

City of Haskell

Clyde Crookham, Jr.

Mayor

2520 Highway 229

Benton, AR 72015

(501) 776-2666

Fax: (501) 776-1201

Jennifer Hill

Recorder/Treasurer

Dear Citizens of the great City of Haskell.

This is the written statement of the City of Haskell on the unfortunate event that took place during the comment section of the city council meeting on January 9th, with six (four full time and two reserves) of the Haskell police department. We will address all the concerns of the officers brought to light during this meeting and the city of Haskell will have no other statements or comments concerning this matter.

Let's review the concerns of the two former officers that commented at the Haskell city council meeting on the night of January 9th.

Joshua DiCicco

Comments transcribed by the Haskell City Clerk:

SEE Attachment 1: Joshua DiCicco Comments

Pay:

I advised former officer DiCicco that we would take it under advisement. I then asked the city attorney to look into this matter of the pay. If he was correct and the city has not paid them correctly, we need to correct this problem immediately.

Training:

There is a line item in the police budget for training along with other expenditures for the department. The allocation of funds from the City's general fund for the police department has to be allotted to each line item in order of importance, the bills of the department come first and anything that is left is allocated between training, equipment and other needs of the department. This goes for any department of the city.

The Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Training along with the Arkansas Criminal Justice Institute establishes the minimum training standards for law enforcement officers in Arkansas. The

training these two agencies provide is free of charge to the department. There is specialized training that cost for officers to attend. The department and community needs are always considered before authorizing an officer to attend. If an officer wishes to attend training that is not approved by the City, they do it at their own expense.

In the nature of a major incident happening in the city of Haskell, the Arkansas State Police, Saline County Sheriff's Department and other Law Enforcement agencies in the County would be requested to respond. These agencies have the resources, specialized training and the man power to deal with a major situations better than our small department.

SEE Attachment 2: Officer Training Hours

Officers on duty:

I prefer that there always be two officers on duty per shift. I am working with the Chief of Police at this time to verify that all officers, no matter their rank, are working the streets of Haskell. Prior to January 9th, the budget for the department would not support adding more officers.

Uniforms:

The Chief and I had a conversation on the morning of January 4th on the image of the Haskell Police Department. We both agreed that the department should wear a more professional looking uniform. I am working with the Chief for the funding of new uniforms.

SEE Attachment 3: 15.04 HPD Uniforms and Personal Appearance Policy

Equipment:

When deciding to buy any equipment for the department, we have to justify the need for that equipment in the community's best interest and the department's budget. Ballistic shields and breaching tools are items that would warrant justification by the department before purchasing. At this time, there has been no justification.

As I have stated before, there are other state, county and city departments that have the resources, specialized training and the man power to deal the major situations better than our department does. The chief has been informed that we will utilize these agencies if we require them to assist our department. The City of Haskell will always be protected in any kind of major event.

Haskell Police Department received a \$100,000 dollar grant which was approved by Mayor Carman and the City Council on December 12. This grant is for equipment for the Haskell Police department. The department will be purchasing new portable and mobile radios for each officer. They are also purchasing new radars for each unit with this grant. The grant is for equipment only and cannot be used to purchase new vehicles.

SEE Attachment 4: ASP Grant

Jimmy Forman

Comments transcribed by the Haskell City Clerk:

SEE Attachment 5: Jimmy Forman Comments

Officer Hutto:

There was a comment made that Officer Hutto was driving his personal vehicle and taking calls in it. If this is true, it is unacceptable. An officer may be required to drive their personal vehicles to work and then obtain a city issued vehicle. Officer Hutto's unit was in the city shop for approximately three days total. Not a month or two as Jimmy Forman stated.

Unit Maintenance:

The Haskell Police Department vehicles are all in working order. If an officer reports that a vehicle needs maintenance or repairs, those issues are handled and repaired promptly.

SEE Attachment 6: 16.04 Care and Maintenance of HPD Vehicles

New Units:

I never said that the officers would have to hot seat a unit. I have no idea where that came from.

New units are a large expense that the City will have to budget for. As the incoming mayor, it would not be a wise decision on my part to budget for a large expense like units on my first year, before I had time to see where the city stood with the budget for the year.

Pay:

I do believe in giving our officers more pay but only if the general fund and the police sales tax can support it. Haskell does not have a policy on how a pay raise is given to any employee at this time. A policy for this will be developed and presented to the city council at a later date.

Chief Hicks presented me with the starting pay of Benton, Bryant and Saline County Sherriff office. We discussed the pay issue and I informed him that I would look into this matter.

SEE Attachment 7: Saline area Departments Pay Scales

Uniforms paid for by:

During the September 12 City Council meeting, council member Brad Cotten inquired about the expiration date on the tactical vest worn for officer safety. After a brief discussion, funds from the general administration fund were diverted to the police budget to purchase the vest and extra cameras that are needed. The police department also spent a total of \$8,220.08 on uniform items from Teeco Safety during 2022.

Officer Caple took it upon himself to purchase the items or accessories that officer Foreman mentioned. The items needed for an officer to perform his duties are provided by the city.

Officer Caples unit that Officer Forman was referring to with the headlight out is a 2018 Dodge Charger. As I have stated before it is the officer's responsibility to have the maintenance report or performed in a timely manner. *Please refer back to Attachment 6: 16.04 Care and Maintenance of HPD Vehicles.*

SEE Attachment 8: Haskell City Council Minutes Sept 12, 2022

SEE Attachment 9: HPD Transactions with Teeco Safety

Fire Department:

Every city department has their own budget that consists of tax revenue and a portion of the general revenue funds. The city cannot take the tax revenue allocated to one department and transfer it to another. The only funds the city can allocate is the general fund revenue.

The Fire Department budget consists of a one cent sales tax that is allocated to the fire department. Chief Brain Cotten does an excellent job of budgeting for the fire department expenses.

The Police Department budget consists of a 3/4 cent sales tax that is allocated to the Police department.

The City Parks budget consists of a 1/4 cent sales tax that is allocated to the Parks.

Positions:

Officer Forman was incorrect on the Arkansas State Police having authority on the rank structure of the Haskell Police Department. The city council is the governing body of the city by state law.

The Chief and I did have a conversation on the position of the assistant chief slot. I informed him of the state statute and advised him that the city council would have to approve this position by ordinance.

A.C.A. § 14-52-201, states: "The governing body of a municipality shall, by general ordinance, direct the number of subordinate police officers to be appointed."

Mayor's statement:

The first time I was made aware of any problems with the police department was about four hours before the city council meeting when I received a call from one of the TV news channels informing me they would be coming to the meeting. The TV reporter was the only person who informed me of the concerns of the officers before the meeting. I also received a call shortly after talking with the news channel from a concerned citizen of a possible walk out. I called Chief Hicks to see if he had heard anything concerning the officers' intentions of coming to the meeting and walking off the job. He advised that he had not. I wanted to have a contingency plan in place if this was true. I immediately contacted Sheriff Wright and advised him of the situation. Sheriff Wright assured me that the sheriff department would assist in any way possible to protect the citizens of Haskell.

As a retired law enforcement officer, I fully support the Haskell police department and its officers. I have worked closely with the chief on the budget of the police department. I have repeatedly informed the

chief during multiple meetings that the budget can be amended by City Council to add more funds during the year if needed.

Budget Committee Minutes transcribed by the Haskell City Clerk:

SEE Attachment 10: City of Haskell Budget Committee Minutes December 5, 2022

As Mayor it is my responsibility to look at all the needs of the City as a whole and provide the City Council with a balanced budget. The general budget for the City operates on a projected budget of revenue for the year. I choose to be conservative with the projected budget to start out the new year. As with any city government, it is the responsibility of the Mayor, department heads and the City Council to be good servants of the people's money.

SEE Attachment 11: Resolution 02-2023 adoption of 2023 budget

Under my administration, the city will take the concerns of the people and employees into consideration during the comment section of a City Council meeting. The City will look for a good outcome for these concerns that will benefit both parties in due time. The City will not give into demands, ultimatums, or threats from employees during the City Council meeting. The way these officers decided to act on their concerns was totally inappropriate.

One of my campaign issues was to be transparent on all issues of the City. I do apologize to the citizens of Haskell for not providing a statement sooner. As you know I had to look into the comments made by the former officers. I also had to wait for the internal investigation that was started on January 5th to be completed by Chief Hicks and reviewed by the prosecuting attorney's office on three of the officers involved with the walk out on January 9th.

The officers were being investigated for violating a person's 4th amendment rights. Any FOIA request should be directed to the city attorney Ms. Clancy.

In closing, I have dedicated most of my adult life to serving the public in law enforcement. Good officers make a difference in the world and touch many lives along their career! Bad officers will eventually show their true character and their lack of honor will remove their badge forever just as it should be. It has been public knowledge that there has been and probably never will be the pay that officers deserve to put their lives on the line for a complete stranger. The number one reason I chose a career in law enforcement is to help and protect people. You may not know when or where you save or changed someone's life forever by your actions. When you do, that is the most satisfying part of the job and you cannot put a price tag or hourly wage on that kind of accomplishment. It's not for everyone and there is no shame in that. When you signed up, you knew the risk and what the job pays.

I want to say Thank you for everyone that has supported us during this difficult time and a HUGE thank you to our amazing City Council, citizens, and all the city workers. I am blessed to be a part of a great team.