

**Regular Meeting of the City Council
City of Rockport
1472 Military Road, Rockport, Arkansas
Tuesday, Sept. 16, 2025**

Call to order

Mayor Kevin Baker called the meeting to order at 5:29 p.m.

Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation

Council member Melinda Baker led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Council member Brenda Womble gave the invocation.

Roll call

Council members present: Melinda Baker, Darrell Hughes, Jimmy Shuffield, Brenda Womble; Mayor Kevin Baker

Other city personnel present: Shira Kelley

Residents present: Jim Beason, Carolyn Beason, Ed Wilson, Petra Wilson, Allen Leible, Pam Hall

Approval of minutes

- Hughes motion to approve minutes of August meeting
- Womble second
- Voting yes: Hughes, Womble, Shuffield, Baker

Departmental Reports

Financial statement:

- Hughes motion to approve the financial report
- Womble second
- Voting yes: Hughes, Womble, Shuffield, Baker

Police Department: no report

Planning Commission: no report

Street Department: M. Baker says vendor Rock Asphalt demonstrated patching streets when hot mix cannot be used. She told him we will be in contact when we are able to do something.

Sewer Department: Womble says a backhoe broke into the sewer line during construction of Byron McCarver's house. Tommy Wright is scheduled to repair. McCarver or the backhoe

operator will be responsible for the repair costs. Sewer audit should be completed this week or next.

Code enforcement: M. Baker is going to mail letters to residents about trash in area yards.

- M. Baker motion to approve departmental reports
- Womble second
- Voting yes: Baker, Womble, Hughes, Shuffield

Old Business

None

New Business

Citizen appearances

Allen Leible asked if there was ever follow-up from the Oct. 16, 2023, emergency meeting with attorneys to discuss municipal bankruptcy. He asked what was found during the exploration, and why the city is at this point.

Both Bakers said the attorney met with the bond company, and the city never pursued bankruptcy.

Leible asked if the city is still upside down on the sewer.

M. Baker said the construction company had inappropriately executed multiple unsigned change orders and said the city is trying to work with the bond company.

Leible asked if the city has considered privatization of the sewer system. K. Baker said we owe too much, so a private company would not be interested in buying it – or would drastically raise rates.

Jim Beason asked who handles FOIA requests for the city. Upon hearing from M. Baker that everyone pitches in with the assistance of the city attorney, Beason said he has several outstanding FOIA requests and is currently resubmitting what he originally submitted July 7, regarding trash pickup. The only answer he received to his original request was that Sylvia (Orrell) was on vacation.

M. Baker said financial information pertaining to garbage pickup was in Quick Books, and the city is trying to extract that information.

Beason also said Rockport officers are patrolling outside city jurisdiction, to Moke Ridge Road and Martin Marietta. He said this was occurring prior to the city's payment to the County election commission for the annexation election. He further said they were clearly patrolling, not assisting another agency on a call, and said he saw Bray pass his rental property a dozen times in one day.

K. Baker said he will talk to Chief Toby Morales about the department's jurisdiction.

Pam Hall said she submitted a FOIA request two months ago. Although she received some answers, she said she still has not gotten answers about how much money the city owes and to whom, or the plan for getting out of debt. She also asked about the progress of the planned TA truck stop.

K. Baker said he met with a couple of engineers two or three months ago, but they did not provide any information.

Hall asked if ADEQ will approve the holding pond for runoff. Baker said yes.

Hall also asked about a parcel of 2-3 acres the city purchased several years ago (from K. Baker) and asked the reason for that purchase.

K. Baker said the city originally planned to use that parcel for the sewer treatment plant but later chose not to.

Hall asked if the city can sell that property, and what else can be liquidated.

Womble said she had previously contacted a real estate agent about the parcel, but the agent was not interested. M. Baker said the city has liquidated what it can so far.

K. Baker said there has been a lot of discussion about what the city is doing to conserve money but not much discussion about what is happening with the county, pertaining to the eight-fold increase for 911 dispatch services. He said the city is also paying for jail space that it is not allowed to use.

Leible asked if the city is working to be prepared if the cost of dispatch increases again in January 2026.

K. Baker said the police department has had a lower call volume this year, so he expects the cost to be lower. He said HSC 911 can roll over the remaining 2025 balance to 2026, or could sue for the delinquent amount, but said the city could also sue to be paid for assisting on calls.

Leible asked if the city could pay the bill if it is just \$16,000 next year, as was discussed at a 911 meeting earlier. K. Baker said as far as he knows, the city could pay.

Leible also mentioned the high turnover of administrative assistants, including some who did not pay IRS withholdings. He asked if the city had obtained a forensic audit to identify all potential discrepancies.

Womble said no, the city had not done so. K. Baker said these events mostly predated him but acknowledged Womble's negative answer.

Legislative Audit

Womble said the council received and reviewed the legislative audit. K. Baker, Silvia Orrell and Darlene Shockey will attend the meeting of the Legislative Audit Committee at 1:30 p.m. Oct. 9 at the Arkansas State Capitol. K. Baker is to contact Legislative Audit staff member Joe Archer Wednesday to update him.

Other Business

M. Baker said she called the Arkansas Municipal League to set up a meeting with their attorneys to discuss possible action regarding the bond company.

Adjournment

- Womble motion to adjourn
- M. Baker second
- Voice vote: all in favor; none opposed

Adjourned, 7:08 p.m.

Attest: _____ Approved: _____
Shira Kelley, Secretary Kevin Baker, Mayor