and we're going to connect to that from our city limits up to where he's starting the gravel trail. That's the only thing we've added. And I'm going to put an easel up in here. I'll put the full trail up in here and leave it so if anyone has any questions about it and everyone can look at it.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said on the grant related to the flyover and with ASU's additional money, how has the grant application been updated so that people looking at it know that there's additional money that will increase the match from like 20% to 30%? Ms. Burkett said so I did not have a commitment letter from ASU at the time that we submitted that reconnecting community grants. So as soon as I got it, which was early January, I sent it straight to the Department of Transportation and to our Washington delegates to move forward and to let them know that we did have a higher match. Councilmember Joe Hafner said and how long does that usually take? Ms. Burkett said well, that should be announced about any day now. But really, Joe, I don't know because the last email I got it said next several weeks, so I don't know what 'next several weeks' means. Councilmember Joe Hafner said so hopefully it will be announced by this summer. Ms. Burkett said yes, I hope so.

Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said one comment, two questions. One, I thought it was a good presentation. I was there and other councilmembers were there at three o'clock. I appreciated the candor and the questions and what was presented, so thank you in that regard. And I appreciate also hearing that you are going to make that presentation digital. Director Regina Burkett said yes we are. My plans were changed from today. I didn't know we were going to be Vanna White, having to move everything around, so that's not the original plan that we had. When we found our small room, I had to do something different. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said sure, I appreciate that. First question, of the \$20 million that you applied, how much did we receive of that? Ms. Burkett said that is what we received. That's not what we applied for. I'm sorry, that's what we received. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said okay, great. And then second question, I don't know if you knew this or not, but one of my passions is to really see our homelessness addressed. I know we've been talking about it quite a bit, quite a few times; and I heard you say that part of one particular grant, I can't remember the acronym, but one particular grant that you mentioned, some of that funding is going to the homelessness. But my question is, are there any major grants out there for us to even consider to address this issue; because it's what I call a good problem for our community. I mean, we're growing; but with all the good we're getting, we get some knuckleheads and some crazies in. And I'm not calling homelessness crazy, but I'm talking about the actual ordeal itself that we have to deal with. Ms. Burkett said we are working with partnering with some nonprofits throughout the city, and there are grants available that we have to have a plan that can sustain itself before we can move forward on any of the grants that are available right now. A homeless plan. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said so when you say a plan, you mean maybe some kind of committee formed to come up with some steps, some strategy on how we can make this happen. Is that what you mean? Ms. Burkett said well now we've already met with different ones throughout the community and we are working on a plan right now with the nonprofits. But they have to apply for the federal grants. They have to show that they have funds in reserve; and they have to show sustainability. And so far, we have not had anyone to show that, but we are continuing to work with a couple of groups who we think may be able to do that. Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said that's great. I would like to add to that though. Because it's one thing to work with nonprofits, but it's another thing for the city to actually take ownership of this as well. So whatever we can do, I'd like to know and maybe we can talk about it in future conversations and how we as a city can really tackle this even beyond the nonprofit organizations. Because obviously their funds are limited; and so whatever we can do to help, I'd like to see that. Ms. Burkett said we will see what we can do.

Councilmember LJ Bryant said just a question or two, if you don't mind, Mr. Chairman. What's the timing on the RAISE grant? I know the submission is pretty soon, but when

do we think we'd hear back on the RAISE grant based on prior experience? Director Regina Burkett said it will probably be the fall. Like I said earlier today, they're like six weeks ahead of what they've been in the past, which is very unusual because the grant came out in December. Usually it's February and it's due in April, so they're really pushing six to eight weeks ahead of what we've been in the past. Councilmember Joe Hafner said if I may add to that. One thing that I think was discussed today is about community support, letters. I think it's very important that all of us that believe in this project submit letters to our congressional members. Regina, is there anything you'd like to add on that? Ms. Burkett said so I'll be happy. We have three different support letters that we had today at the meeting. One was for people in healthcare, one was for neighborhoods, and one was for businesses here in the city. And we also had a sheet with their emails and phone numbers on it. I did suggest today that you wait until after February 28th to start contacting them because our grant needs to be in because anything can happen between now and then. We don't really want to contact people until we're sure the grant is in, and then we need to start contacting and let them know that the community is supporting this grant. I will be happy to email each of you the letters that we had; because we had three different letters, and I don't know which ones you all would want. I could send you all of them, but we had three different letters to each delegate in Washington, so there were three and each one was addressed to a different delegate. So I'll be happy to do that. I just need to know which one. I can send it to you all and maybe you can share it with friends. Also, I could bring some to finance next week or city council and leave them here in the city council chambers; because the Chamber of Commerce kept all that I had today since they felt like they had enough people that they could give those out to. So I'll bring some and put them in the council chambers in case anyone wants any.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said I think the regional approach is something that will be looked favorably upon, but the congressional members receiving these support letters will speak volumes. Director Regina Burkett said it will speak volumes.

Councilmember Joe Hafner said and it could tip the scales in our favor. Ms. Burkett said yes, it can. As I was saying today, so when we had our debriefing on our grant last year, the person that was doing the debriefing told us at the end that if he would have reviewed our grant, that he thought it was a great project, he would have moved it forward. And it's really important that if you're recommended, then that's really when our delegates need to really get involved and start moving it forward.

Chairman Chris Gibson said LJ, did you have another comment you wanted to make? Councilmember LJ Bryant said my only other one back on CDBG, and you know, I don't know, can you help any on the low-income areas on the flooding side? Is that a permissible use? Ms. Burkett said I need to look into that, because there is some infrastructure. But the thing is it's so expensive that, by the time you break it up, we don't have a lot of money that can go toward that that's going to take care of a problem because of the expense. Councilmember LJ Bryant said specifically what I was thinking of is I know engineering has gotten some 100% FEMA money on repetitive loss structures. And I know there's other money out there that's like 90/10, 80/20 and so on and so forth under repetitive loss, and I don't know how that fits into the CDBG box, but potentially stretches the dollar because they're buying a \$70,000 house and you've got to match ten, fourteen grand and you're maybe working on blight and working on flooding, so just a food for thought thing. Ms. Burkett said well, we are working with City Water & Light. If you will remember you passed the resolution for people having issues with their plumbing and they have to fill out an application just like it's a rehab application, but that will also help some of the issues that we have in these areas.

Councilmember Brian Emison said Ms. Regina, I knew back a long time ago when we talked about the Jonesboro Residential and Health Care Facilities Board here recently that we did a housing study to help out, and I think it went hand in hand with CDBG I think a long time ago. Can you think of anything, I mean, do you foresee another housing study that would need to be done or may make us more advantageous with any of these grant applications that we've been turning in or anything we may need to update or do a supplemental for? Ms. Burkett said how long ago was that, because that was before I came? Do you have any idea how long ago? Councilmember Brian Emison said I've at least been on there since 2018 and it was well before that, so I'm thinking it was probably ten, maybe fifteen years ago when it was originally done. Ms. Burkett said it may be time to do another one, I would say. Anything like that always helps, especially with the Community Development Block Grants.

[COM-23:001](#)

PARKS & RECREATION UPDATE

Sponsors: Parks & Recreation

[COM-23:002](#)

JET TRANSIT SYSTEM UPDATE

Sponsors: JETS

Director of JETS Michael Black approached the podium and said good afternoon. Last year we finished out a little better than we anticipated. For '22, we finished out at 83,036 trips at 17% above what we did in 2021. Year-to-date, right now through yesterday, we're at 10,926 trips; and the same period last year in '22, we were at 5,067. So we're building back again. Last year, we did add our 2022 Ford Transit 350 to replace the one that was totaled, which tremendously helped our paratransit service. We just continue to grow; and it gets a little tricky sometimes, because FTA does not like trip denials and thank goodness we haven't had to do any, but it's getting tricky sometimes to schedule all those trips. May the 26th, we will begin our summer youth program. That will go all the way through September the 2nd. Eighteen and under can ride anywhere we go for a quarter. I'm sure it'll really be a big hit once the pool gets over back behind Parker Park. I'm sure that stop will be as popular as the Jonesboro Pool Center is. June the 15th will be a free fare day in observance of the Dump the Pump. We will participate with many other transit agencies across the nation for the free fare and Dump the Pump. That's the third Thursday in June. And that's pretty much all I've got right now.

Chairman Chris Gibson said any questions for Michael? Councilmember Dr. Anthony Coleman said I think I do, Mr. Chairman. One quick question. I had a couple of citizens ask, are we having a problem with drivers themselves? Do we have enough drivers? Mr. Black said no. We have not had enough drivers in probably a year. I do have three full-time positions open right now. I've got a fully licensed driver starting this coming Monday; so after three weeks to a month of training, that will get that position taken care of. Right now, it's difficult to find any. We do have some in training, but they have made it a little bit difficult. We've got one that's waiting to get their birth certificate back before we can even go and get their CDL kit. Dr. Anthony Coleman said that's what I was going to ask. So if I had some person that were interested, so I know the CDL is one and valid driver's license, of course. Are there any other major things that I need to...? Mr. Black said good attitude. No, we will train to obtain, and I do have a certified driver training person on staff, because they've made it where they call it an entry level driver training now. Once you get your kit and you take your written test, that's when you start 40 hours of actual combined classroom and on the road training, and our certified trainer can do that. Then we log that into a website. Once

that gets in the state website, then we can schedule their trip to Newport or possibly with Jonesboro School District. They have a third party tester, plus we're beginning to develop a relationship with ASU Newport in their CDL training class to try to maybe attract some of their students and try to help them get the passenger endorsement side. Because that's one thing that they haven't done is offer a passenger endorsement for the license. Now they'll offer all your other endorsements which would be tankers and multiples and hazmat and all that, but we're trying to work with them to offer the passenger endorsement side of it. Chairman Chris Gibson said on that passenger endorsement side, does Forrest City offer that passenger endorsement side with their CDL program? They do not? Okay. We'll see what we can't do there as well.

Director Michael Black said okay. One advantage too, and I haven't really had time to sit down with Danny. I know he went and got that trolley. My lead technician went with him to go down and get it even though I think it wound up having to be towed back; but that would be a good tool for the passenger endorsement. Because state law says that you've got to have a like vehicle to go take the test on. And that one has air brakes, so that will require a Class B CDL, and that way we could get our drivers updated to the Class B with passenger endorsement if we could kind of swap that out between departments occasionally.

Chairman Chris Gibson said anything else? Okay, thank you. Anything else by the committee? One thing that I did want to ask for our next meeting, Madame Clerk, would you notify Danny that we would like to get a shooting range update for the next meeting please? I know he covered parks at the last one, but I don't believe that was discussed.

7. Public Comments

8. Adjournment

A motion was made by Joe Hafner, seconded by Brian Emison, that this meeting be Adjourned . The motion PASSED with the following vote.

Aye: 6 - Joe Hafner;Ann Williams;Brian Emison;LJ Bryant;Anthony Coleman and Janice Porter