

**REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE GOVERNING BODY OF  
THE CITY OF BLANCO**

**Meeting Minutes  
August 8, 2023**

A regular meeting of the City Council, City of Blanco, Texas was held on August 8, 2023, at 6:00 pm at the Byars Building, 308 Pecan Street, Blanco, Texas.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Mayor Arnold, followed by roll call announcing a quorum was present. The Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance was led by Pastor Phil Thompson, ARK Church. Council members present: Mayor Arnold, Mayor Pro-Tem Thrailkill and Council Members Smith, Swinson, and Moses. Council Member McClellan was absent and excused by Mayor Arnold for medical reasons.

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

Mayor Arnold made the following announcements:

- Burn Ban On, be careful.
- Water, Currently on Stage 3 Drought Restrictions,
- The Concrete Pour is scheduled for next Tuesday, August 15 at 4:00 am.

**Public Comments:**

- Wayne Gosnell, Blanco city resident, comment letter read by Laurie Cassidy, City Secretary regarding New Business item #9, Short-term rental ordinance. Urged Council to leave the current STR ordinance in place, or if the proposal is to simply modify the ordinance, please do so in a manner that protects our neighborhoods from the effects of unrestricted STR's.
- Kenneth Welch, Blanco County resident, spoke of the need for full transparency regarding the 281 relief route, and the transparency committee. Need real transparency on both! From discussions at the last meeting, it appeared this was not the case. The Financial Transparency and Security committee has not been well defined. Need role of committee before members are assigned, this is concerning. Regarding NB #5, proposal to roll back ordinance which allows the public to raise issues before the council. By securing the approval of two council members issues can be placed on the agenda. If you eliminate this rule this will make it more difficult for citizens to participate, instead modify it to allow one member of council to get an item on the agenda.
- Jay Palmer, Blanco ETJ resident, is trying to develop his property. Here to celebrate with this council. Reached a milestone, produced the first bottle of red wine for the project which is named Old Courthouse Red. Blanco's majestic centerpiece, the Old Courthouse, is the heart of the city. It has served as a hospital, bank, school museum, and newspaper office. Our red is a tribute to this beloved and historic landmark. Trying to straighten out discharge without running over pastures/yard. Entered into settlement agreement, still trying, not there yet. Reach those ultimate goals. Found out bypass route, would destroy his property.

- Marcy Westcott, Blanco city resident, spoke regarding the 281 relief route. Said at the last meeting there were some statements made that were not factual (that the proposed route is entirely outside the city limits). People's lives are at stake. The fact is the current proposed route would devastate the following property owners: Don & Linda Murphey, 45.40 acres inside the city limits, Waymond & Jayne Lightfoot, 27.26 acres in the city limits, Colin & Myra Corbett, 39.60 acres in the city limits, Cornelia England, 7.5 acres in the city limits, Ron & Marcy Westcott, 2.97 acres in the city limits and Bobby & Peggy Pawlik, 96 acres in the city limits. Hard to understand how someone in such an important position on council could not have something as fundamental as the city boundaries correct.
- Amy Arnold, Blanco city resident, spoke regarding new business, Item #5, many recent items seem to be unproductive and only stirring descent and strife among council. Please respect the people's time. This ordinance was recently passed, several options to use without needing this ordinance. Would like to see the strife stopped.
- Dan Murrah, Blanco city resident, encouraged council to think back to the last meeting, there was so much worry about so many people overseeing the money of the City of Blanco. How can you have too many eyes on the money that belongs to the citizens of Blanco? Encourage you to rethink this. Would be helpful to have more eyes, not less.
- Donna Ledvina, Blanco city resident, spoke regarding a memorandum from May 12 ,2022 stating the Council approved the Pecan Bottom as a nature park with no parking allowed. This was so they could identify the vegetation growing there. Since this time the chain has been removed. How do we know what is native if we don't let it grow. This has been an ongoing issue; how much longer will this go on before something is done?
- Eric Burkhart, read statement for Candy Cargill – Fiduciary, what does it mean? A fiduciary is someone who manages money or property for someone else. Council, you are here to work for us (see organizational chart). Please put the citizens' needs before your own. What do the citizens need?? A consistent source of WATER! Don't do one more thing until that is secure.
- Crystal Spybuck, library director and Blanco city resident gave a short update on current library happenings. They have added 59 new patrons, July 8 to present, registered 25 new people for dolly Parton program. Thank you to the council for your support.
- Peggy Pawlik, Blanco city resident, owns 96 acres that fronts 281, spoke of her concerns with the proposed 281 relief route. Have lived on their property 26 years. Very opposed to the proposed relief route. Hoping there are other routes considered. The current proposed route would destroy their property. Please do what is best for all concerned.

### **Proclamations:**

Mayor Arnold read the following proclamations:

1. Constitution Week Proclamation.
2. Founder's Day Proclamation.

### **Staff Presentations:**

- City Hall, Warren Escovy, City Administrator announced TxDOT will be hosting a community workshop regarding the US 281 relief route on Monday, August 28 at 4:00 pm at the Old Blanco Courthouse. He discussed the upcoming budget and tax hearing to be held next Monday, August 14, 2023 at 6:00 pm. Also, Joeris General Contractors will have a scheduled concrete pour at Blanco Elementary School next Tuesday, August 15 at 4:00 am.

Blanco is currently on Stage 3 drought restrictions; the pavement restoration has been completed by Titan Milling for this fiscal year. Working on Pothole hotline.

- Police Department, Chief Rubin presented the July Monthly Report. Lt. Thornhill graduated from the Bill Blackwood LEMIT, Leadership Command College Class #94. Reminder: School begins next Wednesday, August 16, be careful on the roads.

**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 July 11, 2023, Regular Meeting and Budget Workshop.
2. Approval of Minutes from the July 19, 2023, Special Meeting.

**A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Thraikill to approve the consent agenda items one and two as amended to show Council Member Swinson was absent at the July 19 meeting, 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 Regarding US Highway 281, Inclusive of Possible Relief Route(s), and Related Committees (Council Member Mike Smith). The mayor spoke, attorney suggested the city pass a statement, the city has not put forward any proposed or preferred 281 route. The Mayor showed a map put out by TxDOT and one from CAPCOG. Council discussed. Discussion followed about where the map originated. **A motion was made by Council Member Smith be it resolved that the City of Blanco has not to date taken any position on possible routing of a Highway 281 relief route that may be constructed by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The City encourages all residents of Blanco to engage with and inform TxDOT directly of any opinions they may hold on any such project. Further action by the City on any such project, if any, shall be subject to authorization by the governing body of the City, seconded by Council Member Moses, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
2. 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. Council discussed. **A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Thraikill to not move the Financial Transparency and Security Committee forward, seconded by Council Member Swinson, motion carried 3-1 with Council Member Moses opposed.** Mayor Arnold said he will continue with his ad hoc committee.

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

1. Consideration, discussion, and Take Possible Action on Review of Costs to Provide Public Information Requests. Warren Escovy, City Administrator spoke regarding the cost of current public information requests. Mayor said it is regrettable that these unbeneficial fishing expeditions are costly and ineffective to the city. Please be more precise and considerate. The council discussed expenses to be added as part of the budget. **No action taken.**

2. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action to Adopt/Reaffirm Resolution 2023-R-011 Civil Rights Policies and Procedures, to include the HUD Section 3 Presentation, for the TxCDBG City of Blanco Contract CDV21-0456. JD Merritt with Langford Community Management Services presented the grant information. **A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Thraikill to adopt Resolution 2023-R-011 Civil Rights Policies and Procedures, to include the HUD Section 3 Presentation, for the TxCDBG City of Blanco Contract CDV21-0456, seconded by Council Member Swinson, motion carried 3-0 with Council Member Smith recusing himself from the motion.**
3. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Hiring City Planner (Council Member Swinson). The council discussed: This would help gear us more toward the small town feel we want. The planner would help us update our UDC and Master Plan. Need now before we have another developer come in. \$25,000 cost. A small amount may be recoverable from the developers. Thorofare plan and future use plan are the two most important for Comprehensive Master Plan. **A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Thraikill to table this item until after the budget discussion, seconded by Council Member Smith, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
4. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on US 281 Overlay Backbone Code (Council Member Swinson). **The mayor moved this item to the executive session.**
5. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Repeal of the Ordinance Allowing Two Members of Council to Request an Agenda Item (Council Member Moses). The council discussed. Council Member Moses requested we change this back to what it was before. Go back to the State mandated rule of three city council members to force a special meeting. One city council member can go to Mayor to ask to put an item on the agenda. The council can motion to add item to future agenda with vote of quorum of council members. We follow Roberts Rules of Order. A motion was made by Council Member Moses to amend, to allow one member of council or the city administrator to add an item, no second was made, the motion failed. A motion was made by Council Member Moses to amend the ordinance to follow the state mandate, no second was made, motion failed. A motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Thraikill, presiding officer, city administrator, or any one member of council can add an item to the agenda, no second, motion failed. **No Action Taken.**
6. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on Approval of Dirt Works to Replace the Force Main From the Water Plant, and Upgrade to a 4" Pipe (Warren Escovy, City Administrator). An upgraded force main was not part of the original design of the water treatment plant but was found to be needed as construction was ending. Our contractor, ACP, provides a quote of about \$66,000 to replace the 2" force main with a suitable pipe. As requested by the Mayor and Council a new quote from Dirt works. **A motion was made by Council Member Smith to approve Dirt Works to Replace the Force Main from the Water Plant, and Upgrade to a 4" Pipe, seconded by Council Member Moses, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**
7. Consideration, Discussion and Take Possible Action on City Water Agreements with Texas Water Company (Warren Escovy, City Administrator). **The mayor moved this item to the executive session.**

8. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action on Proposed Tax Rate Needed to Support the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Budget. On July 11 the Council discussed the budget at workshop #3. Warren Escovy, Budget Officer presented the budget to the City Secretary for posting to website. The staff made a miscalculation on the revenue for ad valorem taxes. The difference between the proposed budget online compared to the revised budget is \$265,893.70. Staff quickly changed the revenue projection. With the revised revenue projection, the city will need to raise ad valorem taxes 10% if we keep the same budget priorities. Staff recommends we increase the ad valorem to 6%. The council will need to find an additional \$70,000 to cut to make a balanced budget. **No action taken.**
9. Consideration, Discussion, and Take Possible Action on Amendment to Ordinance 2022-O-005 Short Term Rentals. The Council discussed: 18 permitted short-term rentals at this time. Non owner occupied at 10%. Does the Council want to review? Owner-occupied properties are not subject to this 10% limitation. 10% is a guideline. Good to review at the anniversary every year. Proposed laws did not pass. In Austin the court struck down a ban on non-owner occupied short term rentals. **No action taken.**

Closed regular meeting at 8:13 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) and Section 1.05, Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct; Consultation with City Attorney regarding Economic Development Project.
3. 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 City Water Agreements with Texas Water Company
4. 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 US Highway 281, Inclusive of Possible Relief Route(s), and Related Committees.
5. 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 Amendment to Ordinance 2022-O-005 Short Term Rentals.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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 9:20 pm and convened into regular meeting.

**Executive Session, Items 2-8: No Action Taken**

**New Business, Item #4, Council Member Swinson made a motion to table the US 281 Overlay Backbone Code, seconded by Council Member Moses, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**


**Executive Session, Item #1, Vapor Genius, Exterior Signage Plan. A motion was made by Council Member Smith to approve the velum as presented by the shop owner, seconded by Council Member Moses, all in favor, motion carried unanimously.**

**Adjournment:**

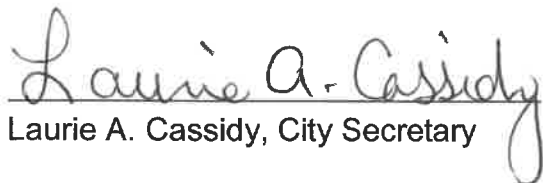
**A motion was made by Council Member Moses to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Council Member Swinson, all in favor.**

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:22 pm.**

Respectfully submitted,

  
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Mike Arnold, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
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Laurie A. Cassidy, City Secretary

These minutes were approved on the 12 day of September, 2023.

