

**CITY OF HARPER, KANSAS
COUNCIL MEETING
MONDAY, APRIL 13, 2026 6:30 P.M.
CITY HALL – 201 W. MAIN ST.
ERIC LATTA, MAYOR**

Council met in regular session with Mayor Latta in chair.

Eric Barker *Present*

Pat Kerschen

Doug Murphy *Present*

Jeff Capps *Present*

Kenneth Leu *Present*

Brande Vogele *Arrived 7:02 p.m.*

Pledge of Allegiance & Invocation

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Murphy second by Leu to remove the order of violation of 108 W. 8th ST. from the consent agenda and have it set aside as a discussion item. Motion carried 4 – 0.

Minutes of the March 23, 2026 Council Meeting.

Appropriation Ordinance No. 20260413

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Ken Leu to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 4- 0.

Public Comment:

Department Reports:

Police: 2 VIN checks, 2 unsolicited contractors, 4 speak to officer, 1 civil, 1 funeral, 3 lockouts 2 dog at large, 1 agency 1 suicide, 1 warrant, 1 criminal trespass, 1 c in need of care. Councilman Murphy thanked the police department for their assistance with the poker run.

Fire: none

Public Works: Street prepared the park for Easter Egg Hunt, over 5,000 eggs were donated. They also assisted the water department installing 500 feet of the new 6” main

Council Action/Deliberations:

Mayor Latta opened sealed bids received for the removal of dangerous structures at 1912 Pine St.

Bid 1: Barker Sand and Gravel \$21,000 Bid 2: Diamond Fencing \$9,500.

Pat Prouse addressed Council. He sent out solicitation for bids as well, never got a response, but didn’t dream it would be that much.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Ken Leu to award the contract for the removal of the dangerous structure located at 1912 Pine St. to Diamond Fencing for a cost not to exceed \$9,500, to be paid out the General – Condemnation fund. Motion carried 4- 0.

Mayor Latta opened sealed bids received for the removal of dangerous structures at 604 Oak St.

Bid 1: Barker Sand and Gravel \$7,400 Bid 2: Diamond Fencing \$7,000

Motion by Eric Barker second by Jeff Capps to award the contract for the removal of the dangerous structure located at 604 Oak St. to Diamond Fencing for a cost not to exceed \$7,000, to be paid out the General – Condemnation fund. Motion carried 4- 0.

City Council to discuss the continued ad valorem exemption for Cox Machine, without having met the employment retention/expansion as set forth in the original agreement. Morgan Wiebe was in attendance representing Cox Machine. She explained to governing body some struggles the local aviation industry had experienced that impacted Cox Machine’s employment numbers including a Boeing door plug issue, followed by Boeing layoffs and the after affects that impacted Cox Machine’s cash flow. She acknowledged they were under the agreed upon employment numbers but shared their expected projected growth at more than 13%. Their goal was to continue to expand, not just in Wichita but also in Harper.

Council deliberated the value of honoring the contract versus approving the final year of the EDX program and the positive impact it could have on Cox Machine's pursuit of growth. It was the consensus of the City Council for the city clerk to submit the annual exemption letter for Cox Machine to receive their final year exemption.

Council reviewed the request to charge the costs of sewer main clean out on West 16th St. to the private user at 210 W. 16th St. that caused a significant blockage of grease in the public sewer main on March 5, 2026.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Ken Leu to approve the charge of \$660 that was incurred by Mayer Specialty to break up the grease block that was pushed into the public sewer main from the private sewer of 210 W. 16th St. to Angel Carreto the active account holder of 210 W. 16th St. Motion carried 5- 0.

Councilman Capps expressed concern that there might be food trucks dumping grease and wastewater down car wash drains. Staff will research on existing regulations and potential violations.

Scott Day, Day Insurance Solutions, was in attendance to discuss the health insurance renewals for the 2026-2027 benefit year. He presented on the City's medical expense reimbursement program (MERP) and renewal rates. The BCBS premiums increased 58.5%, but having the health claims fund, the overall increase would be 27%. He quoted outside of BlueCross BlueShield of Kansas, and the quotes were either significantly higher than BCBS or they declined to quote. He believes it is the City's geographic area (pool) that was causing the increase because the claims data for the City's group did not justify the increase. At 27% the claims fund was funded at 39.72% which was lower than what he recommended, but still manageable. If the Council chose to increase the employees out-of-pocket the City could reduce their increase to 21%. If the City kept the same plan but changed the MERP administrator (TPA) it could fund the claims fund at 44.92% and see a 24% increase. If they changed the plan and MERP administrator then they could reduce the increase 19.3%. Council deliberated the employee benefit package as it relates to overall employee pay when it comes to recruitment.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Jeff Capps to accept the 2026 BCBS Blue Choice Level-Funded health insurance renewal, utilizing EZ MERP as the City's TPA to also include the 2026 BCBS Dental Care Program renewal, leaving employee benefits the same. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Order of violation on 108 W. 8th St. discussion. Councilmember Murphy asked about having an initial discussion with the property owner. Putting it in the consent agenda is sneaking it by.

Vehicles do not belong to the owner. They were towed to that property without his consent. Blue & white duly is in the process being fixed. If it is towed it goes to the registered owner not property owner. Would like to see them as agenda items, not consent agenda. Would like to see an initial conversation. Chief Burns said police job is enforcement, not babysitting.

Motion by Doug Murphy second by Ken Leu to approve the order of violation for 108 W. 8th St. Motion carried 5 – 0.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Jeff Capps to amend the agenda to include Motion carried 5 – 0.

Motion by Eric Barker second by Jeff Capps to request a six-month extension from the Kansas Department of Commerce Motion carried 5 – 0.

Committee Reports: Finance Committee performed a quarterly review of city expenses.

Personnel committee met to consider how to proceed with replacing the Chief of Police upon Chief Burns retirement at the end of the year. Historically it can take some time to fill a police position with a quality candidate.

start recruiting now to take the time to find a quality candidate and the right fit for the community. with the possibility of a promotion, it was worth while to post for both a chief of police and a patrolman. Chief Burns addressed the discussion of pay freezes for cost savings, that needs to be disclosed to any potential candidates.

Councilmember Murphy met with the fire department command staff to review the proposed policy. They worked through some concerns and Chief Flores is working on a final draft.

Admin. Report: City shop RFP

Old Business: Burn pile had experienced illegal dumping again so it was locked back up. Madison has experienced a lot of grief from people having to get key. Council wants to see it made unlawful with up to \$1,000 fine.

New Business: Landscaping for Sycamore Development (pond), Mayor Latta initiated the research on the issue. \$36,000 to \$82,500. Not any funds. Sycamore being mowed by contract.

Notices/Communications: LKM Webinar – Health Nuisances April 23rd.

Mayor Latta announced that due to health reasons he and his wife would be relocating outside of the community. He read his resignation and thanked staff for dedication and efforts towards a better community.

Motion by Brande Vogeles second by Eric Barker to accept Eric Latta's resignation as the mayor to the city of Harper, Kansas, effective immediately. Motion carried 5 – 0.

City Administrator/Clerk Cooperrider gave the oath of office of Mayor to Ken Leu, the President of Council.

Motion by Brande Vogeles second by Eric Barker to adjourn. Motion carried 4- 0.

Tiffany M. Cooperrider CMC, CPM
City Administrator/Clerk