

City of Elko)
County of Elko)
State of Nevada)

SS November 10, 2020

The City Council of the City of Elko, State of Nevada met for a regular meeting beginning at 4:00 p.m., Tuesday, November 10, 2020. Due to the restrictions found in the State of Nevada Emergency Directive 006, the meeting was held in the Turquoise Room of the Elko Convention and Visitors Authority, 700 Moren Way, Elko.

This meeting was called to order by Mayor Reece Keener.

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Mayor Present: Reece Keener

Council Present: Councilwoman Mandy Simons
Councilman Robert Schmidlein
Councilman Chip Stone
Councilman Bill Hance

City Staff Present: Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager
Kelly Wooldridge, City Clerk
Jan Baum, Financial Services Director
Dale Johnson, Utilities Director
James Wiley, Parks and Recreation Director
Cathy Laughlin, City Planner
Michele Rambo, Development Manager
Jim Foster, Airport Manager
Matt Griego, Fire Chief
Shane Fertig, Landfill Superintendent
Jason Pepper, Police Lieutenant
Paul Willis, Computer Systems
Shelby Archuleta, Planning Technician

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Pursuant to N.R.S. 241, this time is devoted to comments by the public, if any, and discussion of those comments. No action may be taken upon a matter raised under this item on the agenda until the matter itself has been specifically included on a successive agenda and identified as an item for possible action. **ACTION WILL NOT BE TAKEN**

Mayor Keener congratulated the Councilmembers elect: Claire Morris and Mandy Simons. He stated we will miss Robert Schmidlein. There was a tragic event in our community November 1st with the murder of a young lady at McDonalds. There was a candlelight vigil held in honor of

Kylee Leniz. Mayor Keener asked for a moment of silence to let her family, co-workers, classmates and friends know that she is in our prayers.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: October 27, 2020

Regular Session

The minutes were approved by general consent.

I. PRESENTATIONS

- B. Update by Northeastern Nevada Regional Hospital CEO Steve Simpson, and matters related thereto. **INFORMATION ITEM – NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN**

Steve Simpson, Administrator at NNRH, said he appreciates the Council giving him a few minutes to give an update on what is a happening at the hospital. Maybe a report like this can become something done on a regular basis. Everyone understands that at the beginning of COVID-19 there was a lot of unknown. We shut down all elective surgery and limit who was in the hospital. By June, we started to understand a bit more and slowly started opening the doors. Now we are better at managing our PPE and elective surgeries. The hospital is in a good place. We are safe and taking care of our patients and staff. We have had from no COVID patients to up to five. Masking has been a sensitive subject but he asked that everyone stay diligent in wearing them.

Mayor Keener asked with school being shut down, have they seen more input into the ER for household accidents?

Mr. Simpson answered no, nothing out of the ordinary.

Councilman Stone asked if they are getting what they need as far as PPE or if they need some assistance.

Mr. Simpson answered they are getting what they need. China is the main supplier for gowns, booties, and masks. The turnaround for COVID tests has been strained. They have equipment in the hospital to test for COVID. They also have a good relationship with LabCorp and they are getting results back quicker. They had a very successful flu shot clinic. He recommended that everyone get their flu shots. They have also been able to hire some new providers.

- C. Update on Business Grant Program and Nonprofit Program by Elko County Chief Financial Officer, Cash Minor, and matters related thereto. **INFORMATION ITEM – NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN**

Cash Minor, CFO Elko County, explained 23 businesses completed applications. Clark County started this program before we knew the money was available. This has been a difficult road. There are a lot of restrictions since it is federal money. They have extended the program to November 30th and he hopes more people will take advantage of it.

Mayor Keener asked how long would it take for a business to go through the application process.

Mr. Minor answered if they are organized they can get through the process within a few days. But not many businesses are that organized. It also depends on the size of the business and what is required.

II. PERSONNEL

A. Employee Introductions:

- 1.) Kirsten Kowing, Animal Shelter Worker II, Animal Shelter
Present and introduced.
- 2.) Spencer Sutherland, Landfill Equipment Operator, Public Works, Landfill
Present and introduced.

I. PRESENTATIONS (Cont.)

- ### A. Reading of a proclamation in recognition of November 18–24, 2020 as Flood Awareness Week in Nevada, and matters related thereto. **INFORMATION ITEM – NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN**

Mayor Keener read the proclamation.

III. APPROPRIATIONS

- ### A. Review and possible approval of Warrants, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**** A motion was made by Councilwoman Simons, seconded by Councilman Stone, to approve the general warrants.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

- ### B. Review and possible approval of Print n' Copy Warrants, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**** A motion was made by Councilwoman Simons, seconded by Councilman Stone, to approve the Print 'N Copy warrants.**

The motion passed. (4-0 Mayor Keener abstained.)

- ### C. Review and possible approval of Great Basin Engineering Warrants, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

**** A motion was made by Councilwoman Simons, seconded by Councilman Stone, to approve the Great Basin Engineering warrants.**

The motion passed. (4-0 Councilman Schmidlein abstained.)

- D. Review, consideration, and possible final acceptance of the Cedar Street Reconstruction Project Phase 3, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

This Project was awarded to Great Basin Engineering in the amount of \$1,992,039.19 at the Special Council Meeting of April 7, 2020. There were change orders on the project in the amount of \$4,286.31 for Elko County School District and \$18,217.66 for the City of Elko for a total change order amount of \$22,503.97 plus a reduction of quantities of \$2,809.93. The total contract amount with change orders and reductions is \$2,011,733.23. Great Basin Engineering has satisfactorily completed the project in conformance with the plans and specification. DS

Dennis Strickland, Public Works Director, explained the project consultant was present. There has been a lot of sweat and work to complete this project over the last six years. During the project we found blockages and collapses in the drainage system. He is very proud of the team that worked on the project. Every phase has been brought in under budget. He recommended final acceptance.

Lana Carter, Carter Engineering, thanked Council for letting her work on the project. It has been a lot of fun and she likes the forward thinking in using low impact development. It has been great seeing how well this works.

**** A Motion was made by Councilman Hance, seconded by Councilwoman Simons, to approve Final Acceptance of the Cedar Street Reconstruction Project Phase 3, in the amount of \$2,011,733.23.**

The motion passed. (4-0 Councilman Schmidlein abstained.)

I. PRESENTATIONS (Cont.)

- D. Presentation by Elko Police Department on External Vest Carriers, and matters related thereto. **INFORMATION ITEM – NO ACTION WILL BE TAKEN**

Mayor Keener noted there were some Scouts present. He asked Lt. Pepper to give a demonstration.

Jason Pepper, Police Lieutenant, showed Council one of the vests and explained that they cost a bit more than regular body armor. They last about 2 years and far more comfortable. These are optional for the officers right now. There is a 6-month wait from the manufacturer. He showed the vests to the Scouts also.

III. APPROPRIATIONS (Cont.)

- E. Review, consideration, and possible final acceptance Ruby View Golf Course Reuse Irrigation Ponds No. 1 & 2, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

This Project was awarded to High Mark Construction in the amount of \$453,585.50 at the July 14, 2020 meeting. There were change order quantity overruns in the amount of \$64,900.70. There were also change order quantity reductions in the amount of \$17,497.50. The total contract amount with change orders and reductions

is \$500,998.70. High Mark Construction has satisfactorily completed the project in conformance with the plans and specifications. DJ

Curtis Calder, City Manager, explained the project had its challenges due to the timing. We battled the elements a bit. Now we are in compliance with our NDEP Permit. We will not have to work on the ponds for some time. He recommended final acceptance.

Mayor Keener stated he had the opportunity to visit the site and felt it was done professionally. The only thing he noticed was some damage to the fairway but that was expected.

**** A motion was made by Councilman Schmidlein, seconded by Councilwoman Simons, to approve Final Acceptance of the Ruby View Golf Course Reuse Irrigation Ponds No. 1 & 2, in the amount of \$500,998.70.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

- F. Review, consideration, and possible final acceptance of the Elko City Swimming Pool Re-Roofing Project, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

This project was awarded to Braemar Construction in the amount of \$475,095.31 at the July 14, 2020 City Council Meeting. There were four change orders associated with the project for the amount of \$71,839.76 and one deductive change order for the amount of \$3,295.59 for a grand total of \$68,544.17. Total cost for this project is \$543,639.48. Braemar Construction has satisfactorily completed the project with the plans and specifications. CC

Mr. Calder said he reviewed the project with James Wiley, Parks and Recreation Director. The project was very successful. He felt they added 20 years to the facility by doing this project. In addition to this project, the re-plastering project is underway. The swimming pool will be in pretty good shape come January. He recommended final acceptance.

**** A motion was made by Councilman Schmidlein, seconded by Councilwoman Simons, to authorize Final Acceptance of the Elko City Swimming Pool Re-Roofing Project, in the amount of \$543,639.48.**

Motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

- G. Review, consideration, and possible authorization to purchase approximately 1,705 square feet, a portion of APN 001-366-003, for future road development/buffer requirements, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

In consideration of a possible purchase and authorized by the property owner, Staff obtained an appraisal for the north corner of APN 001-366-003 to facilitate future road improvements and a buffer area for the intersection of Silver Street and 12th Street. A small residential structure is located on the area, presenting significant land use and ingress/egress conflicts with Silver Street and 12th Street. Acquisition of the property will allow for demolition of the structure, eliminate the land use, eliminate the potential ingress/egress conflicts and provide sufficient area for future development of road/intersection improvements. The appraisal dated August 25,

2020, conducted by Colliers International indicates a hypothetical market value of \$78,800.00. SAW

Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager, explained the need for the proposed purchase. This would let us control the frontage on both sides of the street. The property owners authorized the City to move forward with the appraisal. He has reached out to the business owners and the property owners to verify they are willing to sell the property but he has not heard from them. He recommended a time limit for the offer.

**** A motion was made by Councilman Schmidlein, seconded by Councilwoman Simons, to authorize City Staff to purchase approximately 1,750 sq. feet, a portion of APN 001-366-003, for future road development/buffer requirements, contingent that this will be available for the next 120 days and at the appraised value of \$78,800.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

IV. SUBDIVISIONS

- A. Review, consideration, and possible approval of Final Map No. 8-20, filed by BDSA, LLC, for the development of a subdivision entitled Tower Hill Unit 4 involving the proposed division of approximately 8.601 acres of property into 5 lots for residential development and 1 remainder lot within the R1 (Single Family Residential) Zoning District, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Subject property is located northeast of Lamoille Highway and south of Stitzel Road. (APN 001-929-125). The Planning Commission considered this item on November 3, 2020, and took action to forward a recommendation to conditionally approve Final Map 8-20. MR

Scott MacRitchie, 312 Four Mile Trail, stated he was on the phone and was available to answer questions.

Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager, explained the request. The recommended motion is to approve. He suggested adding to the motion to accept the areas offered for dedication. When we took a look at this area, units 1-3 were able to be serviced by our water system assuming the tanks were half full. They took a look at the grading for this unit and determined that it made sense to lower the elevation of this area.

Mayor Keener said when he looks at the design it looks like there is an area that is undeveloped.

Mr. Wilkinson said that section was too high to be serviced at the current elevation. Staff has met with owners of some property on Elko Mountain and they are looking at the possibility of getting a tank site dedicated for that next elevation.

Mayor Keener asked Scott MacRitchie is he was good with the conditions listed by the Planning Commission.

Mr. MacRitchie answered he was. He thanked Mr. Wilkinson for his comments and he is looking forward to that tank site.

**** A motion was made by Councilwoman Simons, seconded by Councilman Hance, to conditionally approve Final Map 8-20 for the Tower Hill Unit 4 subdivision, subject to the findings and conditions as recommended by the Planning Commission, and accept the areas offered for dedication.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

V. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Review, consideration, and possible approval to cancel the December 22, 2020 City Council Meeting, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Curtis Calder, City Manager, explained that unless there is something pressing, we usually cancel the Council Meeting that falls on the week of Christmas. At this point we do not see a need to have a Council Meeting.

Mayor Keener asked if they have the flexibility to move the first meeting in December to about mid-month so they can capture anything like payables so they wouldn't have to wait until 2021.

Mr. Calder answered we could do that. We would come back with another item to cancel the first meeting and then another item to schedule a meeting. If we see the need for a meeting, we can schedule a meeting on top of that first meeting in December but he didn't think that would be necessary.

**** A motion was made by Councilwoman Simons, seconded by Councilman Stone, to approve the cancellation of the December 22, 2020 Council Meeting.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

- B. Review, consideration, and possible approval of a Performance/Maintenance Agreement for subdivision improvements associated with the Tower Hill Unit 4 Subdivision, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Elko City Code 3-3-21 requires the subdivider to have executed and filed an agreement between the subdivider and the City for the required subdivision improvements, including stipulations on the timeframe for when those improvements are to be completed, and to post a performance guarantee in accordance with Elko City Code 3-3-22. MR

Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager, explained this is routine with subdivisions. The developer has actually executed a copy of the agreement already.

**** A motion was made by Councilman Stone, seconded by Councilman Hance, to approve the Performance/Maintenance Agreement for subdivision improvements associated**

with the Tower Hill Unit 4 subdivision and the developer enter into the agreement within 30 days.

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

VII. 5:30 P.M. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Review, consideration, and possible action to adopt Resolution No. 26-20, a resolution of the Elko City Council, adopting a change in zoning district boundaries from PQP (Public, Quasi-Public) to LI (Light Industrial) Zoning District, approximately 2,800 square feet of property, filed by City of Elko, and processed as Rezone No. 4-20, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

The Planning Commission considered the Subject Zone Change Request on September 1, 2020, and took action to forward a recommendation to City Council to adopt a resolution, which approves Rezone No. 4-20. CL

Scott Wilkinson, Assistant City Manager, explained the proposed rezone is associated to the land sale to an internet service provider. We are proposing a zone that is consistent with the other land uses down there. The findings are in the memo. He recommended approval.

Mayor Keener called for public comment without a response.

**** A motion was made by Councilman Stone, seconded by Councilwoman Simons, to adopt Resolution No. 26-20.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

VI. RESOLUTIONS AND ORDINANCES

- A. Review and possible adoption of Resolution No. 28-20, a resolution providing for the adoption of an amended Interlocal Cooperative Agreement and authorizing the membership thereby to the Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority, and matters related thereto. **FOR POSSIBLE ACTION**

Copies of Resolution No. 28-20 and the amended Inter-local Cooperative Agreement have been enclosed in the agenda packet for review. CC

Curtis Calder, City Manager, said this has taken several months to get this amended. From time to time it needs to be amended due to members joining or leaving. This will have to be approved by all other members and then sent to the Attorney General for that approval.

Mayor Keener stated he knew it was months in the process. He understood that Humboldt and Pershing will not be participating anymore. He asked Mr. Calder if they were some of the entities that had some of the biggest concerns.

Mr. Calder said this dates back several years. It expanded to include entities that were actually competitors for economic development. We may make a decision down the road that we can handle our own development too.

Mayor Keener said he sits on the NNRDA Board and recommended the Resolution. He called for public comment without a response.

**** A motion was made by Councilwoman Simons, seconded by Councilman Stone, to adopt Resolution No. 28-20, a resolution providing for the adoption of an amended Interlocal Cooperative Agreement and authorizing the membership thereby to the Northeastern Nevada Regional Development Authority.**

The motion passed unanimously. (5-0)

VIII. REPORTS

A. Mayor and City Council

Councilwoman Simons said the Airport has been working hard to create a memorial for those that have been killed in crashes. It is finally coming to fruition and a ceremony will be held the 18th.

Mayor Keener said it is a beautiful addition to the Airport.

Curtis Calder added years ago, when the Access Air helicopter crashed, City Council committed to build a memorial. The City wanted to build a parking lot for the memorial but Newmont wanted parking there. The City waited for Newmont to develop it but that never happened. Now the costs are in the hundreds of thousands. Then there was a second accident and Barrick reached out to say they wanted to develop a monument near their parking lot. Mr. Calder explained to them that they had a location set aside at the airport. An employee for Reach is an artist and developed a concept for a sculpture. The City did budget for some of the Capital Improvements. The community will be blown away when they see it. The sculptor will be present at the ceremony and will be speaking.

Jim Foster said the sculptor be there to explain the vision. This was designed in 2004 and it has taken a while to get to this point. It is something the community can be proud of.

Councilman Schmidlein said he was at a breakfast meeting with Deputy Chief Snyder when he was asked if he was ready to go on a run. He spent Friday and a good portion of Saturday with the Fire Department on a ride along. He recommended other Councilmembers spend some time with the Fire Department too. He will not be at the next Council Meeting.

Councilman Stone said it is great to see the Scouts at the meeting. He would not be here today if it were not for scouting.

Mayor Keener reported he had the opportunity to meet with Ricardo Higuera, the Mexican consult from Boise. He comes to town several times a year to provide services to Mexicans in the area. He was here to do some special COVID testing.

B. City Manager

Curtis Calder said Governor Sisolak will have a press conference in about ten minutes. He may be preparing a press release if changes are made. He reminded everyone there will be a Special meeting next Monday.

C. Assistant City Manager – Update on Emergency Cold Weather Shelter Options

Scott Wilkinson reported on the City's involvement provided a warming shelter. He has spoken to several hoteliers and he has received a number of

responses. He put together a possible program but it will require that someone be willing to enter into a contract with the City.

Curtis Calder explained he spoke to Wayne Carlson with POOL. Wayne mentioned any type of contract with a hotelier will need to limit liability. He did advise that there are non-profit entities that have specific policies for homeless camps. This is not going to be inexpensive.

Mayor Keener asked about the status of the Veteran's Cemetery.

Mr. Wilkinson said the due diligence is going slow and they are looking at many different options.

D. Utilities Director

E. Public Works

Dennis Strickland reported Saturday was the annual Fall Clean Up day. It was a quiet day. There were 228 vehicles, 53 tons and 109 tires.

F. Airport Manager

G. City Attorney

H. Fire Chief

Chief Griego thanked Councilman Schmidlein for spending time with Department and watching their coordinated layered response.

I. Police Chief

J. City Clerk

K. City Planner

L. Development Manager

M. Financial Services Director – CARES Act Funding Update

Jan Baum said she CC'd Council on the CARES Act Funding reports she sent the State. We revised all of our reports from March forward. She reached out to the State COVID Task Force. She was told that Fire and PD wages can be reimbursed when calls are COVID related. That increased the expenditures incredibly. We will continue to gather our COVID expenditures through the end of the year and if we are overspent, then we should be fine. Our ambulance broke down during a transport and now we are looking to purchase a new ambulance. It would have to be in service by December 1st. She said we could purchase a new building to give employees space with the CARES Act Funding.

Mayor Keener thought a good portion of Council's salaries in the COVID funding since they spend a lot of time COVID related.

Ms. Baum said she would need some kind of backup to verify the expenditure. By the end of the year with November and December wages and the ambulance, will be over between \$800,000 to \$1 million.

Chief Griego said the ambulance they are replacing was a used unit put into service in 2009. We got all the use we could out of it. Luckily this money was available and the new ambulance will be in service in December.

Ms. Baum explained there will be some Agenda Management software being put into service and we needed to get new iPads for it. The software will not work on the tablets they already have. IT will be getting in touch with Council to get them their new iPads.

Mayor Keener mentioned that COVID is alive and well in Elko. Several staff members were out due to illness and they are isolating per directives. Be conscientious and follow the protocols.

N. Parks and Recreation Director

- O. Civil Engineer
- P. Building Official

COMMENTS BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC

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There were no public comments.

There being no further business, Mayor Reece Keener adjourned the meeting.

Mayor Reece Keener

Kelly Wooldridge, City Clerk

[Return to campus fall 2020 and other COVID-19 updates](#) **READ MORE »**



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[UW-EAU CLAIRE RESEARCHERS HELP POLICE DEPARTMENT ADDRESS ISSUES WITH BACK PAIN](#)

UW-Eau Claire researchers help police department address issues with back pain

Wednesday, Nov. 15, 2017 | Judy Berthiaume

Share with:

Officer Mark Vang and his colleagues at the Eau Claire Police Department know the physical and mental demands that go with careers in law enforcement can lead to all sorts of health issues.

After all, stress, long hours in a squad car and apprehending suspects all can take a toll on their bodies.



Dr. Jeff Janot and Blugolds Chantal Bougie and Anna Kohler (from left) talk with Eau Claire police officers about a shared research project.

While it is impossible to eliminate all the health-related challenges that Vang and his fellow officers face, a faculty-student research team from UW-Eau Claire is working to address one problem that is all too common among patrol officers in Eau Claire and elsewhere: lower-back pain.

"The police department approached us because they have an issue with officers experiencing back discomfort while they are on duty," says Dr. Jeff Janot, professor of kinesiology and the faculty lead on the research project. "They are going to see their doctors, who are advising them to stop wearing the belts that carry their equipment and instead wear vests. We are helping the police department determine if vests are a real solution."

The standard police belts officers wear to carry their equipment — including everything from handcuffs to batons to flashlights — typically weigh close to 30 pounds.

Carrying that amount of weight on their hips during 10-plus hour patrol shifts puts a significant amount of pressure on the officers' backs, especially their lower backs, Janot says.

"Policing is a physically demanding profession," says Matt Rokus, deputy chief of police for the Eau Claire Police Department. "Officers spend an extended period of time in their vehicles because they use them as their offices. They also often have to hold suspects, run after suspects or engage in other physical activities all while carrying 30 pounds of police equipment around their waists."

The result?

Many officers experience constant back pain, diminishing the quality of their lives, Rokus says.

They also miss patrol shifts because of back issues, which leads to staffing shortages, overtime costs and numerous worker comp claims, he says.

The Eau Claire Police Department is looking to the UW-Eau Claire faculty-student research team, in partnership with Mayo Clinic Health System physicians, to help them determine if there is a safer way for officers to carry their equipment.

Specifically, the Blugolds are studying whether replacing the belts with load-bearing vests might lessen the stress on officers' lower backs, while still giving them easy access to the tools they need to do their jobs, Janot says.

The vests, which include bulletproof panels, hold all the officers' equipment except Tasers and guns.

Once loaded with the equipment, the vests weigh about 35 pounds, slightly more than the belts, Janot says.

However, wearing the vest shifts the weight load from the waist to the trunk of the body, Janot says.

With the weight more centered on the body, it puts less strain on the lower back, he says.

"The vest-versus-belt issue sounds like a fairly simple question but it's actually very complicated," says Janot, whose research team includes three faculty members and six students. "We are working to determine if the vests are a reasonable way to address the officers' ongoing back problems. Is this a way to help alleviate their back pain? Will officers wearing the vests complain less of lower back discomfort when they are on duty? The police department needs answers to those and other questions before deciding if they should make a change."

To help get answers, researchers are working with 15 Eau Claire police officers to study the health-related pros and cons of using the vests and the belts.

For three months, some officers in the study are wearing load-bearing vests while the others are continuing to wear the belts. The officers wearing belts will then switch to vests and those wearing vests will go back to belts for an additional three months.

Throughout the six-month study, researchers will document and track how officers are feeling during and after their shifts.

At the end of each shift, the officers will self-report and self-record any discomfort and rate the level of lower-back discomfort using a visual-analog scale. Researchers will collect and analyze reports weekly throughout the period of the study.

"After six months, we will have a snapshot to see what levels of pain or discomfort these officers are experiencing over a period of time when wearing the belt and the vest," Janot says.

The UW-Eau Claire study will help the police department determine if making a change from belts to vests is in the best interest of the officers and the community, Rokus says.

The department wants the research in hand before making a decision because buying vests for all the officers would require a significant financial investment, Rokus says.

The department also would have to invest money and time in training officers to use the vests, he says.

All officers go through extensive use-of-force training, which results in muscle memory that officers rely on when accessing their equipment, Rokus says. All officers would have to be retrained to create that

same sort of reflexive response when wearing the vests, he says, adding that the officers who volunteered for the study range from rookies to 25-year veterans.

"The health of our officers is a priority," Rokus says. "If investing in the vests is the right thing to do, then we will do it. But we need to see some research before making this type of decision."

To the best of his knowledge, this is the first research examining whether an officer wearing a vest is less prone to lower-back discomfort than an officer wearing a belt, Janot says.

While the vests-versus-belts question is at the center of their project, the researchers are expanding their study to include creating a current biometric profile of more than three dozen active-duty police officers, giving the ECPD a look at the overall health status of its officers.

Forty officers, including Rokus, will participate in the biometric screening part of the study.

"Since we had a number of officers already participating, we decided we might as well get a lot of other information at the same time," Janot says. "We want to ask more questions and get a broader profile. It's a great opportunity for our students, and it will give the department some important information."

The biometric screenings will test things like the officers' flexibility, spinal mobility, core endurance, aerobic fitness, upper-body endurance and lower-body strength.

UW-Eau Claire has high-end equipment that researchers will use for the biometric screenings, Janot says, adding that it will be invaluable for students to gain experience using those technologies as part of a real-world study.

Expanding the research project to biometric screenings also will help researchers and the police department identify possible underlying issues that could be contributing to the officers' back pain or other health-related issues, Janot says.

"For example, it could tell us if sitting in a squad car for long shifts creates problems regardless of whether they wear a belt or a vest," Janot says. "So while our main focus is on whether the vests work to lower the back discomfort, we also want to consider whether being sedentary is actually creating these or other health problems."

Among the strategies for gathering that information is having officers wear wrist and thigh monitors that will measure how often they change positions while they are sitting and how active they are while on duty, Janot says.

The biometric profiles will give the department a baseline that they could use to identify strategies to improve the overall health, well-being and readiness of their officers, Janot says.

"Having the answers to a lot of small questions can be used to make a big difference," Janot says.

Knowing their findings will help the ECPD address real issues makes the research even more rewarding for the students and the faculty, Janot says.

"It's exciting because it's the real thing," Janot says. "Our work is going to help the police department with a decision that will make a real difference in the lives of the officers and for our community. It's a big project and an incredible opportunity for our students."

For Chantal Bougie, a junior kinesiology major from Oshkosh, being a student lead on a research project with real-world implications is an opportunity she never imagined having as an undergraduate student.

"I am incredibly fortunate and grateful to have been given the opportunity to pursue this type of research," says Bougie, who is a McNair Scholar. "It means one thing to be able to do research with a faculty mentor, but it means so much more to be doing research that impacts the community in such a positive way.

"The research will benefit the officers and the Eau Claire community itself, which I believe is something special. I'm hoping we get the results we are looking for so we can suggest solutions to help the police officers in Eau Claire stay strong and healthy."

The project also aligns perfectly with her future career plans, Bougie says.

"My goal is to be a physical therapist so I've always been interested in finding the root causes of injury and implementing a solution to better the problem," says Bougie. "This project does something similar to that in which we have to investigate different weight-bearing methods and underlying factors to determine whether there is some impact on pain among the police officers."

While UW-Eau Claire researchers are collaborating with the Eau Claire Police Department, already other law enforcement agencies are expressing interest in the findings, Janot and Rokus say.

It's exciting to be a partner in our community, and even more exciting to know that our work may make a difference far beyond Eau Claire," Janot says.

Bougie says it is a little nerve-wracking to have her first research project be so high profile, but she is confident she can handle it because she has an experienced researcher as her faculty mentor.

"Dr. Janot has guided me through the research process and various procedures, set time aside for weekly research meetings with me, and most of all, has had the patience to work with me and teach me how to do research," Bougie says.

As a result, Bougie says she will better understand how to conduct a successful, thorough research project, skills that will serve her well in graduate school or in her career.

"It is so important to take advantage of any of these high-impact opportunities," Bougie says of faculty-student research. "They allow students to expand their knowledge outside the classroom and apply it to real life, whether it be in different countries or different settings.

"Anyone at UW-Eau Claire is capable of pursuing these opportunities. They make you stand out compared to other students, but also leave you with a feeling of satisfaction and success."

A UW-Eau Claire alumnus, Rokus says he already is impressed with the research team, especially Bougie and the other students.

"It's exciting for me and for the officers to see the enthusiasm in the student researchers," Rokus says. "They know they are helping the community and are taking their work very seriously."

Other UW-Eau Claire kinesiology faculty involved in the project include Dr. Nick Beltz, Dr. Saori Braun and Dr. Marquell Johnson.

Student researchers include Chantal Bougie, Sierra Freid, Maddy Downing, Jessica Nagel, Anna Kohler and Lindsey Opelt.

Top photo caption: Mark Vang, an officer with the Eau Claire Police Department, looks at a vest he will wear as part of a research project with UW-Eau Claire kinesiology students and faculty to determine if the vests will help ease back pain among police officers.



Written by Judy Berthiaume

Judy is an IMC storyteller, sharing stories about the many exceptional people that make UW-Eau Claire such a phenomenal place. She talks with students, faculty, staff and alumni to find and to share their successes, initiatives, challenges and dreams with the campus community and the world beyond.

In This Story

Jeff Janot

Chantal Bougie

Matt Rokus

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▲ Fall 2020 Semester Planning Update

The University's Campus Plan for Fall 2020 Semester has been approved by CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White.
[Read More...](https://www.csuci.edu/news/campus-updates/covid19.htm) (<https://www.csuci.edu/news/campus-updates/covid19.htm>).

External Load Bearing Vest Pilot Program

External Load Bearing Vest Pilot Program

The CSUCI Police Department is excited to announce our External Load Bearing Vest (LBV) Pilot Program. Based largely on research from the University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire and at the request of our officers, the CSUCI Police Department will be exploring the benefits of LBV vs the traditional duty belts which we currently carry.

The standard duty belts officers wear to carry their equipment — including everything from handcuffs to batons to flashlights — typically weigh close to 30 pounds. Carrying that amount of weight on their hips during 12-plus hour patrol shifts puts a significant amount of pressure on the officers' backs, especially their lower backs. Many officers experience constant back pain. Across the Law Enforcement profession, many officers miss patrol shifts because of back issues, which leads to staffing shortages, overtime costs and numerous worker comp claims.

University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire Study

The Eau Claire Police Department, University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire, and Mayo Clinic conducted a collaborative research project on the health benefits of load-bearing vest carriers in comparison to the traditional police duty belt. Based on their study, UW Eau-Claire researchers assert load bearing vests are more effective at evenly distributing the weight of police equipment and put less strain on the hips and lower back compared to the traditional duty belt. Additionally, there were no unintended consequences discovered related to the health of the officers or functional safety of the vest while on duty. It could be concluded that the use of the load bearing vest carrier may well have potential short- and long-term health and wellness benefits for officers.

- PoliceOne.com Article: [Load-bearing vest vs. duty belt \(https://www.policeone.com/officer-safety/articles/load-bearing-vest-vs-duty-belt-ergonomic-researchers-determine-the-winner-BXAKXHhAdMdbM2qR/\)](https://www.policeone.com/officer-safety/articles/load-bearing-vest-vs-duty-belt-ergonomic-researchers-determine-the-winner-BXAKXHhAdMdbM2qR/)
- UW - Eau Claire Article: [Researchers help police department address back pain \(https://www.uwec.edu/news/news/uw-eau-claire-researchers-help-police-department-address-issues-with-back-pain-2691/\)](https://www.uwec.edu/news/news/uw-eau-claire-researchers-help-police-department-address-issues-with-back-pain-2691/)

- UW - Eau-Claire Youtube Video: [Load Bearing Vest Study \(https://youtu.be/dlZghnflJI4\)](https://youtu.be/dlZghnflJI4)

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- UW - Eau Claire Police Department Newsletter: [Vest Summary & Implementation](https://www.bluestonesafety.com/images/pdfs/Load-Bearing-Vest-Implementation-Update-Article.pdf)

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([https://www.bluestonesafety.com/images/pdfs/Load-](https://www.bluestonesafety.com/images/pdfs/Load-Bearing-Vest-Implementation-Update-Article.pdf)

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Read more (<https://www.csuci.edu/news/sample-updates-load-bearing-vest>) (PDF (<https://get.adobe.com/reader/>),

630KB)

CSUCI Police Department - LBV Implementation

Uniform Appearance

The CSUCI Police Department values our positive relationship with both the CSUCI and the University Glen Communities. Up until now we have maintained a traditional uniform appearance in an effort to minimize any possibilities of our officers looking too tactical or intimidating. We believe that some load-bearing vest carriers appear overly militarized or tactical in appearance and hope to address this concern through the specific design of the LBV and community outreach. With this specific LBV product we believe our community will still feel comfortable in approaching us while also improving the working conditions for our officers. We hope our transparent approach to the implementation of the program will help to garner community understanding and support for the uniform change.

Test Group

The CSUCI Police Department has currently outfitted four (4) officers with the proposed new LBV. The four pilot program officers are currently assigned to day shift patrol. In addition to normal patrol visibility, we will be making special appearances and soliciting feedback from all of our CSUCI Community Members.

Pictured are Officer Taylor Kronberger and Officer Jenna Kushigemachi in a side-by-side comparison of the new LBV with its traditional uniform and duty belt counterpart. The Department has standardized the appearance and design of the LBV to as closely match the look of our traditional uniform as possible.

Community Feedback

We are actively seeking feedback on our LBV Pilot Program and invite everyone in our community to take a short survey about the new LBV, its overall appearance, and your feelings about the program.



- Community Feedback Survey - LBV Pilot Program

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(https://csuci.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_6fgY7CxVOiSyBdb)

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