



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL JOINT MINUTES
of
July 28, 2025**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell and Chairman Smith called the meeting to order at 1:07 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Keith Bell
Joe Compian
Kimberley Yancy
Joseph Lowry
Tonia Griffin

Mayor
Mayor Pro Tem/District B/ Board Member
District A
District C (arrived at 1:50 p.m.)
District D

Gene Smith
James Osteen
Tracie Steans

Chairman
Board Member
Board Member

ABSENT:

Cleveland Lane

EDC Secretary

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Economic Development Director Getty gave the invocation and Board Member Steans led the pledge.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1. Updates from HDL Companies

Richard Fletcher, Vice President of Client Services and Operations at HDL Companies, gave a brief presentation regarding their findings of the City's Sales Tax and Use. Mr. Fletcher shared that HDL provides 15 different reports for the city. He stated that from a net perspective, the city's sales tax is up by approximately 20%, which includes a large prior year payment. In the current period collections the city is up by 2.1% excluding the large prior payment. Discussions regarding "out of jurisdiction taxpayers" ensued, where Mr. Fletcher explained that not all the city's taxpaying entities have physical locations within the city.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked clarifying questions regarding the companies listed in the Top 10 Taxpayers, and the exclusion of certain well-known entities. A discussion followed regarding which tax information is considered confidential.

Mr. Fletcher thanked everyone for their time, and stated that HDL is open to returning at the respective body's request.

5. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

James Ross (Ave D) spoke regarding EDC grants. He spoke of a particular entity and gave various accounts of conflicting information provided by the entity. He is requesting a review, stating that he did one independently utilizing a "75% requirement". He is not telling the bodies how to review them but just that they need to be done, and if they choose not to review, they should tell the community why. Hayley Winkelmann (Bowie St) stated that someone hacked the YouTube stream and posted something highly inappropriate. She quoted the primary role of the Economic Development Corporation. She appreciated the discussion regarding the COVID-19 Grant applications. As the city was looking to assist during this time, there were people who obtained these funds that they should not have. "It's our money, we want it back". Vanessa McAfee (***declined to give address*) also requested that the wrongfully obtained funds be recovered. Susan Grainger Tyler (***declined to give address*) stated that she is a PhD Student in Environmental Justice, and she is doing research in the community. Over the next month, hopefully with city support, she will be interviewing the community regarding environmental concerns.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6.1. COVID-19 Relief Grant

City Attorney Knebel reminded the bodies of the Chapter 171 Conflict of Interest Rules that states if an individual has a substantial financial interest in a business affected by the program they are advise against participation.

Councilmember Yancy requested that this be provided in writing so that she could "read it for (her)self".

Boardmember Osteen stated that 3 meeting participants would not be eligible to participate, Councilmembers Lowry and Yancy, as well as Board member Steans. Director Getty gave a brief history of the program. He stated that only 2 local entities acted prior to the city, and the program was enacted relatively fast. He acknowledged that the intent of the program and what it became were "totally different". Whereas it was initially intended to be for sales tax entities, as the applications were received it was quickly determined that there was a greater need. In the two rounds of funding, the EDC provided nearly \$1 million dollars in relief funding. He believes that this was a "really good program" and La Marque "really showed its heart" during this time.

Boardmember Osteen informed the public that four of the current EDC members were not on the board at the time, and three of the original members are now deceased.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked if any of the other Economic Development Corporations that had enacted this program had taken any action to reclaim these funds. It was determined that to Director Getty's knowledge, this had not occurred. Mayor Pro Tem Compian followed with questions regarding the application verification.

Mayor Bell stated that, in his recollection, "no one was driving around checking

addresses". He believes this program was a good-faith effort. He stated that the concept of an audit is no different from the federal government reviewing the Paycheck Protection Program loan process. He believes that if the city does not do what is called for in the process, then the city could technically be engaged in "corruption".

Board Member Steans stated that she was not a board member at the time of her receipt of grant funds. She was thankful for the funding that saved her business. She does own a business in La Marque, and her business is "clean".

Mayor Bell and Board member Osteen both clarified that no one was implying otherwise.

Chairman Smith stated that he believes this should be considered by the board, and he is not interested in moving forward at this time.

Councilmember Griffin made a motion to direct the EDC to perform an audit. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian stated that he only seconded for purposes of discussion, but he would like to defer to the EDC. He would like to allow the EDC to make the first decisions.

Councilmember Griffin amended her motion to recommend that the EDC perform an audit on the COVID Relief grant program within 60 days. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded.

Mayor Bell stated that, regardless of what individuals have claimed, this has nothing to do with Councilmembers Lowry or Yancy.

COUNCIL MOTION PASSED 3-0 (Lowry and Yancy abstained due to Conflict of Interest).

6.II. Priorities

Councilmember Yancy stated that her priorities for the Economic Development Corporation would be the creation of a business incubator program and a home-buying program. She requested that the council review ordinances that could assist in being a better partner of the EDC. She also spoke of creating an outdoor entertainment venue on Highway 3.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared his desire to establish an ombudsman to make it easier for businesses to "get things done" in the city. He asked the EDC to be a greater voice of education to the council and community.

Councilmember Lowry had no priorities to share.

Councilmember Griffin stated that she had spoken with the Director and is interested in the revitalization program and creating a Buttermilk Junction memorial across from Bayou Park. She is also interested in the beautification and revitalization of Hwy 3. She would like to partner with the EDC on expanding Lemonade Day, and collaborate with the Chamber to talk about Highland Bayou as a premier marketed recreational space. She has also asked to further boost the All America City designation.

Mayor Bell stated that everyone has done a great amount of work thus far. He is looking forward to continuing with small business development. He sees the Hwy 3 corridor as an opportunity, and requests due diligence in developing the Hwy 3 corridor and the Renaissance District. He also spoke about the continued efforts regarding the acquisition of surplus properties within the city from other governmental entities.

Councilmember Yancy added that she would like for the EDC to consider the space industry, developing land owned by the University of Houston, the Emancipation Trail development, and creation of a city brochure to advertise the amenities the city has to offer.

7. EXECUTIVE SESSION

***Mayor Bell and Chairman Smith recessed the Special Joint Meeting and entered into Executive Session at 2:37 p.m.*

7.1. Section 551.087 of the Government Code - deliberating economic development negotiations regarding MS Shops at La Marque, LLC (Main Street Commercial Partners)

8. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

***Mayor Bell and Chairman Smith closed the Executive Session and reconvened the Special Joint meeting at 3:15 p.m.*

8.1. Section 551.087 of the Government Code - deliberating economic development negotiations regarding MS Shops at La Marque, LLC (Main Street Commercial Partners)

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion that the council move forward with the commercial 380 agreement with Main Street. Councilmember Yancy seconded.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. ADJOURNMENT

***Meeting was adjourned at 3:17 p.m.*