

**CITY OF CENTERTON
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
CALLED BY COUNCILMAN TOMMY LAIRD
AND COUNCILWOMAN ROBIN REED
JANUARY 30, 2012**

The special city council meeting was called to order by Mayor, Bill Edwards, Tommy Laird and Councilwoman, Robin Reed. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited and a prayer was offered by Todd Wright. Those Present and answering roll call were Mayor Bill Edwards, Robin Reed, Josie Reed, Keith Higginbotham, Tyler Steele, Skye Petty and Tommy Laird. Those present and not answering role call were Jennifer Robinson, Todd Wright, Brian Rabal and Andrew Huntsinger.

Mayor Edwards addressed the council and the audience and stated that the purpose of this meeting is to have a discussion about the Centerton Fire Department, mainly due to an article that was in the paper on Saturday, January 28, 2012. He stated that the council wanted to come together to see if there was anything that we needed to address. He stated that he had received several calls from citizens that wanted to make public comments regarding this situation. The Mayor opened the meeting to public comments and asked that speakers state their name for the record and keep their comments under 5 minutes.

Jimmy Thompson addressed the council and stated that he felt that this meeting should have been held on Friday, January 20, 2012 (Jeff Coffelt was terminated on Thursday, January 19th). He compared the situation to an employee at a local bank being fired from one branch and being allowed to work at another branch. He said that he thought it reflected sadly to the city to not address it the very next day. He said he was ashamed. He said that he has made his share of phone calls and asked the council to take care of the situation that he has made known for 3 years.

Councilwoman Robin Reed stated that she is the one that asked for information from the firemen at the last council meeting, prior to all of this going down, because everybody knows, including Jeff Coffelt, that we have included funds in our city budget to hire a full-time Fire Chief or whatever will help the city move forward. She stated that she has asked for information so that we can get the city council, the community and the firemen together to help make that decision. She said that this was not to lash out at people and that she wanted this input to help us move forward as a community. She stated that she said this again at the fireman training meeting. She stated that she didn't feel like anyone should be punished for stating their opinion in this situation because everyone's individual opinion is needed in the situation that we are in.

Mayor Edwards stated that he has been the Mayor for one year. He said that he has worked with Jeff Coffelt on the fire side only, for that one year. He stated that he does not work with him regarding Water & Sewer. He stated that he has had no issues with Jeff over that time. He stated that he is hard to get a hold of sometimes. He gave details about

a rope launcher issue with the county judge that was resolved. He reminded everyone that the City of Centerton and the Water & Sewer Commission are 2 separate entities. The mayor stated that he was on the phone with the Municipal League the night of the firing, asking them to look at our employee handbook to see if the city had probable cause for disciplinary action and they said we did not. He said he has also had discussions with our city attorney, Brian Rabal and that everyone is in agreement. The mayor stated that he appreciates our fire department and the work that they do. He thinks overall they are doing a good job. He stated that as mayor if there was more to this and he felt that there was a need to terminate or suspend, he would do that right away. He said that he doesn't see a need for that in the current situation.

Chris Benefield stated that the fire department would still be turning in some recommendations and that the letter that was turned in recently was just a response to a letter that was written. He said that they would turn in those recommendations to Mayor Edwards and let him disseminate them out.

There were no other public comments.

Keith Higginbotham recommended that the Mayor and City Council adjourn and go into Executive Session and all council members voted in favor. The time was 6:40 p.m.

The Mayor and City Council returned from Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. Keith Higginbotham made a motion to return to the special city council meeting with a 2nd from Tommy Laird. All council members voted in favor and the motion carried.

Mayor Edwards stated that the he and the council met and decided that Jeff Coffelt will remain as Fire Chief and stated that there is a city code that allows a \$100.00 spending limit per transaction. He stated that any purchase over that amount has to come before the Mayor for approval. He also stated that any hiring or firing in the Fire Department has to have Mayoral approval according to our Employee Handbook. Josie Reed made a motion to retain Jeff Coffelt as Fire Chief with these stipulations with a 2nd from Tommy Laird. All council members voted in favor and the motion carried. Tommy Laird made a motion to proceed tomorrow with advertising for the position of part-time Fire Chief with a 2nd from Skye Petty. All council members voted in favor and the motion carried.

There was no more business or announcements and Tyler Steele made a motion to adjourn with a 2nd from Robin Reed. All council members voted in favor and the motion carried.

Bill Edwards, Mayor

Todd Wright, City Clerk/ Recorder