



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
SPECIAL MEETING OF CITY COUNCIL
MINUTES
of
March 23, 2021**

Minutes of Special Meeting of City Council via telephone/video conference hosted through Zoom as provided in the attached notice on Tuesday, March 23, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. via teleconference (ZOOM), with the following members present:

(1) CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the Joint meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

(2) ROLL CALL

Keith Bell	Mayor
Joe Compian	Mayor-Pro-Tem District B
Robert Michetich	Councilmember District C
Casey Mc Auliffe	Councilwoman District D

OTHER STAFF

Charles "Tink" Jackson	City Manager
Derra Purnell	City Attorney
Robin Eldridge	City Clerk

(3) CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

1. T. J. Aulds- owner and founder of I-45 NOW spoke about an issue he has with the communication policy that the City of La Marque is currently working under. Reported that he had a one-on-one meeting with the City Manager and an agreement had been made that within thirty days the issues that they discussed would be resolved, but said that within a week of that meeting, he considered that a betrayal of the spirit of their conversation had taken place. He then stated that he had submitted an open records request three months ago, and it had not been acted on in any manner by the city. Then continued by saying that the city sought an Attorney General's opinion (outside of the law) to withhold that information. Further he said that a city has ten days and fourteen days if under certain extreme circumstances exists to ask for an Attorney General's opinion. "The extreme circumstances that appeared over a year ago, were not present at the time."

Due to the length of time which had passed, the city, by law could not withhold any information at that time (over 80 days). He further stated that the city has adopted a policy that it is not beholden to the laws of the state when it comes to transparency, to fulfilling open records requests. He referred to an officer involved shooting that occurred in December of 2020. He continued by saying that the city is giving out only part of the truth. Health concerns as it refers to Covid-19 illnesses within the Police Department was mentioned, and that the citizenry has a right to know, and the City has a responsibility to provide full transparency, and honesty to build trust and to provide this type of information to the citizens and media. He reported that there was lack of staff to speak to the media when the news of Amazon having a location within the city was dropped. Mr. Aulds reported allegations against city employees of unethical behavior. "I want a policy to be adopted that will give employees a clear definition of how to handle open records requests". He is also asking that open communications between staff and the media to be allowed again. He is asking that the city withdraw their request to the AG's office to withhold certain information on the request from December of 2020. Further stated that the Mayor, City Clerk and City Attorney will be receiving an email concerning these issues, as a letter he plans to send to the Texas Attorney General.

(4) OLD BUSINESS

a. Discussion relating to Safe City Initiative

Discussion began with Mayor Bell stating that because of the issue of gun violence that has impacted the city within the past year, is the reason being for the city to begin a safe city initiative then introduced the following individuals:

Shannon Guillot-Wright (UTMB Center for Violence Prevention), she directs the Health Policy Research Division

Nakisha Paul - (409 Action Network), and School Board President of the Texas City School Board

Dr. Shannon explained her job at UTMB, which is helping to create policies to help reduce violence in the communities (domestic violence, dating violence, healthy relationships, structural violence) - she introduced two of the "buckets" (areas) that she thinks may benefit this community: (1) environment; (2) school

Ms. Paul explained that the 409 Action Network is a grass-root, community- based organization than begun a little over a year ago. Their goal is to reduce violence within the community, by introducing some of the older generation that were involved in some of the same activities that this generation is involved in and have gotten past that lifestyle and have secured good jobs. They are asking these men to share their experiences to help the younger generation to overcome some of their obstacles and try to change some of the mindsets of those that are struggling in one way or another.

These two ladies were invited to share their expertise in their fields by Councilwoman Mc Auliffe, she feels both are deeply invested in the long-term generational work. The key is going to be through community collaboration.

Dr. Shannon began the discussion which touched on mentoring and adding universal relationship programs (semester- long curriculum) teaching healthy and unhealthy relationships in the schools, texting intervention (texting the word relationship to 37420). One other focus point is social media and the way that white males are being recruited to extremism, (learning fact from fiction and the way it all is intertwined).

Collaborating with the Police Department and Municipal Court to help them and engage them in activities to keep them involved in school but also in the community after school hours and get into the mindsets of this generation to decrease some of the criminal activities that some are getting involved in.

Mayor Pro-Tem Compian spoke about the roles Dr. Shannon plays in implementing the programs through the Center at UTMB and maintaining the programs once the funding is depleted. They also touched on engaging parents and getting them involved in these programs and offering parenting skill programs (disciplining, etc.), making more hotline numbers available for youth and parents for a wide variety of subjects.

Councilmember Michetich asked what is available for municipalities to help fund these programs (suggestions included partnering with the school district, grants, some money is already available depending on which programs, then other resources). It was asked that she bring back to the City Manager a list of other municipalities and school districts that are engaged in these types of programs.

Discussion continued on other factors (social, economic, environmental) and how they can tie into the mental and physical health of individuals that can lead to certain types of violence.

Mayor asked for the success rate of the Universal Relationship Program, being evidence based, it was said to be very successful. Stats will be provided at a later date. Asked about determining factors in the success rate within different communities (which involves interests, in that certain youth - based on the psychology of each); asked about different curriculums for different factors or one for all (dysfunctional family life, family violence, relationships, bullying, parent separation, etc.); with the lack of engagement from parents, and other parties and how it and how it translates into the success of these programs, and how with the collaboration with several individuals is greatly needed.

Councilwoman Mc Auliffe asked how we can move forward. Funding was the forefront answer to that, which could begin with the school district, and some of the funds could already be in place or the submission of a smaller grant that can be worked on together for implementing these programs. Going through the grant-writing process often begins to create a strategic plan and helps fund the initiatives through a funding stream. The most successful programs are by getting those long-term grant funding in place.

Mayor Bell added that he would like that this process be something that will be able to incorporate the community involvement in. This should be supported and driven by the community.

Immediate action that can be taken:

- Implement the Four “R” curriculum throughout the TCISD (in collaboration with UTMB and TCISD)
- Connecting kids to mentors through the 409 Action Network
- Re-visiting the handling of truancy within the Municipal Court (Handle with Care protocol)- Partnership between all of the entities (City, LMPD, TCISD, and UTMB)
- Environmental portion (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design)

During this “planning time” a meeting was suggested and necessary to be held between the TCISD School Board Members, the Superintendent of TCISD, Ms. Paul, Dr. Shannon, and the City Managers and or Mayors of both cities. (a “scope” of the project will be needed as well; MOU); Some issues that may come up: (other school districts are in the city; the students may live in another city and or attend other schools). A comprehensive plan will need to be generated in order to begin any implementation phase. Whether it be track changes on a word document a zoom meeting or an actual in - person meeting, can begin the process.

It was agreed upon that the following persons should be included in the initial meeting: City Managers of both La Marque and Texas City; Ms. Paul; Dr. Shannon and both Mayors of La Marque and Texas City.

City Manager followed up by giving an update on the initial meeting in January, which includes the following:

1. Consultant- was not agreed whether city should get one
2. Working with sister cities to address the violent crime issues (Chief Jackson already has proposed the formation of a Galveston County Task Force)- a resolution could be passed asking for other entities to participate and sign
3. Looking into grant opportunities (HGAC, etc.)

4. Asking that the Assistant City Managers be more involved out in the community- they have been out in the community as much as possible lately
5. Neighborhood Watch Program - Meeting was held in which Mr. Jordan attended that meeting 1.19.2021- they are waiting on finalization of group captains, and officers have already been assigned for their roles; also working on the training portion of the block captains another meeting is scheduled for 3.25.2021
6. Street-light Program - working with Public Works and Dinh to get together a map of all existing streetlights and to start keeping track of locations and look for darker areas of town that need to be lit up- there is no set price on costs yet (depending on whether poles already exist and or they have to install poles or they only have to set transformers or both)
7. CBA Workshop held - it was asked to increase level of interaction on traffic stops, and Neighborhood Watch, Community Outreach, but Covid reduced some of the interactions with the public. Bolster resources for a Rapid Response Team (in progress); a weekly report based on crimes within the City to be published on the website, social media and other social platforms was asked for.
8. More focus on youth (Student Government Day with City Staff scheduled for April 1, 2021; other programs such as Youth Advisory Council, framework has been provided, this is a work in progress.
9. DOJ- Safe Neighborhood Projects- working on The God Spot Program
10. Job creation and affordable housing- focusing on jobs to be brought in that are not minimum-wage paying
11. Streets- TxDOT sent information for an opportunity for grant monies for sidewalks, and staff was able to get together a proposal and TxDOT responded by asking for a meeting with staff for possibility of sidewalks (on 519 from Highway 3 to Feeder Road and Bayou Road from Cedar to 1764.)

Mayor Bell strongly requested a Community Engagement Officer and a Rapid Response Team, as was asked during a workshop.

City Manager responded by adding that it should be everyone's job at the Police Department to be community engaged and said that if "one" person were given this job, it would discourage the other officers to do this in addition to their other numerous duties. Further discussion suggested that this may be able to work on some kind of a rotation team consisting of a

few officers at a time. It was suggested that Mr. Jordan may be assigned this duty.

City Manager added that he has some ideas that may work.

Mayor Pro-Tem Compian asked that some of the information pertaining to community policing needs to be updated on the city's website.

On another note, Mr. Compian raised a few questions about street lighting and cost if the city were able to switchover to LED lights, Reserve police officer's and salaries being comparative for the police officers.

Mayor Bell, asked for the resolution as it relates to partnering with other cities for a Rapid Task Force to be placed on a future Council meeting, soon.

Summarizing this portion of this meeting, a one-page brief was suggested to be compartmentalized and drawn up to be distributed among all involved in this process speaking about the three major (3) things highlighted tonight and emailed to Council individually for their input. Those three things being: ELE (Environment; Law Enforcement and Education components); City Manager was given this task.

- b. Discussion/possible action regarding appointing various members to various Boards and Commissions

After reviewing and discussing the backup in the packet, the following appointments were made:

Mayor Bell appointed Crystal Cooper to a member status from an Alternate of the Board of Adjustments.

Councilwoman Mc Auliffe moved Helen Kee from an Alternate status to a member status on the same Board (BOA).

Mayor Bell made a motion to approve and Councilmember Michetich seconded. Appointments stood.

(5) REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

City Manager reported that a drive-by parade was provided for a 111-year-old resident of La Marque, Melvin Campbell, who resides at Bayou Pines Nursing Home.

A Comprehensive Communication Strategy was asked from the City Manager and for him to speak in response to Mr. T. J. Aulds comments earlier in the meeting.

It was asked of the City Attorney Derra Purnell to provide to Council a memo relating to Mr. Aulds comments earlier in the meeting.

Mayor Pro-Tem Compian reminded all to visit the TML website that shows what bills are being introduced to Legislation and those that are pending currently and how they may impact our community.

(6) EXECUTIVE SESSION

Section 551.071 (Consultation with attorney)

Mayor Bell closed the Special Meeting and convened into Executive Session at 9:16 p.m.

Mayor Bell reconvened into the Special Meeting at 9:29 p.m.

(7) ADJOURNMENT

Councilwoman Mc Auliffe made a motion to adjourn the Special Meeting at 9:30 p.m.

Mayor Pro-Tem Compian seconded. **MEETING ADJOURNED.**

This unofficial copy of the minutes from the above meeting are posted for convenience only. Executed or certified copies of the minutes can be requested by contacting the City Clerk
