

**REGULAR MEETING AND BUDGET WORKSHOP
OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF
THE CITY OF BLANCO**

**Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2023**

A regular meeting and budget workshop of the City Council, City of Blanco, Texas was held on July 11, 2023, at 4:30 pm at the Byars Building, 308 Pecan Street, Blanco, Texas.

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 pm by Mayor Arnold, followed by roll call announcing a quorum was present. The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Pastor David Mayer, Trinity Lutheran Church. Council members present: Mayor Arnold, Mayor Pro-Tem Thraikill and Council Members Smith, Swinson, and Moses. Council Member McClellan was absent.

City staff present: Warren Escovy, Sasha Ricks, Laurie Cassidy, and Police Chief Scott Rubin.

Mayor Arnold made the following announcements:

- Council Member McClellan is still in the hospital, hoping to be released in a couple weeks. Please keep him in your prayers.
- The City is back on Stage 2 Water Restrictions, be mindful of your water usage.
- Blanco County Burn Ban is on as of today.
- Wine with the Mayor this Friday, July 14 from 5:00 to 6:30 pm at Esperanza

Public Comments:

- Kenneth Welch, Blanco County resident, spoke first regarding the city budget and property taxes. He referred to strategy, saying don't kick the can down the road. Secondly, he spoke on the US 281 relief route, must have community input as this will have a huge impact on Blanco. Thirdly, transparency committee, structure to ensure it is forward looking and assists the staff.
- Betty Jones, Blanco city resident, spoke on the budget and specifically on fixed income, elderly persons and the burden that higher taxes put on them.
- Nancy Arnold, Blanco city resident (no relation to Mike Arnold) spoke in support of the mayor's proposed budget.
- Juan Vargas, Blanco city resident (30 plus years), spoke regarding the budget. Said we should work together and find ways to make things happen. Live within our means and raise taxes next year. In support of not raising taxes now. Worst year for so many negative comments.
- Dan Murrah, Blanco city resident, spoke out against raising taxes, reminder of inflation on homes and properties, in favor of keeping taxes the same this year.
- Greg Vest, Blanco city resident, spoke saying he is keeping Keith McClellan in his prayers. Asked why Council was meeting at 4:30 pm? Spoke against raising property taxes.

- Rachel Lumpee, Blanco city resident, thanked Inframark for donating bench for the city park, asked to please run information by KBB. The council should be making decisions based on the citizens, we all need to work together and actually listen to each other and should not be lashing out on social media. Go with the majority, encourage everyone to start thinking about residents, work off one budget, NOT 3. Do not cut the police department, keep fully staffed at two officers per shift as the two year plan was created. Kicking things down the road is what has happened in the past, let us not continue on this path.
- Neil Neyens, Blanco county resident and 30 years with law enforcement, spoke in favor of the police department budget. He said it is a bad idea to make cuts and a bad time to have less officers, this would be a huge step backward. Everyone is worried about chickens and potholes. Higher taxes are everywhere, and costs have risen across the board, it's a fact of life.
- Trey Atchley, Blanco county resident, spoke regarding the budget saying there is probably no greater hot button than taxes. His thought is that if there wasn't a pothole problem, no one would be discussing a well thought out police department budget. The question is to satisfy the issue are you going to take a well thought out budget and take one pothole problem and create another problem. Understand you need revenue, but urge the council, don't take one problem and create another problem. The Police Department is a well lead department, come up with another solution.
- Sarah Knippa, Blanco city resident, read a statement on behalf of Blanco Bob Flores, who was unable to attend the meeting due to his work schedule. He is against raising taxes in this year's budget. Want to see top 5 list of priorities. Cyber security should be a priority in protecting the city's infrastructure.
- Susan Moore, Blanco city resident, spoke in favor of the police department. Do NOT cut this stellar department. Also, please do not increase property taxes. Thank you, Mayor, for speaking out.
- Crystal Spybuck, Blanco Library Director and blanco resident spoke regarding the library's request for budget funds in the amount of \$15,000. Last year the library added over 15,000 items, including new books, audio books, and movies. They also signed up 350 new patrons, hired three new employees, added a new coffee and tea bar, and updated their Wi-Fi and internet services. They also partnered with Gem of the Hills, provide reading programs for children and adults, host free shred service, and friends of the library have placed 2 of 6 little libraries throughout the community. Just began the Dolly Parton imagination library which provides a free book per month to each child from birth to 5 years of age. The library's goal is to promote the love of reading to all.
- June Newhouse, Blanco city resident, spoke out against the budget and raising taxes. She said she has complained on social media, furious at the last meeting. Asked council to skip a year, counting on council and asked them to think about the residents.

- Retta Martin, Blanco city resident, talked about the rock wall. Back in 2018, she was chair of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). She sent a demand letter to the council to get engineer. Patrick Sparks Engineering came and did assessment. HPC paid half, city paid half. Had to get a survey, was ongoing. In the letter was an agreement for the city to present a plan to stop the demolition by neglect process. Martha Gosnell, survey done, in the end it was put on hold. Asked council to please vote in support of Sparks doing reassessment. Over past 5 years ongoing. Please support this in the budget \$45,000 to rebuild/rehabilitate.
- Marcella Murrah, Blanco city resident spoke regarding the budget. She wrote to three council members who are for a budget and tax increase. In response she received two canned replies to her question(s) from Council Members Mike Smith and Laura Swinson. Mayor Pro-Tem Rodney Thraillkill responded respectfully with a thoughtful reply. She also spoke regarding the upheaval on social media and discussed the Mayor's proposed budget.
- Diana Gonzales with PEC, spoke regarding their upcoming 85th anniversary celebration. PEC was officially incorporated in May 1938. One of the largest cooperatives in the US, serving over a million central Texans, serving 24 counties and 45 franchise cities.
- Andrew Forsberg, Blanco city resident, spoke regarding the budget and transparency. More actively involved since working closer to town. In support of the police department budget. Focus on transparency and be cautious when making decisions. Hold on surplus and let residents decide where to spend funds.

Budget Workshop #3 – No Action Taken

Warren presented PowerPoint presentation on the budget.

OJ Armstrong, CIAMAC Chair, gave a rate comparison presentation.

Mayor Arnold presented his proposed budget to the council.

Closed Budget Workshop at 7:02 pm and took a 15 minute Break.

Called regular meeting to order at 7:23 pm.

Public Comments:

- Susan Moore, Blanco city resident spoke regarding the ordinance related to invocations which was passed by the council in November 2021 and revised in June 2023. Specifically, the revision relating to members of clergy changed to faith leaders. The Ministerial alliance is comprised of many churches. They have monthly meeting and a men's prayer breakfast on Saturdays comprised of around 90 men. Pastor Carlos Cloyd is committed to providing a person each month to provide our invocation.
- Barbara Ballas, Blanco city resident spoke regarding the budget and proposed tax rate. Suggested 3.5% may not be enough, 5% might be too much, average and go with 4%, a little surplus is helpful. We need to keep the city services and city running. Mayor has good idea in cutting the fat. Build up reserve this year and maybe lower taxes next year.

Presentation by Gary Currier regarding Committee on Financial Transparency & Security:

The proposed goals of the committee would be accuracy and fairness, to assist the city and finance in making sure that the city's financial statements and records are accurate, fairly represent the city's financial, and comply with all regulatory and other legal requirements. Financial Transparency, assist the city in providing the public with grater and easier access to information about the City's finances, presented in a manner to be understandable and comprehensive, and Investigate Discrepancies, investigate any discrepancies or concerns about past financial transactions to provide assurance to the public about the integrity of the City's past and current financial dealings. What is the time requirement? 1-2 hours, overview/set up. Need financial spreadsheets to review. Time period to obtain certification. A couple of months to gather information to load online. What are the benefits to obtain certification? Transparency.

Staff Presentations:

- City Hall, Warren Escovy, City Administrator – no report.
- Police Department, Chief Rubin presented the June Monthly Report. Chief reported a carjacking incident, occurring today with two juveniles involved.

Consent Agenda: *The following items may be acted upon in one motion.* No separate discussion or action is necessary unless requested by the Mayor or a Council Member, in which those items will be pulled for separate consideration.

1. Approval of Minutes from the June 13, 2023, Budget Workshop
2. Approval of Minutes from the June 13, 2023, Regular Meeting.
3. Approval of Minutes from the June 27, 2023, Special Meeting and Budget Workshop

A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Thrailkill to approve the consent agenda items 1-3, to include Council Member McClellan excused absence from current and last meeting due to medical illness, seconded by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.

Old Business: Consider, discuss, and take appropriate action on the following:

1. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action on Vapor Genius dba The Hill Country Vape & Smoke Appeal of Administrative Denial of Exterior Signage Plan. Vapor Genius presented window tinting for approval (gray scale). Council discussed ongoing issues with window tint. A motion was made by Council Member Moses to accept the tint and move on. The motion was withdrawn. **Item moved to executive session.**
2. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action on Approval of Change Order 012 to the Water Treatment Plant Contract to Include removal and replacement of the existing 1" force main and replace it with a 2" force main that will discharge the waste into the City's wastewater collection system. This Change Order will Increase the Contract by \$66,364.23 and add 21 Days to the Completion of the Project (Ardurra, City Engineer). Damon Berryman, Inframark has verbal quote from local contractor at half the cost. 4" vs. 2". **Damon will provide written documentation to city staff. Attorney Tuggey recommends tabling item. Mayor Arnold moved to table.**

3. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action on Approval of Change Order 013 to the Water Treatment Plant Contract to Include replacement of inadequate bentonite dosing system. This Change Order will Increase the Contract by \$51,102.94 and add 140 Days to the Completion of the Project (Ardurra, City Engineer). Damon okay. **A motion was made by Council Member Smith to approve CO #13, seconded by Council Member Swinson, all in favor motion carried unanimously.**
4. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action on Approval of Change Order 014 to the Water Treatment Plant Contract to Include overage from original allowance of PEC electrical service. This Change Order will Increase the Contract by \$17,630.60 and add 57 Days to the Completion of the Project (Ardurra, City Engineer). **A motion was made by Council Member Smith to approve CO #14, seconded by Council Member Swinson, all in favor motion carried unanimously.**

New Business: Consider, discuss, and take appropriate action on the following:

1. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Amendments to Investment Policy (Sasha Ricks, Finance Director). TWDB is assisting the City in updating the city's outdated policies. Free service from Texas Water Development Board. CFO to Go (voluntary program). **A motion was made by Council Member Moses to approve amendments to investment policy, seconded by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
2. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Approval of Text and E-Mail Notification Software Contract between the City of Blanco and Fundview (Sasha Ricks, Finance Director). Sasha Ricks, Finance Director discussed. **A motion was made by Council Member Moses to approve the notification software contract with Fundview regarding text and email services, seconded by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion passed unanimously.**
3. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Approval of Installation of Park Bench in Bindseil Park (Damon Berryman, Inframark). Damon spoke, Blanco Women's Club was speaking at the little library, donated \$200 in books to the library. Inframark proposes to donate a bench, with crushed gravel. 100% recycled eco-friendly materials. Plaque on back "Donated by Inframark" Will speak with and get KBB and Historic approval. **A Motion was made by Council Member Moses to approve installation of park bench in Bindseil Park with conditional approval of KBB and historical preservation commission, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Thrailkill, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
4. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Formation and Composition of Committee for Financial Transparency and Security, including Approval of Nominees Submitted to Date, and Setting Related Timelines. The council discussed forming the financial transparency and security committee with members to include Gary Courier, Dana Bundick; and Judith Knowles Raven. A motion was made by Council Member Swinson to dissolve formation of committee, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Thrailkill, vote tied 2-2 with Council Members Moses and Smith opposed. Mayor Arnold voted against the motion; the motion failed. **Council Member Swinson moved to table the item, seconded by Council Member Moses, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**

5. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action Regarding US Highway 281, Inclusive of Possible Relief Route(s), and Related Committees (Council Member Mike Smith). Mayor spoke with Joe Muck, TxDOT, pulled together with the federal corridor project, combined with our relief route, they will manage, want to do a workshop this summer. The council discussed support of the relief route and shared their disappointment, that relief route was pointed out to the state by the Mayor and that no route has been identified by the relief route task force. Council Member Swinson read email correspondence between the Mayor and TxDOT representative regarding a route being floated to TxDOT, and no one has been notified. TxDOT workshop planned for August 2023. The Chamber pushed out request, received map. Suggested the County be involved and the City and County meet and discuss. Resident, Ron Westcot on Sunset Ridge, spoke, saying proposed route would go straight through his home. The Council's goal is to be involved on the task force committee in making the decision regarding the relief route. **A motion was made by Council Member Moses to Table item, second by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
6. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Approval to Hire Sparks Engineering to Update their Town Creek Retaining Wall Report at a cost of \$2,500.00. Staff suggested updating the report. **A motion was made by Council Member Moses to approve hiring of Sparks Engineering to update the Town Creek Retaining Wall Report at a cost of \$2,500, seconded by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
7. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on City Administrator's Resolution of Personnel Matter. **Item tabled to executive session.**

Closed regular meeting at 8:57 pm and convened into executive session.

Executive Session in accordance with Texas Government Code: in accordance with the authority contained in the Texas Government Code, Sections 551.071, 551.072, and 551.074.

1. Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 (Consultation with City Attorney) and Section 1.05, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct; Confer with City Attorney regarding Vapor Genius dba The Hill Country Vape & Smoke Appeal of Administrative Denial of Exterior Signage Plan.
2. Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 (Consultation with City Attorney), 551.072 (Real Estate) and Section 1.05, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct; Confer with City Attorney regarding Pharr Paradise Utility Easement Agreement.
3. Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (Consultation with City Attorney) and Section 1.05, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct. Confer with City Attorney regarding legal issues associated with the Water Treatment Plant Project; Bids, Contract. Award, and Notice to Proceed.
4. Texas Government Code Section 551.071 (Consultation with City Attorney) and Section 1.05, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct. Confer with City Attorney regarding Pending Legal Matters.

Closed executive session at 10:24 pm and convened into regular meeting.

Old Business, Item #1/Executive Session, Item #1 - Vape Genius and Executive Session
Item #1: A motion was made by Council Member Moses to table item, seconded by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.

New Business, Item #7 City Administrator's Resolution of Personnel Matter, A motion was made Council Member Smith to authorize City administrator to resolve personnel matter as discussed, seconded by Council Member Swinson, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.

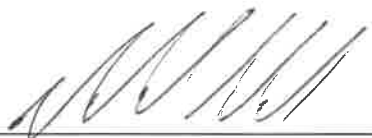
Executive Session, Items 2-4: No Action Taken

Adjournment:

A motion was made by Council Member Moses to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Council Member Thraikill, all in favor.

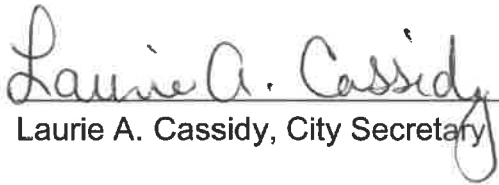
The meeting was adjourned at 10:25 pm.

Respectfully submitted,



Mike Arnold, Mayor

ATTEST:



Laurie A. Cassidy, City Secretary

These minutes were approved on the 8 day of August, 2023.

