CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
BUDGET MINUTES
of
August 6, 2024

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
   Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL
   All members of Council were physically present with Mayor Pro Tem Compian arriving at 1:43 p.m.

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
   Councilmember Yancy gave the invocation and Councilmember Lowry led the pledge.

4. PRESENTATIONS
   James Osteen (2012 Jeridona) reviewed all budgets from 2020 to current. He identified accounting errors in the Animal Services line item. He has offered his assistance to the City Manager and Finance Director, but he will not beg anyone to let him assist. He asserts that the numbers have to be right. He shared his opinion that the meeting on the previous day was one of the best budget meetings the city has ever had.

   David Pennington (924 Cypress) requests a dedicated crew to clean out drainage ditches. He states that he has asked many times before but this is a dire need. He is requesting at least a 3-man team including a qualified Graddall operator and dump truck driver. He also questioned the number of officers on the street.

   ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
   Economic Development Director Alex Getty began by sharing a brief overview of the budgeting process for the Economic Development Corporation. The Economic Development Corporation's budget committee Chairman Gene Smith and Boardmember James Osteen also assisted with the presentation.
   Many changes made by the committee are not reflected in the current budget proposal, the corporation's postage item should read as $20,000. Director Getty did assure the council that he and Director Turner worked together on the proposal and the numbers in the proposed budget should be attributed to software errors, not changes made by city staff. He provided a copy of the board's budget to the council that reflected the correct proposal.
   Discussions relating to the Professional Fees line item, including partnerships for retail recruitment, ensued. Accounting Services and Clerk Services are the only EDC supported positions in the current proposal.

Discussions relating to the removal of City Public Relations and the Blight Reduction Program ensued. Councilmember Yancy requested that the board reconsider their support for these positions and, if they cannot, consider investing those resources in business incubators. Councilmembers Lowry and Ross both understood the position of the board and respected their decision. Mayor Bell understood the position of the board, and he asked the board to consider human capital that aligns with the mission of the Economic Development Corporation. Boardmember Osteen was amicable to revisiting additional resources for human capital.
Mayor Bell spoke regarding his disapproval of perpetual support. In the event that the EDC does choose to support human capital for the city, then there should be a time limit on the support.
Boardmember Osteen asked for a clerical change, to title the item as "Proposed EDC Budget" as opposed to the "City Manager Proposed Budget" for this portion of the budget proposal as the city manager does not have any authority of EDC funds.
Extended discussions about the city's budgeting software and it's limitations ensued.
Councilmember Yancy acknowledged the accomplishments of the Economic Development Corporation.
***Mayor Bell recessed the meeting at 11:32 a.m. and returned at 11:50 a.m.*

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.I. Boards and Commissions Appointments
This item was postponed.

5.II. Review And Discuss Proposed Fiscal Year 2024-2025 Departmental Budgets And All Funds
The discussion began by addressing Mr. Pennington's request for a drainage crew. City Manager Cesar Garcia shared that the city does at present have a drainage team. Their primary function at the moment is clearing drains, but grading will occur.

COURT
Court Administrator Stacy Froeschner, gave a brief overview of her department's budget for the year. Discussions relating to the Police Department's statistics shown the day prior, reflect additional citations and the correlation to Court procedures.
It was determined that the Court has purchased ticket writers for code, the fire marshals office, and the police department. These were purchased through the Court Technology fund, as an allowable expense. These increases in citations have resulted in an additional court date, and also extended court dockets.
She shared her success with the department's in-house warrant cleanup project and her desire to continue that program each January.
She also requested additional funds in her Professional Fees line item to show $63,000 as the initial proposed amount is lower, due to her not having the most up-to-date invoices at the time of the initial submission.
She also corrected some discrepancies in the budget overview, comparing them to the detailed summary in the budget book.

She also shared that she is confident about proposing an increase in the amount of revenue expected will exceed the proposed revenue of $535,650. She believes this revenue will be more akin to $720,000.
Councilmember Lowry shared his belief that indengency and dismissals need to be reviewed as it sends a bad message.
Lengthy discussion regarding court fines and fees ensued covering topics ranging from who sets the fines and fees and how the city's fines and fees compare to other courts in the area.
Councilmember Yancy requested a list of arrests in District A.
City Marshal Russell Washington stated that it is much easier to get compliance now that the Court is no longer in the Police Department, and also the implementation of video magistration has been successful as well as helpful to the police department.
Court Administrator Froeschner also announced that the department is getting the word out that they are a Safe Harbor Court, meaning that even if someone has a warrant, they will not be arrested for coming to court.
***Mayor Bell recessed for lunch at 12:36 p.m. and returned at 1:43 p.m.*
***Councilmember Yancy returned from lunch at 2:04 p.m.*
Court Administrator Froeschner corrected a misstatement she made earlier in the day, the estimate for the City's Court Revenue should be shown as $528,376. The misstep is in part due to not taking the state charges into account, which typically represent a percentage of each citation.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian clarified that there is still more revenue expected to come into the city from the court operations than expenses.
Mayor Bell shared his disapproval of the reduction of the projection, sharing that Ms. Froeschner was confident in her projections until the City Administration was involved. He feels that administration is being too conservative with their projections.
Court Administration Froeschner shared her expertise on why her initial projections, while accurate, do not adequately share a complete picture of what is available to the city.

PARKS BOARD
Parks Board Chair and Vice-Chair, Mike "Rock" Bock and Tonia Griffin, presented on behalf of the Parks Board. They opened their discussion by sharing a list of projects that have been completed, identified, or are in progress for the Parks Board. It was determined that once the list is completed, all items that are available to be completed by the Parks Board in order to satisfy the needs of the Parks Master Plan will be completed. The other items requested will need to be completed either by the park maintenance staff or by outside contractors.
Chairman Bock shared his heartburn regarding the confusion surrounding the availability of funds to the Parks Board.
A discussion regarding Parks Board expenses ensued, bringing attention to a $7,500 investment into what initially was intended for the Summer Youth Program ran by the Library in conjunction with Culture Corp. and IGNITE Mainland, that unfortunately did not come to fruition.
Chairman Bock brought this up in an attempt to highlight how significant a single

purchase can be from what is called the "Donation Fund". As a result of the reduction in budget of the current fiscal year that was unclear to the Board, the Board is projected to be $17,000 over budget. This led to a lengthy discussion regarding the convoluted budgeting history of the Parks Board.
After much discussion, it was determined that clarification needed to be made regarding funding. It was clarified, with the assistance of Deputy City Manager Joshua Pritchett, that the board has 3 revenue funds available to them; Fund 81, which has 2 accounts, donation and operating, and Fund 66 which contains the mandatory Parks User Fee.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked for clarification regarding the purpose of the Parks Surcharge Fee. City Clerk Kierra Nance clarified the language in Ordinance No. O-2019-0013, the creation ordinance for the Parks User Fee also known as the Parks Surcharge. In Section 1 of the ordinance it states " Funds from the Parks Improvement line may be budgeted directly by the City Council for park construction, renovation, and/or maintenance, or, may be set aside with Council approval for payment of bonds issued for park projects."
Upon prompting from the council Chairman Bock shared the board will utilize the "Donation Fund" as a discretionary fund, to be used for paint, beautification, and event promotions. The "Council funding" would be utilized for new equipment, and the Parks User Fees would be split in half, between matching funds for parks grants and maintenance and repair.

***Mayor Bell called for a recess at 3:39 p.m. and returned at 3:50 p.m.*

KEEP LA MARQUE BEAUTIFUL
Vice-Chair Re'Chard Loftis spoke on behalf of the Keep La Marque Beautiful Commission. He made a plea to the council not to cut their budget. There have been projects postponed or eliminated due to inadequate funding. He also asked the council to consider increasing the board's budget if possible. He shared that the board also contributed to the replacement of the street signs in the amount of approximately $7000.
Discussion ensued regarding consideration of their budget. It was council consensus that the Keep La Marque Beautiful Commission would receive, if possible, at least $25,000.

TEXAS CITY-LA MARQUE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
Executive Director Tim Culp presented for the Chamber. He shared his background and his desire to review the contract between the Chamber and the City. The City pays $25,000 to the Chamber annually, and in the contract there are approximately 14 areas that the Chamber is meant to cover through the contract. He recommended making changes to the contract that would prove to be more beneficial to the city without adding to the city's financial contribution. He spoke of a new event in the Spring the Chamber plans to hold, at Highland Bayou Park, in the Spring. He did share that the Chamber would request an additional $20,000 to support the new festival which is expected to bring approximately 10,000 people.
Mayor Bell shared concerns that in the future the event in question would be moved to another location, outside the proposed Highland Bayou Park location. He

clarified that it has not ever been the intent of the Chamber to eliminate BayouFest, there has merely been a proposal to move BayouFest to March and partner with the new event to expand.
Discussions regarding special event insurance, revenue shares, and partnerships ensued.

BAYOUFEST
Parks Chairman Bock started by saying Bayoufest is "behind the 8-ball" this year, but there will be two nights of entertainment. The first night is a Tejano night and this year will include a paid gate for the first time. He also shared the plans to remove the fireworks at BayouFest, reallocating those funds to Life & Liberty. The event is proposed to have 2 Grammy award-winning Tejano bands on Friday Night, and 3 bands of various genres on Saturday. The event will include Kids Fish, Cookoff, Food Trucks, Kid Zone, Mutton Bustin, cornhole, and a pickleball tournament. He also added that there could potentially be carnival rides, a pageant, and a Fun Run.
***Councilmember Yancy exited the meeting at 4:43 p.m.*
Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked for legal clarification on whether the city is allowed to cut off access to a public park for paid events. He also asked for a budget for the BayouFest event. Chairman Bock shared plans to have a budget of approximately $90,000.
Councilmember Lowry questioned if there would be a cookoff on Friday. It was clarified that there is one cookoff, but there would be two categories on Friday.
Councilmember Ross questioned why this new potential partner would want to keep the BayouFest name. It was determined that funding and brand recognition were among the key factors in this decision. However, the event will continue regardless of the merger. It is currently being called the Cajun Throwdown.
Mayor Bell, on behalf of a resident, questioned what the staffing costs would be to include a second day. Deputy City Manager Pritchett shared that there is already limited staffing on the night prior to the event for security reasons so, while there will be an increase it likely will not be as stark as some may anticipate.
Further discussions ensued regarding the planning, preparation, and vision for both BayouFest and Cajun Throwdown.
Councilmember Lowry requested to know who would lead these events. For the Cajun Throwdown Mr. Guidry, the proposed partner, and Director Culp would be the lead. As for BayouFest, Emergency Management Coordinator Kyle Hunter shared that the Emergency Management Team has historically been the lead, due to event security.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION
There was no executive session.

7. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION
No actions were taken.

8. ADJOURNMENT
Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Ross seconded the motion. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

***Meeting was adjourned at 6:02 p.m.*