

PITTSBURG

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alongside newcomer Perry. As per procedure, each year the board selects the new mayor from among its own members. In the past, this has typically been the current president of the board moving up to the mayorship and a new president selected with each member taking their turn.

But this year, something changed. Seglie, the current president, clearly expected to take his turn as mayor, but Brooks, Munsell and Perry had other ideas. Quickly shooting down Seglie's nomination, Brooks nominated Chuck Munsell as the next mayor.

Flabbergasted, Hite asked if there would be any discussion in disregarding the accepted custom of promoting the president into the mayor's chair.

Brooks quickly chimed in, "There is no precedent."

"There is no precedent? OK," Hite responded. "We've never not elected the sitting president of the board as mayor."

"Yes, we have," Brooks responded.

"Not in the last four years," Hite said.

"Unless you can point to a policy or procedure," Brooks continued, "that says that's required, produce it."

"If you want to change the rules to fit your own agenda," Hite began.

"We're not changing the rules, Stu," Brooks countered. "It doesn't benefit you otherwise you would be for it."

"It doesn't benefit me at all," Hite said. "I'm just trying to go with tradition on this."

"There is no tradition," Brooks said flatly. "There is no past procedure. Nothing like that."

While Brooks is correct in that there is no statute that requires the president of the board to become the next may-



Commissioner Chuck Munsell is sworn in as the new mayor after a contentious vote by the members. Munsell won his seat 3-to-2 with Stu Hite and Ron Seglie voting against. DUSTIN R. STRONG / THE MORNING SUN

or, the city commission has established that custom. Even Munsell acknowledged as much last year during the December 17 reorganization meeting, laying out why he believes the presidency — and the mayorship by default — should be rotated among the members, saying, "I think it's my turn."

Munsell was passed over for president of the board in 2024 in favor of Seglie. Tuesday's disagreement was Munsell and Brooks correcting course.

The meeting progressed through its usual phases of approving ordinances, but the meat of the night was approval of the 2025 Budget Amendment.

An amendment to the annual budget at the end of the year is normal.

During this process, the commission approves the transfer of funds from the reserve to the general fund to pay for additional expenses, such as increases in operating costs, unexpected replacement of vital equipment, and a host of possible complications that cannot be predicted but

must be paid for.

"It is a standard annual procedure," said Financial Director Missy Scott. "And it is required by the state to align the budget with the actual expenditures."

Two funds needed amended for 2025, Section 8 Housing and Sanitation. Scott said housing is pretty standard as expenditure increases have a positive impact on the community. The commission previously approved additional expenditures for the Sanitation Department for additional poly-carts and trucks.

This money has already been spent.

"This is just to adjust to what has already happened," explained Deputy City Manager Jay Byers.

The extra expenses for Sanitation came under scrutiny by community member Christy Bitner. "We do not have a crystal ball," said Scott. "We do not know what's going to happen. We are doing the best case we can do in making judgement calls."

Using sanitation as an example, Scott asked if anyone knows for sure what a new business is



Newly-elected Commissioner D.J. Perry is sworn in as president of the board, effectively making him the second-ranking member after the mayor. DUSTIN R. STRONG / THE MORNING SUN

going to make in its first two years or how much demand there will be.

"You're guessing," Scott said. "You do not know what's going to happen with Sanitation. We didn't know there was going to be this big blowup."

In January of this year, Scott said Sanitation's service income was around \$40,000. By November, the monthly income was more than \$70,000. In order to service the increase in demand, new poly-carts and another truck had to be added — hence the additional expenses that needed to be approved.

"We didn't know what we needed until it happened," Scott said. "There's a lot of startup costs hitting your bottom line."

Scott reminded the commission they already approved the expenditures, and that it was not just a matter of formality so the accounts for 2025 can be balanced and closed out. To not do so, she said, puts the city out of compliance.

"So we got to decide what we want to do,"

Munsell said after closing the public hearing.

Perry asked what would happen if the commission voted against the amendment. Byers said they would be out of compliance with requirements.

"We're in a Catch-22," commented Brooks, a commissioner since 2019. "The money is already spent so we have to approve it, but the budget books appear wrong. It's confusing."

There is also confusion stemming from multiple copies of the 2026 budget, diligently pointed out by Bitner on previous occasions.

Scott said, in the end, despite all the changes, the result is the same. She went on to explain that minor changes were made, such as taking out an increase in sewer rates, that changed certain totals. Another factor was corrupted formulas and unlinked information that failed to carry through the rest of the budget spreadsheet, producing the wrong totals.

"At the September meeting," Scott said, "management commit-

ted to making the corrections and presenting them at a later meeting. The final budget is a result of those corrections."

Scott went on to say she has reviewed the differences in the two versions. The state budget certificate, which is filed with the state, had no changes from one version to the other. In comparing the July and September versions of the budget, Scott noticed some changes, but they were to no net effect.

"Doing a budget on Excel Spreadsheet is not fun," Scott said. "You are touching so many numbers. The city really needs software that specializes in budget creation."

The City Commission recessed into Executive Session until nearly 10 p.m. before adjourning.

A special session will be held on Wednesday, January 17, at 5:30 p.m.

This reporting is made possible, in part, by the Support Local Journalism Project Fund. Learn more at: southeastkansas.org/Localnews

Date change of funeral leads to death of friendship

DEAR ABBY: I had a friend, "Mylene," for many years. We swapped dog-sitting to offset the cost for each other. I helped her when she was sick and broke her foot. I walked her dog whenever she needed me. If a funeral, wedding or family emergency came up, I was always there for her.

An aunt of mine in another state passed away. I would have had to drive there, but her daughter was making the funeral arrangements while in the hospital herself. The funeral was delayed until the next week because my aunt's body had to be shipped to another



DEAR ABBY

Abigail Van Buren

state for the funeral.

When I told Mylene, she said she'd keep my dog, but when the date changed, she said she couldn't do it. "I have to work," she said. Abby, her dog stays at home while she works, so why is there a problem? I reminded her of everything that I have done to help her out when she needed it, but she didn't want to help me. (This was two days

before I was to travel for the funeral.)

I have tried many times to apologize to Mylene, but she refuses to make amends with me. All she does is send emojis, which I find disgusting. Can't she call and talk to me like a grown adult to straighten this out? I paid her several times to help her, and this is what I get? What do you think about this? -- DISAPPOINTED IN NORTH CAROLINA

DEAR DISAPPOINTED: You have done plenty for Mylene, but the time to remind her wasn't when she said she couldn't take care of your dog. (Is this why you "have tried

many times to apologize"?) Mylene may have sent emojis instead of calling because you embarrassed her. When we do favors for others, we shouldn't do them with the expectation that we will be paid back. What do I think about this? I think you should find another dog-sitter immediately.

DEAR ABBY: Our daughter and her family live an hour from us. We are both in fair health. Our daughter got a late start on marriage and children. Their girls are 10 and 8. The little one is sweet and shy, but the 10-year-old is a nightmare to be around. She's very smart but also manip-

ulative. She lies, cheats and steals. She is rude and seems to always do exactly the opposite of what an adult tells her to do. If her parents see her being sassy or ugly, they will put her in timeout for 10 minutes, but nothing ever changes.

None of their neighbors wants this child at their home. To make matters worse, she has begun early puberty. We can't stand being around this 10-year-old because it wears us out. We love our daughter and would like to have a good relationship with the whole family. Please advise on how we could help or what we should do. -- EXHAUSTED GRANDPARENTS IN

OHIO

DEAR GRANDPARENTS: A 10-minute timeout is not enough discipline for a 10-year-old's consistent bad behavior. Without further intervention, that girl is headed for big trouble. Please suggest to your daughter that she consult a child psychologist about how to get her obviously troubled daughter heading in the right direction before things become worse.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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