

A Citizen's Response to the 2023 Year-End Report

It is unfortunate citizens cannot expect full transparency in the information we receive on our city's website. In respect of your time, I will be as brief as possible.

1. I totally disagree with the notion of any alderperson being responsible for disseminating \$100,000 to "assist" citizens. I do not recall any specifications as to the qualifications of this assistance, and with our community consisting of an overwhelming number of renters I can see this being an administrative nightmare. Besides, all elected officials are not financial managers, and that only increases the possibility of mismanagement. The ARPA funds would best be managed from one source. I am pleased the Board rejected this idea.
2. There are two critical issues regarding the resolution for the one-time municipal administrative pay for employees. First, there was disagreement on how to fairly administer these funds. There was debate on whether a part time employee(s) who had recently been promoted to full time should receive the same compensation as employees who had been full time throughout the entire pandemic. Three alderpersons voted they all should receive the same compensation, three alderpersons thought there should be an adjustment. There never was a "highly contested" position as to whether these employees should receive this compensation, although that was communicated throughout City Hall. The Mayor Reverend broke the tie in favor of everyone receiving the same compensation. But the most critical reality is that the vote was simply to amend the language of the resolution, not to adopt the resolution itself. The City Attorney was directed to go back and amend the resolution to update the verbiage. That is protocol. This fact was verified by the City Attorney in the meeting minutes on this website, as well as in a document I obtained via a Sunshine Request.
3. I will reserve my comments regarding the \$1M USDA Forestry Grant.
4. Sure, as a community, most of us would probably not be in favor of slot machines in gas stations in our city. The fact is the city has been trying to get these machines removed since the Pierson administration. Former Police Idhler explained to me he had been working with the Missouri Gaming Commission for years. The placement and/or removal of this equipment falls under the jurisdiction of the State of Missouri, not any administration of any local municipality. We are grateful the State of Missouri was finally responsive to our city.
5. The Rec Center project began transformative renovations under the Pierson administration. We are all happy to see its completion in 2023.

6. At the May 4, 2023 BOA meeting there was a lot of unsettling information regarding our city's finances. There is too much for me to summarize here, but the fact that the finance department had not reconciled our bank statements for two years was a major concern. In summary, the Board voted 5 to 2 in favor of a hiring freeze EXCEPT for essential personal (and whether or not a candidate was in the middle of the hiring process), a halt on extracurricular activities (summits and other recognitions/celebrations), and the completions of audits in order to know where we financially stand as a city. From my view, that was a responsible thing to do. It was stated that if funds were necessary for various concerns, that information would be brought to the Board for approval. Additionally, the Board reduced the police recruitment/community outreach fund from \$7000 to \$5000. The Chief acknowledged he could manage with that; if we put a halt on summits, et al, there would be no need to buy t-shirts and tote bags for those kinds of activities. After all, if you review our latest budget information on our website, since 2019 you will see the police department has received \$900, to \$252, to \$1500, to \$7000, to \$0 for community outreach. So yes, the former Chief did not object to a \$2000 reduction for swag. And we all know the huge deficit our region, and the entire nation is experiencing with a lack of police officers (and teachers, and doctors, and...)

So no, the Mayor Reverend's reason for vetoing our 2023-24 budget is not based in facts. Maybe because of the halt in the social gatherings part, but certainly not because of a lack of money for essential personnel and police giveaways and promotions. In fact, the new budget included hiring of city workers. Regarding the assertion of "usurping" authority, the MO Municipal League directed me to MO Statute 79.110, and the organizational chart for 4th class cities. You will read that these are both CO-EQUAL functions of government; the notion of either function "usurping" the other is simply not true. Regarding the mayor functioning as the city administrator (a position we have never filled), the COMPLETE ordinance reads the city administrator has NO AUTHORITY to act independently without the approval of the Mayor AND the Board of Aldermen. And until both functions are willing to accept this fact there will always be questions of confidence.

I really didn't plan to take this much time, and time will not permit me to address other issues in this report. Everything I shared is on the city's website or in an email. Everything. Because to me, it would be beyond disconcerting and poor character of me to try to take advantage of people who may be unaware of the complete truth. It will come back to bite you when you least expect it, because we all must stand account for our own actions.

Wanda Lane

Citizen/Voter

Dialogue for the Mayor's 2023 Year-End Report

It is exciting that citizens are responding to the 2023 Year-End report I posted. So that we can create a safe place to communicate, we will be posting responses on our website and the next-door community app. I'm responding to **Mrs. Wanda Lanes's response!**

1). I proposed a strategic plan for **\$100,000** to be **allocated** for each Ward. Any funds dispensed from the city are subject to proper accounting procedures. That is the **responsibility of the Finance Department**. Several municipalities, Jennings, Dellwood, and Ferguson cities, St. Louis City, and states **created programs using guidelines** set by the United States Department of the Treasury to assist citizens. **(Click the link for guidelines and read what others implemented)**. <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/coronavirus/assistance-for-state-local-and-tribal-governments/state-and-local-fiscal-recovery-funds>

<https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/mayor/initiatives/arpa/st-louis-arpa-resource-guide.cfm>

2). There was **never** a discussion about paying employees equally. A motion was made to discuss and vote on the resolution and add the verbiage proposed by Alderwoman Hester. This statement was **repeated several times, including before the vote**. The One-Time Municipal Administrative Pay discussion included setting criteria by which each category of employee would be paid: full-time working 32 hours or more, part-time working at least 20 hours, and seasonal workers. Also, whether or not a longtime part-time employee of 11 years who was recently promoted would have to be subjected to the same probationary period as a new hire to receive the amount allocated for full-time employees. The motion was made to adopt the resolution as is, adopting the verbiage from Alderwoman Hester; the votes were **3 yes and 3 no**. **I broke the tie and voted yes**

(Click the link to read the Thursday, October 5, 2023 meeting minutes and watch the video. The discussion starts at 4:56 minutes).

https://www.cityofbn.com/download_file/view_inline/2948/356

https://youtu.be/e4kUoTDIB_Q

3). I welcome the discussion!

4). Mrs. Felecia Bishop was hired Monday, June 5, 2023, and wasted no time familiarizing herself with our ordinances. She encountered several businesses that were inquiring about obtaining liquor licenses. After researching, she found an ordinance <https://ecode360.com/documents/BE3235/public/485080430.pdf> that states it is illegal to have gambling or games of chance in our city. I agree that it has been a longstanding issue. After working with our legal counsel and building rapport with business owners and suppliers of the gaming machines, **Mrs. Bishop enforced the law. ALL gaming machines were picked up by the vendor who provided them.**

5). I agree that renovations of our Recreation Center commenced under the previous administration. **They were completed in Summer 2023.**

6). **A. I agree** that for several years there have been serious concerns about the state of our finance department. Until we adequately staff our finance department, some concerns will linger. Our FY2021 was completed on June 6, 2023. The FY2022 audit **was due January 27, 2023, and it's late!** Bank reconciliations **were not done** from July 2022 until November 2023, which is **16 months**. Our FY 2023 audit was **due January 27, 2024, and will be late**. Completing bank reconciliations is paramount to beginning an audit. We will be **prepared to start our FY2023 audit by Friday, January 19, 2023! We hope to restore our bond rating by 2025.**

B. MO State Statue 79.110 gives the Mayor and the Board of Alderman equal responsibility for the city's finances. <https://law.justia.com/codes/missouri/2022/title-vii/chapter-79/section-79-110/> **City's Ordinance #2418 Sec.2-47**
<https://ecode360.com/29088870?highlight=&searchId=13420719619526927#29088870>
Shows the powers and Duties of the City Administrator free from the interference of the legislative branch. When the office of the City Administrator is vacant, the Mayor takes on those powers and duties! The Board of Alderman has no authority to hire or fire employees or freeze hiring without creating an ordinance! **Bill #2674 seeks to usurp that authority.**

The salary for a City Administrator, Assistant Finance Director, additional Police Officers, Building Inspector, and part-time Maintenance Person was not in the budget. All but one are essential employees and are vital in offering citizens services and safety and meeting deadlines for required reports to the federal government, the state of Missouri, and insurance providers.

Information is always open to interpretation, but **FACTS** can't be refuted. Please read at your leisure. Let's keep the conversation going! You can also email me at dtatman@cityofbn.com or our city clerk at Sruffinhall@cityofbn.com, the next-door app, or call 314-867-0076, 314-706-0920.

YOUR SERVANT LEADER

Mayor Dinah Tatman