

August 6, 2018
6:00 p.m.
Regular Monthly Meeting
Ripley City Courtroom

Mayor Pavletic presiding

Aldermen present: Alston, Beard, Chipman, Davis, Hankins and Treadway

Aldermen absent: none

Also present: Donna Buckner, Superintendent Scott Nelson, Assistant Chief Ronald Bonds, Chief Donnell Baltimore, Superintendent Johnie Ford, and Director Randy Danley

Visitors: Breanna Shelton, Delaney Mann, Nyiesha Gingery, Maddie Peyton, Abbie Sondgeroth, Kristy Sondgeroth, Lily Carmack, Cara Holmes, Bayleigh Conaster, Taylor Land, Hanna Carroll, Alexis Crowder, Amber Murphy, Shelby Odom, Taylor Walding, Ashlyn Gray, Carnie Rose, Dana Rose, Lindsey Hendren, Reagan White, Carole White, Hanna Chalk, Paige Hardee, Mary E. Barnes, Kim Byrd, Stephen Byrd, Seth Byrd, Cole Byrd, Ron Goforth, Amanda Adkerson, Jay Heath, Lee Johnston and Sandy K. Coss

Reagan White opened meeting with prayer.

Mayor Pavletic led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Mayor Pavletic introduced new student representative Seth Byrd.

Mayor Pavletic introduced Ripley High School Cheerleading Squad which placed first place at UT-Martin cheer camp.

1. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Chipman to approve July 2, 2018 minutes as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye
2. Motion by Alderman Hankins and second by Alderman Treadway to approve July 2018 financial statement as printed and delivered in agenda package. All aye

Correspondence: none

3. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Hankins to approve re-appointment of Don Ammons to Ripley Housing Authority Board for 5-year term August 2018 – August 2023. All aye
4. Motion by Alderman Alston and second by Alderman Davis to approve Ripley Housing Authority request for the city to waive construction permit fees related to the building of home to serve three clients of the Helen Tucker Center. All aye
5. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Hankins to approve 1st reading ordinance eliminating Item N of Title 17 Refuse and Trash Disposal. All aye
6. Motion by Alderman Chipman and second by Alderman Treadway to re-schedule September board meeting to September 4, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. due to Labor Day holiday. All aye
7. Motion by Alderman Hankins and second by Alderman Davis to approve contract agreement between Community Development Partners, LLC and the City of Ripley to provide administrative services for 2018 Site Development Grant. All aye

Alderman Hankins introduced Lieutenant Joe Bennett. Alderman Hankins stated Lt. Bennett spoke to another alderman about addressing the board and that alderman would not present it. Lt.

Bennett came to Alderman Hankins requesting to address the board concerning ongoing issues and some programs and ideas which he has to suggest in order to improve the department.

Lt. Bennett thanked the board for allowing him to speak. Lt. Bennett stated everyone knows the department is short-handed. We need to get that going. It's been over a year since there has been any promotions. We have one sergeant and one lieutenant spot that is open now. Promoting a lieutenant will open another sergeant spot. Proceed with promotions so that when new people are brought in the rank structure is already in place so we can hit the ground running. He's been with department 13 years and we have never been as low as we are right now. This is not the time for mediocrity. We shouldn't just pick up the first 5, 6 or 7 people that walk through the front door. We have the best opportunity we've ever had to turn this city and this police department around by hiring almost one-third of the personnel over again. Knows that it's dark-looking right now but we should not only look within the county but advertise outside the county and use social media to get new people in.

Lt. Bennett suggested implementing FTO (Field Training Officers) Program. It's the only way we are going to fix the department and make it relevant in the future (25-50 years down the road). A Field Training Officer would be two or three officers already in the department that already know how to do their job correctly and send them through a FTO training program. New officers would ride along with a FTO and be monitored and scored on their performance. Tipton, Dyer and Shelby Counties have this program in place. We hire a new officer (even if he's certified and has five years on the road) and have him ride the city to learn the streets for two week and turn him loose on his own. It's a disservice to him, the department and the city. We don't get what we're paying for. As a rule the FTO would receive \$40-\$50 more pay a week while they are training an officer or when going to training themselves. Any other time they go back to their base pay. It's not a big cost to the city but it pays off in the future because we're starting to get our stuff streamlined. Everyone has their own little flavor they put on a report. We need to get away from that. When you look at a police report you shouldn't be able to say "Bubba" wrote that report. You should be able to say it looks like someone from Ripley Police Department wrote that report because everybody writes the reports the same. Streamline our process and get everyone on the same page. Quit going from left to right and doing what we want to do and do what's standardized. The more training we have through a FTO Program the more we have to stand on in court.

Alderman Hankins stated we're talking about hiring and we've had some difficulty in getting officers hired here lately. He doesn't think it's particularly unique to our department because he sees where Memphis has lowered their standards from having to have a two-year Associates Degree. Sees advertisements from Dallas and Houston needing police officers. Doesn't think it's just with us. He stated he thinks we are having unique issues getting people hired. He asked Lt. Bennett why he thinks it's so different hiring people now as opposed to hiring under previous chiefs and administrations. Is it the manual?

Lt. Bennett stated it's not the manual. The department needed a new manual since before he got here. The policy was a good thing. It's a tool we can use now to train our new guys. Can't answer why we're not having more people. When he hired on in 2005 there were 30 applicants that applied. It's diminished over the years.

Alderman Davis asked if we hired 15 people tomorrow are we ready? Are we ready to hire? Do we have everything in place?

Lt. Bennett stated he couldn't answer that.

Alderman Davis asked Chief Baltimore if we are ready.

Chief Baltimore stated yes we are ready to hire if we can get someone to put the ad in the paper.

Alderman Davis asked why we haven't put the ad in the paper.

Chief Baltimore stated we just got some information. Ms. Rachel and Ms. Donna just gave us some information on the 23rd of this month that MIRC Rehabilitation was set up for our rehabilitation and agility tests was set up for that. We got all of the questions we needed from MTAS and we have the hiring staff. All it is is running the ad.

Alderman Davis asked Ms. Buckner if that's true.

Ms. Buckner stated she provided Chief Baltimore a copy of the rehabilitation on July 3rd and asked him to review it and if he had any changes or questions to get back with Ms. Robertson if not then they would have to begin the process of getting the testing worked out. Chief Baltimore has not responded back since July 3rd.

Alderman Hankins stated that's his main question and asked Ms. Buckner what's the difference now than when Jerry was chief or when Pop Durham was chief.

Ms. Buckner stated we have new manual and MTAS provided the board with information (a study) and advise them the necessary steps that needed to be done to improve this department.

Alderman Hankins stated that MTAS also told us it was good idea to hire some part-time certified officers already and we haven't done that. And idea why we haven't done that.

Ms. Buckner stated she thinks he needs to ask the chief that.

Chief Baltimore stated he did talk to Ms. Donna about that and Ms. Donna said there would be a standard that they would have to apply to which would be getting them certified, a manual and all that. Those types of situations. We haven't been able to run an ad. That would be something he would have to work with another department on.

Ms. Buckner stated since that day (2 months ago) she has not had any more conversation with the chief on that. But he has had conversation with the attorney and she has advised him of the process on how he should proceed. Nothing has been done.

Alderman Hankins stated that he has spoken briefly with Mayor Gaines and he said he wasn't sure he would be on board with letting his officer's work part-time.

Lt. Bennett stated we've had officers leave here, in good standing, to go back to their home jurisdictions that have expressed interest in coming back on a part-time basis if we needed them.

Ptl. Neal, from the audience, asked for permission to speak as an officer of the department.

Alderman Hankins asked Ptl. Neal if he was on shift.

Ptl. Neal stated yes but with here with authorization from his supervisor.

Mayor Pavletic asked who we have on the street right now since we have all these officers here.

Ptl. Neal stated Lt. Kirkpatrick and Ptl. Bolds were on patrol.

Alderman Chipman stated Lt. Bennett was the only officer on the agenda to speak.

Lt. Bennett stated his next item to present was the part-time issue. Several Lauderdale County Sheriff Deputies have expressed interest in working part-time but he has learned since that there may be an issue with upper management. However, we still have Covington, Tipton, Halls, Dyer and Dyersburg to pull from.

Alderman Hankins asked if we have an idea of what overtime cost per hour for an officer.

Chief Baltimore stated the average officer is making over \$20 per hour.

Alderman Hankins stated he thought he'd heard part-time would work for \$15.

Alderman Hankins asked Ms. Buckner if there was problem with going forward with placing an ad in tomorrow's paper for certified part-time officers. No one can tell him if there is anything wrong with going ahead and doing that.

Ms. Buckner stated we would be defeating the purpose by not hiring certified officers.

Alderman Hankins asked if there was any issue with running the ad tomorrow asking for part-time certified officers.

Ms. Buckner stated that someone needs to make the decisions on pay and benefits.

Lt. Bennett stated the good thing about hiring part-time is that there is no civil liability. If he's not doing his job simply don't call him back to work.

Ms. Buckner stated they would need to be provided uniforms.

Lt. Bennett stated department would provide one uniform.

Ms. Buckner stated that all items need to be determined before the ad.

Alderman Hankins stated he didn't necessarily mean advertise tomorrow but at least start preparing the list of requirements. It's not a permanent fix but it's a bandaide.

Ms. Buckner stated this was determined a long time ago.

Alderman Hankins stated he didn't have the proper understanding of what the holdup was there.

Ms. Buckner stated that is the proper understanding.

Alderman Hankins stated there's no issues with running a separate ad for part-time officers before we fill our full-time. Is that right?

Ms. Buckner stated that was correct.

Alderman Chipman asked how long has this been going on. It's been a year since we've hired an officer?

Alderman Hankins stated every time we think we're there someone changes it.

Chief Baltimore stated actually we did hire two officers. They would have been on the street at this time. They were hired under the old policy but for some reason we had a problem there.

Alderman Chipman stated he just bid on a job for the state. He made two mistakes on 25 pages of forms. They sent it back. He sees that with the police department. We need to get whatever needs to get done to get these officers hired as quickly as we can possibly can. This has been brought up over and over again. Doesn't know what the holdup is. Whatever paperwork needs to be done we need to get it done and over to City Hall and get these officers hired.

Alderman Alston asked who would make the decisions on who is promoted to lieutenants and sergeants.

Lt. Bennett stated as a rule it's an interview board who would give their findings to the chief and the chief would make that decision.

Alderman Alston asked who would be on the interview board.

Lt. Bennett stated the interview board are usually different every time.

Lt. Bennett stated his next item is a Recruiting Program. We're not in any of the schools. We're not investing in any of the kids. This is a long-term fix. You want individuals that are from this community, that grew up here, so that when you spend well over \$10,000 to send them to the academy they're not going to go somewhere else. They're invested in their community just like you're invested in them. We are not doing that and have never done that. Have a Junior Police Academy in the summer. Run them through the PT test. Take them to the range and let them shoot.

Mayor Pavletic asked Lt. Bennett to provide the board with his list.

Lt. Bennett stated another item is bringing back comp time pay for the police department. He knows it was abused in the past. But rather than punish the whole police department there could be a cap on it. We're about to hire seven people and before we can get those seven people hired someone else will probably leave. New employees have to work one year before they get one week of vacation. If we give them the option of comp time we give them some time off in that first year. Comp time will also help with the occurrence policy. Shift commanders can manage comp time for their own shifts.

Mayor Pavletic ask Ms. Buckner if there is a limit for comp time.

Ms. Buckner stated there is a limit but that was not the only problem in that department. Part of it was record keeping.

Mayor Pavletic ask who was responsible for keeping up with it.

Ms. Buckner stated Lynn Gould is the one that has been doing it. But it was several years ago. Everyone was paid out. But it was all because of record keeping.

Mayor Pavletic instructed Lt. Bennett to get the board a list. Anything to improve the department this board would be unanimous on.

Lt. Bennett stated his last item was the \$30 clothing allowance. When Lynn Gould was hired in 1982 it was \$30 per month. When Joe Purcell was hired in 1977 it was \$30 per month. The last time he had three uniforms embroidered it was \$75.

Alderman Chipman stated we just went through the budget. The chief was there. None of this was brought up during the budget discussions.

Lt. Bennett stated his suggestion wouldn't cost the city any more money. In the past officers charged more than what was allotted but instead of making the officers pay the overage the city paid it. We have to pay taxes on the \$30 which brings it down to \$22 and when an officer buys something they pay sales tax. So we're down to \$18-\$20 per month to buy uniforms that cost \$100 a piece. Holsters \$100. Boots \$150. Stinger flashlight \$125. Raincoat \$75. Officers are buying their own equipment. Officers are not asking for a handout. It's been the same since 1977. We're asking for \$360 so that we can use the full \$360 instead of ending up with \$240. The city would issue a purchase order and not pay sales tax.

Alderman Davis stated to Lt. Bennett for the record Mr. Hankins stated you (Bennett) went to another alderman. He (Davis) was that other alderman and for the record he didn't feel it was his position to put someone from the police department on the agenda. Out of respect for him (Hankins) and his department he (Davis) declined. He stated he appreciated Lt. Bennett coming and bringing some good ideas and points are well taken. But his question is have you (Bennett) run these by the chief.

Lt. Bennett stated some of them. He was told by Jerry Temple that City Hall said not to bring up comp time again.

Alderman Davis asked Alderman Hankins if he didn't have enough confidence in the chief to make this presentation since it's his department.

Alderman Hankins stated the chief didn't approach him and ask him.

Lt. Bennett stated this was his. He worked this up. The chief didn't. The chief knew he (Bennett) was coming before the board but only the part-time issue had been discussed. He (Bennett) didn't go behind anyone's back and the chief didn't put him up to anything.

Alderman Davis stated that while he appreciates Lt. Bennett's points but in the future he thinks that anything that comes from a department, whether its police, fire or any department it needs to be presented by the department head not individual employees.

Alderman Hankins stated we had a disciplinary meeting on 5/25 and department heads weren't in there giving 14 page reports either.

Alderman Davis stated that was grievance.

Alderman Hankins stated it was a grievance but it turned into a three hour meeting about the chief.

Alderman Davis stated he just wanted to go on record that he didn't want to interfere with the liaison from another department.

Lt. Bennett stated that when Alderman Davis gave him that explanation he was fine and that he knew that Mr. Hankins would take it.

Mayor Pavletic asked what the Sheriff's department do on their clothing allowance.

Lt. Bennett stated they buy uniforms when they are needed. They don't have a clothing allowance.

Alderman Hankins asked what a new officer is provided.

Lt. Bennett read the list of items and stated he would provide list to board.

Alderman Beard stated that just doesn't see why he had to come to his board. He doesn't know why. We have a police commissioner. He's in charge of that department. He doesn't know why these kinds of things can't be settled within the department without coming to this board. Everybody can't bring department issues to this board to be settled here and take this much time. It's embarrassing to this city, the mayor, the aldermen, Ms. Donna and the attorney that we sit up here a year and not hire somebody. How in the world can that happen? We've got to do better than this as a city. Somebody needs to go. Maybe even me (Beard). But we can't run a city this way. The little things that have been brought up here about pay, uniforms- how many years has he been here- he's never heard this. This should have been settle way before coming to this board. That's why we have a commissioner. That's why we have aldermen. So he doesn't understand. He doesn't know the answer. But does know it's embarrassing to him. It may not be to anyone else. So he's hoping we can get on board here and get this resolved. Now we're talking about part-time policemen instead of filling the positions we need filling. Then we talk about part-time. That's his thoughts on the whole idea. He is embarrassed and he hopes if there is anything he can do someone will tell him because he wants us to look good. And this is not looking good. We're pitching blames here and there. But the blame falls back on all of us. So the answer is we need to come together, other than at this board, and come up with some solutions.

Department Reports:

Ripley Parks & Recreation: Director Randy Danley gave monthly report.

Ripley Public Works & Codes Departments: Superintendent Johnie Ford gave monthly report.

Ripley Police Department: Chief Donnell Baltimore gave monthly report.

Ripley Fire Department: Assistant Chief Ronald Bonds gave monthly report.

Ripley Gas, Water & Wastewater Department: Superintendent Scott Nelson gave monthly report.

Ripley Power & Light Department: Alderman Beard gave monthly report.

Ripley Housing Authority: Alderwoman Alston gave monthly report.

Ripley Downtown Development: Director Lee Johnston announced upcoming events.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Donna Buckner, Recorder

Jon Pavletic, Mayor