

Town of Fifty Six
Home of Blanchard Springs
6564 Hwy. 14 Fifty Six, AR
(870)757-2225

Mayor: Earnestine McDaniel

Recorder/Treasurer: Christina Byrd

Town Council Meeting
April 14, 2025

Members present were Aaron Byrd, Tim Hudspeth, Richard Wible, Rick VanEvera, and Lisa VanEvera

Visitors present were Delvin Freeman, Rebecca Ferguson, Linda Baca, Larry Treat, Marilyn Treat, Billy Mitchell, Kirby and Lora Curtis, and Matthew and Lisa Linn.

Meeting was called to order by presiding officer, Mayor Earnestine McDaniel.

Tim Hudspeth said opening prayer.

Christina Byrd read the previous month's minutes.

A motion to accept previous month's minutes was made by Aaron Byrd and 2nd by Tim Hudspeth. ALL IN FAVOR.

Christina Byrd read a summary of previous month's financial statement.

A motion to accept financial statements was made by Lisa VanEvera and 2nd by Rick VanEvera. ALL IN FAVOR

Tim Hudspeth asked for an update on the generator and propane tank for the transfer station. Delvin Freeman stated he believes a tank has been located and the generator is ordered. Tim asked that Earnestine invite Travis Trammell to the next meeting.

Christina Byrd reached out to Mary Elder and asked about moving the food box closer to town hall. Mary said that was not a problem and that her and her husband would move it. That discussion was before the tornado so the project is on hold.

Earnestine emailed the Clements regarding the land contract on Buck Pond and has not had a response yet.

ARWA is going to do an internal audit to see if we qualify for a loan to repair water towers. Tim Hudspeth would like to search for more grant options. Earnestine said grants are getting harder to get.

Council would like Mayor to reach out to people who could assist in teaching someone how to properly apply for grants.

The Town does not qualify for many grants due to number of residents that did not fill out the census causing the median income for the Town to be higher than it actually is.

Aaron Byrd suggested the idea of part of the maintenance money be considered to pay a loan payment. Tim Hudspeth expressed concern that maintenance money will be needed to maintain the water lines as they are aging.

Tim would like the council to think of incentives to get residents to fill out the census.

Earnestine informed the council that most grants available are 50/50 and the Town does not have 50% to cover their share.

Earnestine reiterated that water rates will not go down, they will continue to rise. Tim expressed the need for the Town to think of other ways to generate other means of finances.

Christina Byrd talked about the possibility of in the future turning the old school building on Balentine Street into apartments. Council would like Christina to check into legality of that. Richard Wible suggested it might be possible to get a loan and let the rent pay the payments. Aaron Byrd expressed concern of maintenance for the apartments. Tim said he feels outsourcing for maintenance would be best.

Lisa VanEvera suggested once the ball park is completed the Town could hold ball games to generate revenue.

Earnestine informed council that the Town received 2 checks from the Municipal League to cover the cost of damages from the tornado. The Town received \$26,979 and the fire department received \$1,331. Council would like at least 3 quotes for the work that needs to be done. Aaron would like to see an awning put up that is ADA compliant.

Delvin Freeman informed the council that he has repaired leaks through out the system. Delvin has also put another valve in to help isolate the leak that cannot be found. He was able to narrow it down and will repeat the process. Delvin also informed council there is a tree on a fire hydrant and he will be present when it is removed in case issues arise.

Lisa VanEvera asked when FEMA will be coming. Aaron Byrd stated FEMA has not determined if they are coming for sure yet and as soon as Glen Cyrmes knows we will notify the residents. IF FEMA comes they will help residents with low interest loans. In order for Fifty Six to qualify for FEMA there has to be 85% destruction.

Council discussed that someone had called the Governor's office saying they were Mayor McDaniel. The Mayor has reported the incident with OEM and he has notified the Governor's office.

Lisa VanEvera asked about the tornado siren being fixed. Aaron Byrd explained the county will no longer be paying to fix sirens. The cost of the siren is \$35,000. The siren was hit by lightning. This decision was made by the County Judge, OEM, and Quorum Court. Due to technology they feel residents have ample notifications available. Those who do not have or use cell phones can purchase weather radios and have them programmed. Ordinance 127 was tabled due to corrections needing to be made.

The highway department will continue to clean up debris on highways. They are taking the brush to Industrial Park where it will later be burned. The County Road Department is currently working on fixing roads throughout the county. They will start picking up debris on county roads once they finish up road repair.

Earnestine McDaniel informed the council that the judge ruled on the case with Matthew Linn. The ruling was in favor of the city. Since then Mr. Linn has removed debris from the water right of way.

Chief Aaron Byrd gave Fire Department report:

He has ordered a container to store tornado donated items in. It will cost \$2,800. It will be delivered and set up. Richard Wible mentioned he could get it \$700 cheaper from Texas. After discussion with council it was decided to get it local thru someone who will set it up.

Aaron informed council the big green tanker truck is now operable.

Firefighter Marcus Miller worked on it and it is now in service.

The fire department is required to house all trucks and there is not a place to store the truck because of its size. Delvin Freeman is willing to share his water shed with the fire department. Aaron said the department will have to put a door on the end of the building to get the truck in and out. Aaron Byrd will get quotes for the door installation.

Linda Baca was on the agenda. She publicly thanked everyone for an outstanding job handling the tornado clean up.

Tim Hudspeth made a motion to adjourn 2nd by Aaron Byrd. ALL IN FAVOR.

Mayor, Earnestine McDaniel

Recorder/Treasurer, Christina Byrd