



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MINUTES
of
August 10, 2023**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 10:16 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Bell, Councilmember Yancy, and Councilmember Ross were all physically present for the meeting.

Councilmember Carlson joined the meeting at 10:40 a.m. virtually from 208 Washington St Mosier, OR.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian was not present.

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Councilmember Yancy gave the invocation, and Councilmember Ross led the pledge.

4. NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Bell gave a brief overview of the intended agenda for the day, beginning with identifying changes needed to meet the proposed no new revenue rate of 41 cents, council budget selections, and a follow-up to discussions relating to the status of the City's CO bonds.

City Manager Garcia gave a brief overview of some of the "clean-ups" in the budget since the last meeting, sharing that there have been revenue adjustments. It was identified that some of this was due to an increase in permitting revenue as a result of both the increased number of permits issued and the increase in permitting fees. There was also a reduction in court fees and fines that should be considered, as well as a delay in hiring in some vacant positions. City Manager Garcia announced that with the required cuts, the budget would remain balanced at the end of the year.

4.1. Review and Discuss Proposed Fiscal Year 2023-2024 Departmental Budgets and All Funds

City Manager Garcia discussed some of the increased revenue projections for the 2023-2024 fiscal year in permitting, fire and EMS fees, and sales tax.

City Manager Garcia discussed some expenditure adjustments, primarily made in the timing of hiring new personnel.

James Osteen (2012 Jeridona) asked clarifying questions about development services revenue as proposed in the budget book and the revenues the Development Services Director projected earlier in the budget discussions.

Mayor Bell asked clarifying questions regarding the approximate \$2 million in increased budgetary expenditures. There have been increases in personnel costs and technological needs.

Mayor Bell shared that he is not in favor of adding additional personnel to the City Manager's Office, except for a Deputy City Manager to assist with the opportunities related to the span of control. He shared his support for an additional IT Technician and the (3) Fire Captains but does not believe there is enough space for 1.5 additional positions in the City Clerk's Office.

It was clarified that part of the increase in budgeting and personnel in the City Manager's Office is due to the council's desire to move the Public Relations Officer to the City Manager's Office. Discussions related to the rising costs in the IT Department ensued, which are a result of both increased staffing and technological needs.

Councilmember Yancy questioned the reduction in proposed street repairs. It was initially requested at \$250,000 and is now shown at \$100,000. Sharing that there are particular streets, Jefferson and Brown, in desperate need of repair. She also shared her support for a Deputy City Manager. She feels that the City can be creative in its desire for a Project Manager, but also showed support for the 1.5 additional positions in the City Clerk's Office.

James Osteen (2012 Jeridona) recalled that at a previous budget meeting, he identified that he brought to the council's attention a discrepancy in the projected sales tax allocation to EDC. He shared that the discrepancy still appears today.

Discussions with the Finance Director regarding the sales tax calculations ensued. Mayor Bell shared his frustrations with the city's conservative sales tax projections instead of being conservative about the property tax revenues.

Further discussions relating to the sales tax projections ensued.

City Manager Garcia shared his excitement about the public's enthusiasm and commitment to this process.

***Mayor Bell recessed the meeting at 12:03 p.m., and Councilmember Carlson exited the meeting.*

***Mayor Bell reconvened the meeting at 1:40 p.m.*

Discussions related to increases over the current fiscal year's expenditures ensued, such as the calculations of the new fire captain positions, salary adjustments for staff members who are significantly underpaid for their positions, and the effects of a full-year salary for positions added last year to begin both the 6 and 9-month marks in the current fiscal year. Discussions related to the requested positions included in the proposal, such as the IT Tech position, Public Affairs Assistant, Project Manager, and Part-Time Records Clerk. Followed by discussions relating to additional software needs and street repairs.

Mayor Bell shared his desire for most of the items shared to remain with the Project Coordinator and Public Affairs position to be removed in place of a Deputy City Manager position at a rate of \$90,000 annually, the removal of a Public Works Project Coordinator, and Grant Administrator providing approximately \$138,000 in savings which he would like to see redirected to streets.

Councilmember Yancy shared support of a 3% COLA in lieu of 2% and questioned if the Public Affairs position could be resolved through the proposed college internship program. She asked clarifying questions regarding the Public Works Project Coordinator. She questioned if a combination approach of the Public Works Project Coordinator and Grant Administrator would be advantageous. She shared her support for the Part-Time Records Clerk but suggested that the city look to local partners to assist, such as Texas Workforce Solutions and College of the Mainland. She also shares support for the Deputy City Manager position as recommended by Mayor Bell and additional monies towards street repair.

Councilmember Ross shared his support for transitioning some hourly fire personnel into salaried employees. It was determined that most of the department is covered under collective bargaining agreements. He shared his support for the recommendations made by other members of the council.

Discussions relating to revenues from Development Services ensued.

***Mayor Bell recessed the meeting at 2:37 p.m. and reconvened at 3:11 p.m.*

City Manager Garcia gave an updated account of the status of the city's certificates of obligation. The total amount in the 2020 CO bond left to be spent is \$2,690,934 towards the Wastewater Treatment Plant. The total amount in the 2018 CO bond left to be spent is \$750,000 towards municipal building renovations. The total amount in the 2016 CO bond left to be spent is \$555,318 towards utility infrastructure, sanitary sewer operations, and the wastewater treatment plant. The total amount in the 2007 CO bond left to be spent is \$402,090 towards the city's utility systems.

To allocate those funds, the Council recommended, upon legal review, that the balance of the 2007 CO be earmarked toward the wastewater treatment plant. The balance of the 2016 CO be earmarked for the Main St. Sanitary Sewer project, Maple & Cedar Sewer Line project, the Orange & Prune Water Line project, Lift Stations, and Manhole Covers. The balance of the 2020 CO be earmarked for Main St. Waterline Repair, Merry Melody Lane project overages, and the Wastewater Treatment Plant Bar Screen.

Discussions relating to the allocations and potential pitfalls of these allocations ensued.

James Osteen (2012 Jeridona) questioned why the price of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Bar Screen increased by over \$600,000. Public Works Director Sailer shared that this is due to the original \$750,000 estimate being done previously, and from the original estimate, additional required work has been discovered.

Councilmember Yancy requested that for every budget season, Certificates of Obligations balance sheets be included in the discussions.

5. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

6. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

No actions were taken.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Bell thanked the City Manager and staff for their hard work, but there will be passion and diligence when dealing with the people's money.

Councilmember Yancy shared that the Council has not received a CO Bond report in years and looks forward to receiving that in the future. She is grateful that government is ever-evolving; this is a teachable moment.

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Ross seconded. MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

***The meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.*

*Kierra K. Nance, TRMC
City Clerk*

*Keith Bell
Mayor*