



Wednesday, September 3, 2025

Council Rejects Request to Expand Firefighters' Residency Requirement

City council members narrowly rejected a proposal during their first September meeting on Tuesday to expand the residency requirement for firefighters following a discussion that included concerns about emergency response times and a desire to increase the pool of potential firefighters.

Councilwoman-at-large Linda Williamson, chair of the Policy, Administration and Public Employees Committee, noted the residency requirement had been a subject of council discussion more than a year ago, when the firefighters' union requested the residency requirement be changed from 10 miles to 30 miles from the city limits.

The latest discussion began with a union proposal to expand the distance to 20 miles. Third Ward Councilwoman Lisa Kahookele said the greater distance would broaden the pool of potential firefighter candidates as the city strives to reach its goal of adding 2,000 residents with the construction of the Daisy Brands dairy-processing facility and other economic development projects.

Fourth Ward Councilman Terry Moorman expressed his concern that firefighters who live within a 20-mile radius would have a minimum response time of 25 minutes when called in for a major emergency. "If we have a major fire downtown, 25 minutes is a lifetime," he said.

All city employees have residency requirements. The city administrator is required to live within the city's corporate limits. The police chief, fire chief, assistant fire chief/commander, assistant police chief/commander and fire captain are considered emergency employees and must live within 10 miles of the city's corporate limits. Any other employee, including any officer, director, superintendent, or foreman must live within 30 miles of the city limits.

Mayor Elijah Stines said he believed the 20-mile radius was "a reasonable middle ground to try out," adding, "I don't think there's a mad dash of anyone moving outside of the 10-mile radius."

Casey Petersen, speaking as the Boone Professional Firefighters Local 678 representative, emphasized that changing the residency requirement would not affect the department's immediate response to fires or other emergencies. "We still have three fully certified firefighters coming to your house. Usually within the first five minutes of being on scene, the fire is mitigated," Petersen said. "The callback crew that we're debating now is very much not of a question of whether the fire is going to be under control."

He echoed the mayor's observation that current firefighters do not intend to move beyond the current residency distance. He added that expanding the residency requirement will increase the number of future firefighter candidates. "We want to get somebody in the door to move to town. We're not trying to leave," he said. "We're all very well established in the community. We're trying to look to the future."

Fifth Ward Councilman Kole Hilsabeck proposed setting 15 miles as the new residency requirement for firefighters. Hilsabeck, Williamson and Kahookele voted yes. Moorman, Henson, Byrd, and Angstrom voted no.

The council approved a resolution to enter into an agreement with the City of Ogden to temporarily accept digester sludge. "It will bring a little extra revenue and it's a nice thing to do for a neighboring community when they're in a bind," said Angstrom, who chairs the Utility Committee.

Ogden has requested to dispose of digester sludge next January and July. Council members approved the agreement on the condition that the monthly volume does not exceed 60,000 gallons and the total volume does not exceed 120,000 gallons. Ogden will compensate Boone at a rate of 17.5 cents per gallon. The agreement will automatically terminate on July 31, 2026, unless both parties agree in writing, prior to July 1, 2026, to extend it for another one-year term at a renegotiated and mutually agreed-upon rate.

Councilmembers unanimously approved a demolition agreement with CRB Land, LLC for a collapsed building located at 813 Keeler Street to "enhance the business district and for future economic development purpose." The city will be responsible for the demolition with CRB Land reimbursing 75% of the cost within 30 days of the project's completion.

City administrator Ondrea Elmquist noted that the agreement is similar to ones the city undertook to demolish the former Pizza Hut, Lynn's Lounge and other properties. Moorman, who chairs the Economic Development Committee, said, "This is going to be a delicate situation, so we're going to go in and do that."

"(CRB Land) has 30 days to pay that 75% or else we assess 100% of the cost to his property. In addition to that, he has 30 months from the date of the agreement to rebuild a commercial property in the same location," Elmquist said. Referring to the property's shared structural walls with neighboring businesses, she continued, "The property owner understands that there may be a potential that time is the essence of repairing those exterior walls, and he's under that understanding that he'll do what he needs to do."

In other action, the council:

- will meet at 6:00 p.m. on Oct. 6 in the Council Chambers, to act on the authorization of a loan agreement and issuance of general obligation capital loan notes not to exceed \$1.5 million for essential corporate purposes. If approved, the funds will "pay the costs of opening, widening, extending, grading, and draining of the right-of-way of streets, highways, avenues, alleys and public grounds, and market places, and the removal and replacement of dead or diseased trees thereon; the construction, reconstruction, and repairing of any street improvements, bridges, grade crossing separations and approaches; the acquisition, installation, and repair of sidewalks, culverts, retaining walls, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, water service lines, street lighting, and traffic control devices, including the Hancock Drive Extension R.I.S.E. Project; and the acquisition of any real estate needed for any of the foregoing purposes."
- approved a fireworks permit for the IMCA Super Nationals at the Boone Speedway on Saturday.
- heard several citizens express opposition to vacating the alley abutting 926 Eighth Street, which is the location of a proposed new restaurant. Concerns mainly centered on safety issues related to semi-trucks, which would have a more difficult and potentially dangerous time negotiating the shortened alley. A neighboring business owner also said the shorter alley would force semis to block his driveway. The council tabled a motion to hold a 6:00 p.m., Sept. 15 public hearing about the sale of the land abutting 926 Eighth Street property. Instead, consider an easement to accommodate the incoming business while addressing others' concerns.
- waived the second reading and approved the third and final reading of an ordinance to prohibit parking from 2:00 a.m. to 5:00 a.m. on both sides of 10th Street from Marshall to Greene streets, except on the north side between the 700 and 800 blocks of Tenth Street.

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