

Eventful Nitro Council Meeting

A mountain out of a molehill.

That's how Nitro Mayor Rusty Casto describes a situation involving the city treasurer and a Nitro police officer, which caused quite a stir at the City Council meeting Tuesday.

The issue revolves around Nitro Police Officer John Scurlock's trip to England last month.

Scurlock flew to England with evidence for forensic testing.

While there, Scurlock used a state-issued purchasing card for his expenses.

Scurlock spent about \$1,500 in travel and food. Everyone agrees that money was spent legally.

The problem began when Scurlock revealed he put \$60 on the card for souvenirs for his kids - not acceptable under the purchasing card rules.

Scurlock told council to take the money out of his paycheck. Mayor Casto says he thought the whole situation was over at that point.

"I thought it was settled three weeks ago," Casto said. "I thought it was behind us."

Scurlock was told he could receive a per diem and pay off the card expenses. That way, the \$60 wouldn't be an issue. In fact, Scurlock would pocket more than \$400 from the per diem once the card was paid off.

City Treasurer John Young took issue with that.

Young says he doesn't have a problem with Scurlock personally, but he says he doesn't think he should pay a per diem when the city already paid for Scurlock's expenses.

Scurlock could have taken the per diem instead of the purchasing card when he first left for England. Had that been the case, Young says there would have been no problem.

Casto says he suspects some members of council have political motives behind the debacle.

"I think certain people have taken issue to use it in order to discredit me," Casto said. "There's other people who want to be mayor and they decide this would be a pretty good political stunt."

Casto says the city isn't out any money and it's time for the city to move on.

"It's all been taken care of, and as far as I'm concerned the whole matters behind us."

Also at council Tuesday, members heard a presentation from Kemron, one of three companies hoping to be chosen to handle Brownsfield Grant money in Nitro.

Brownsfield Grants are issued by the EPA and used to help clean up abandoned industrial areas.

Kemron team member Dawn Seeburger says if Kemron is chosen, they have plenty of ideas for the sites.

"There are a lot of different end uses for contaminated properties, so you don't necessarily have any concerns about children playing on (the sites) once we're finished with them," Seeburger said.

Casto says council will choose which company will get the grant money next meeting in October.