



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MINUTES
of
January 23, 2023**

Minutes of a Special Meeting held in the Council Chambers at 1109-B Bayou Road La Marque, Texas as well as via videoconference hosted through Zoom on January 23, 2023, beginning at 3:00 PM :

1/23/2023 - Minutes

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 3:18 P.M.

2. ROLL CALL

All members of the council were present, with Councilmember Yancy arriving at 3:23 p.m.

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bell gave the invocation and Councilmember Carlson led the pledge.

4. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Re'Chard Loftis (309 Johnson) spoke to share his concerns with trashcans being left on the side of the road after trash day and sometimes until the next trash day. This is not an issue in areas of town with HOAs, but it is in District A. He also received the City newsletter and appreciated it.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.I. 2022-2023 Budget Review

Councilmember McAuliffe asked for Finance Director Kou to share what she views as the most significant changes in the current fiscal year budget over the previous year. She shared that a lot of changes occurred in the previous year, she feels that these are best reflected in detail in the executive summary letter.

Councilmember McAuliffe questioned the significance of cutting each department's "Operating Supplies" item. City Manager responded that this is predominantly paper supplies, to which staff has been encouraged to utilize more digital processes to reduce some of the need. He asked Human Resources Director Patty Rees to speak on some of the budgetary cuts that she has experienced this year.

Human Resources Director Rees spoke about having outstanding bills due to budgetary cuts but still needing to operate. When prompted, she confirmed that there were issues with covering bills for items relating to the Employee Holiday Party and her training and recruitment budget. She and the finance director spoke regarding how they are being "creative" in handling the difficulties, projected capital

expenditures, why Texas City ISD is not considered in terms of the top employers of the city, the revitalization fund,

Councilmember Carlson spoke regarding a huge issue he is having with the Employee Holiday Party. It was not financially responsible, knowing there was no financing. He also expressed his displeasure with how the last two years of budget documents have been posted. To date, the adopted budget has not been posted, and he does not understand why.

Councilmember Carlson questioned the financing for the Citizens Police Academy and where it is allocated in the budget. He asked why it was not a standalone line item. Chief Aragon said there are no overhead costs for the academy except for the manpower, which is considered overtime. Councilmember Carlson requested that this be accounted for.

Mayor requested that the council direct the City Manager to prepare a resolution regarding the posting of the City budget.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared that he has seen improvements in posting the budget documents. He appreciates that the fund balance is included in the summary and identifies approximately 1 million dollars in unreserved funds. He clarified some of the columns represented in the budget document, top employers in the city, a deficit in the revitalization fund, and the balance of the disaster fund.

Mayor Bell asked Finance Director Kou if she believed that the approved budget calendar was executed, and she stated that she did not. He questioned if the budget cuts were sustainable and asked if a year-to-date total could be provided. Mayor Bell also questioned if these financial decisions have reduced city services and potential solutions to the timing issues that occurred this year.

Mayor Bell recommended an internal budget committee to allocate for the event of a department head's absence for whatever reason.

Mayor Bell questioned the purpose of the stormwater division. Public Works Director Sailer spoke, stating that the stormwater division/permit directly correlates to the city's TCEQ stormwater permit. These individuals clear debris from streets, and other services to assist with stormwater services.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested a future discussion regarding development services inspections, legal, engineering, compensated absences, and maximizing the allocation for homestead exemptions at \$40,000 in lieu of the current \$20,000.

Councilmember Yancy spoke regarding the need to clean up the process surrounding the budget calendar.

Mayor Bell asked a series of questions regarding grants, including if the council has approved all grants in progress, if the city has the matching funds for all current grants, and what would happen if the city turned down a grant.

Mayor Bell clarified if the city has the required 90 days reserve, and the finance director assured him that the city has approximately 95 days in the reserve fund.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THIS ITEM.

5.II. Operational Organization

Mayor Pro Tem Compian exited the room at 5:05 p.m. and returned at 5:07 p.m.

Mayor Bell stated that it is imperative that city services be streamlined and as efficient as possible, taking an interest in the Public Works Department and requesting outside expertise.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared his concerns with the current organizational chart, which shows the City Clerk as reporting directly to the City manager when the position reports to Council. Discussions relating to how the City Clerk reports ensued, clarifying that the position objectives and workflows are directed by the council, but as an employee, daily supervision is handled by the City Manager. He shared that based on the current view of the organizational chart, he wants to ensure that his communications with the City Clerk are not violating proper procedure, as the chart does not show that the Clerk reports to Council but to the City Manager.

Former Councilmember James Osteen (2012 Jeridonna) assured the council that they could speak with any staff member they choose. However, they cannot give directives to any staff not appointed by the council.

Councilmember McAuliffe addressed that the intent of this discussion was to discuss the potential reorganization of the Public (Relations) Officer, separation of Development Services and Code Compliance, and Public Works. She asked for clarification on the desired reorganization of Public Works. City Manager Garcia clarified that the Public Works division would be broken into specialized divisions under the supervision of two assistant directors to assist with the growing demands of the department.

A discussion relating to areas of opportunity in the Code Compliance division ensued. Development Services Director Van Stavern refuted the **assertion of a** code compliance division communication breakdown. The department has a very strict 3-day response window. Discussions regarding the communications between the complaining citizen, council, and staff, as well as the barriers to those communications, were discussed at length.

NO ACTION WAS TAKEN ON THIS ITEM.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION

*** Mayor Bell recessed the Special Meeting and entered into Executive Session at 5: 46 p.m.*

6.I. Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters)

7. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

***Mayor Bell reconvened the Special Meeting at 6:16 p.m.*

7.I. Section 551.074 (Personnel Matters)

Councilmember McAuliffe made a motion to adjust the City Clerk's pay to \$79, 996.80 annually, at a prorated amount for the current fiscal year. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED WITH 4 AYES AND 1 NAY (Carlson).**

When asked how this would be funded, City Manager stated that there have been enough staff vacancies in the current year and the difference can be realized there for the current year, in future years the city would rely on increases in property tax and appraisal values to support this increase.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Councilmember Carlson seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

*** Meeting was adjourned at 6:17 P.M.*

Keith Bell
Mayor

Kierra K. Nance, TRMC
City Clerk