



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MINUTES
of
FEBRUARY 13, 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 February 13, 2023, beginning at 1:00 PM :

2/13/2023 - Minutes

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 1:22 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Keith Bell, Mayor

Joe Compian, Mayor Pro Tem

Kimberley Yancy, Councilmember District A

Michael Carlson, Councilmember District C (11611 IH10 Katy, TX)

Casey McAuliffe, Councilmember District D was not present at this meeting.

3. PRESENTATION

***Mr. Tidwell's presentation occurred after the initial discussions between Council and the Police Administrative Staff due to scheduling conflicts.*

Mr. Tidwell gave a brief assessment overview and shared that the results "did not surprise" him. While the department appears to not be as trusting of the city or lieutenants and higher-ranking officials, they implicitly trust their sergeants. There is an overwhelming feeling that the officers are "not being heard," and there is a lack of accountability.

Mr. Tidwell agreed that there is an average process of 3-5 years to change a culture, which begins with building trust and implementing standards.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian inquired about statements made in the assessment report regarding training and civilian access and security.

Councilwoman Yancy inquired if she is correct in understanding that there is a lack of innovation in the department. Mr. Tidwell stated that he saw more of a lack of trust than innovation. After discussion, Mr. Tidwell agreed that there could be a missed opportunity regarding access to new information.

Mr. Tidwell assured the council that he in no way feels that the department is a "bad" department and joked

that if he still was an active chief, there are members that he would be looking to recruit as the city has some great officers, who truly care about their profession and community.

Mayor Bell focused on some of Mr. Tidwell's comments regarding communication between the administration and the staff. Mr. Tidwell reiterated that one of the biggest hurdles is bridging the gap between the two sectors. Mayor Bell followed up with questions regarding creating measures to track officer activity. Mr. Tidwell shared that since the assessment began a process has been implemented to measure officer activity, a process that was not occurring in the past. Mayor asked Mr. Tidwell if he had any observations regarding why the department is losing staff. He shared that in his discussion with a few former members, he gathered that they wanted to move to a less frustrating department.

***Mayor Bell called for a brief recess at 3:20 p.m.*

4. NEW BUSINESS

4.1. Assessment Report

City Manager Cesar Garcia introduced the report, stating that a similar assessment was conducted in 2019 and shared how staff participation was achieved.

Mayor Bell opened the floor for general discussion amongst the Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian acknowledged that a similar report was completed in the past and addressed the topics of the morale in the department, as well as the statements of fear of retribution that were mentioned in the report. He also clarified that this report would be publicly available, unlike the previous report that previous administrations administered. He goes on to speak to the need for additional training that was discussed. He shared great concern with the officers not being aware of the department's mission statement. He addressed the City Manager and spoke to the need for a direct link to the website for the department outside of navigating through the city's main website, and gave an example of an effective mission statement, including (6) pillars of policing.

Chief Aragon shared his perspective, revealing that upon his arrival, he received the same information that is in the report, sharing that the results are residuals of the previous department administration, stating that it takes 3-5 years to change organizational culture, but it will be fixed. There are many factors that have been implemented that are already showing improvements, community policing, jail improvements, accreditation process, etc.

Councilmember Carlson is concerned that the same things brought up in 2019 are still in effect today. He shared that fears of retaliation should not prevent an open-door policy with the city administration, and there needs to be a cultural shift within the department.

Deputy Chief Waggoner shared that there is also a means for discussion regarding grievances etc, by utilizing the union.

Councilmember Yancy shared that there is a "culture issue" in the department, but she has seen positive changes in the department, such as community policing, and having accessible officers, something that was not available before. She asked the Chief why responses said they would not recommend the department to others. Chief Aragon rebutted that is not the current status of the department. However, the working conditions are a major contributor to this scenario. She questioned the amount of overtime required, if that contributed to the department's morale, and shared that there are resources to assist in this area. She emphasized that this meeting is not only to discuss the problems but to look towards solutions.

Mayor Bell began his statement by saying, "two things can be true at the same time". He acknowledged that while crime is down and has been dropping for the past two years, the department is in need. Many of these areas point to issues in leadership. He also shared his concerns about department morale, citing the responses indicated in the report as the basis of his assertions. Chief

Aragon once again asserted that changes have been made since the initial survey has been made, improvements are being seen; awards are being won, and the community is supportive of what the department is trying to accomplish.

Mayor Pro Tem began a discussion regarding evidence, how much assistance can be given by civilians, and shared concerns regarding the need for the destruction of weapons.

Councilmember Carlson thanked Deputy Chief for his comments and shared that he is not looking to "hammer" the staff and sees the progress being made. He just is sharing that there are some things that may need to change.

Mayor Bell brought to the department leadership a comment in the report about "proper training" and gave them a chance to respond, asking if it is true that the department is hiring and promoting individuals without proper training. Chief Aragon refuted the statements, sharing that the department hires those best qualified for the position. He followed with another response regarding leadership within the department. Chief Aragon again responded that this survey was taken early in his tenure and stated that if asked again within a year or so, the responses will be different.

Mayor Bell shared a massive concern regarding statements of potential sexual harassment within the department. Chief Aragon shared that until this assessment he had no idea that this was even allegedly going on. The chief has a 0 tolerance policy for the issue, and since, there have been investigations in this area. Mayor Bell shared that he appreciated the chief for his service and is grateful for all that he has been able to accomplish.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked both the Chief and Deputy Chief if they have attended any training in the past year. Both stated they have received continuing education, as required by the profession, with Chief Aragon receiving some additional training through TML and other organizations. Mayor Pro Tem used this as an example of an opportunity expressed by the report. While the department receives the required training, there is not much training completed outside of the requirement.

***Mayor Bell Reconvened the meeting at 3:29 p.m.*

Both Lieutenants Gandy and Rodriguez approached to answer questions regarding the department. While Union President King was in attendance, as an on duty officer it would have been inappropriate for him to speak in his capacity as a union leader.

When asked about the department's organization it was relayed that the structure is comprised of Chief Aragon, Deputy Chief Waggoner, 3 Lieutenants (1 vacancy) , 5 Sargents (one of whom is assigned to a task force) , **watch video.**

When asked about additional training each Lieutenant has received, both are working in FBI training courses for different leadership or "train the trainer" disciplines, and two patrol sergeants are enrolled in front-line supervisor training. Both also are involved in recruitment efforts.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

6. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

7. ADJOURNMENT

made a motion to adjourn. seconded the motion. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

***Meeting was adjourned at*

Keith Bell
Mayor

Kierra K. Nance, TRMC
City Clerk