

August 19, 2024

Council President Mr. Martin called the August 19, 2024 Special Belpre City Council meeting to order at 7:03pm. The roll was called with the following members present: Mr. Ambrozy, Mrs. Dennis, Mr. Ferguson, Mr. Locke, Ms. Riffle and Mr. Seebaugh present. Also present was Mayor Abdella, City Auditor Mrs. Nolan, Treasurer Mrs. Cassady and Clerk of Council Mrs. Meredith. Absent from the meeting was City Law Director Mr. Webster and Councilman Godfrey.

Council President Mr. Martin asked everyone to please rise for the Prayer and remain standing for the Pledge of Allegiance. President of Council Mr. Martin gave the invocation and led us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council President Mr. Martin asked all present if you have cellphones or any electronic devices to please turn them off or to vibrate so it won't interfere with the recording.

If you plan to address council this evening, please stand, come to the podium, state your name clearly so the clerk can get your information, and address council.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Mr. Ambrozy brought before council for first reading **AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING WATER RATES**. President of Council Mr. Martin asked Mr. Ambrozy to resend the motion because he didn't address **PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL - AGENDA items only.** Mr. Ambrozy resent the motion.

PERSONS APPEARING BEFORE COUNCIL - AGENDA items only -

Jesse Wonycott 805 Main Street Belpre addressed council regarding the base rate. Mrs. Wonycott questioned that in 2025 you are raising the rates up 50% from the 2024 budget. Mayor Abdella stated that no, it will only go up 20%.

Mr. Ferguson stated that she was mixing up the commercial rates with the residential rates. Mrs. Wonycott stated that the 4% just deals with the base rate of the water. Mayor Abdella stated that the water and sewer rates can be adjusted annually by the mayor, safety-service director, and the auditor by up to 4%. To me the water rate is \$2.32 per thousand and does not include the service fee of 4%. Mayor Abdella agreed.

Judy Drake 713 Oak Tree Lane stated that council has her most empathy for having to manage something that should have been taken care of 25 years ago. This has been neglect on previous administrations for not doing what they should have done. When I was on council, I did a lot of research and found that Belpre was so far behind on their rates that in my mind I wondered how they would ever get caught up. If you don't help yourself, you're not going to get help from outside especially when you need money for a new water tank. Eventually it comes to a point that when people don't do what they are supposed to do you have to draw a line in the sand, step over that line, bite the bullet and the community will have to respond because water, sewer and trash is a mandatory commodity among citizens whether you're a land property owner, landlord or whatever you are. This is your duty as a citizen to reside on this planet earth. When I leaved in Florida in the late 80's early 90's I paid more for these luxuries then what this comes up to. If you want it, you pay for it. You have my empathy and respect to do what you have to do to bring this community up to where it needs to be on these commodities.

Steve Null 2321 Washington Boulevard, Belpre stated that he wanted to add on to what Mrs. Drake just said. Years back council worked hard to have an excellent water system and fresh clean water. Mr. Null asked what the minimum bill would be when the rates come into effect. Mr. Ambrozy stated that currently for water the cost is \$17.92 and would go up to \$26.10 for 3,000 gallons. Most people get 2,000 gallons. Mr. Null asked what would the total bill go to for water, sewer and trash. Mr. Ambrozy stated that it would go from a minimum of \$65.15 to \$82.66 for water, sewer and trash. Mr. Null stated that the rules are changing on recycle trash. They have to sort trash and have had a lot of incidents where the sorters have been cut. So, because of safety issues they are changing the way of recycling.

Mayor Abdella informed Mr. Null that if he uses less than the 3,000 gallons your bill could potentially go down.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Mr. Ambrozy brought before council for first reading **AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING WATER RATES**. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye. Mr. Ambrozy stated that he would like for this to lie over until the next meeting of council.

Mr. Ambrozy brought before council for first reading **AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING SEWER RATES**. Mr. Ferguson discussed commercial customers outside or residential customers outside the city limits that don't take city water per 1,000 gallons of sewage. Mr. Ferguson asked how they would meter that? Mayor Abdella stated that most water and sewer rate customers outside the city are bulk. You're asking me a question that my understanding are water and sewer customers that are just being billed separately.

Mrs. Wynecott asked if Washington County when they meter down here are they considered commercial. According to Mayor Abdella right now there is a contract with the city that defines their rates. They are bulk users currently. Mayor Abdella or our new Safety-Service Director will to go talk with them. Mayor Abdella stated that the Safety-Service Director would go talk to them. Does the contract expire? Mayor Abdella stated that it is not a sound contract and needs modifications done to it.

Mr. Null asked Mr. Ferguson in the areas that they just use our sewage system is water available also. Mr. Ferguson stated that he couldn't answer that 100%. He stated they are getting the sewer and, in most cases, they are taking the water. Can we change that so they are also taking our water? Mr. Ferguson stated that in most cases they already are. Mr. Null stated that they could meter that.

Mayor Abdella stated she knows citizens that use our water but not our sewer because they still have septic systems.

A vote was taken on the first reading of **AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING SEWER RATES** with all members of council present voting aye. Mr. Ambrozy stated that this will lie over until the next meeting of council.

President of Council Mr. Martin stated that both pieces of legislation will lie over until the next meeting. This isn't something we want to have to do but we have no other choice. This council has worked very diligently putting numbers together to come up with the best plan.

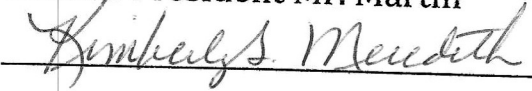
Darien Lorentz 1408 Roselawn Avenue stated that he is like everybody else he doesn't like to see an increase however he remarked that he feels that this council is doing the right thing. To have a strong community you have to have good infrastructure. We appreciate you being a strong council. Mr. Lorentz expressed the needs of this community.

ADJOURN:

Mr. Ferguson made a motion to adjourn at 7:22pm. A vote was taken with all members of council present voting aye.



Council President Mr. Martin



Clerk of Belpre City Council Mrs. Meredith