



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MINUTES
of
April 8, 2025**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present:

Keith Bell	Mayor
Joe Compian	Mayor Pro Tem/ District B
Kimberley Yancy	District A (arrived at 11:50 a.m.)
Joseph Lowry	District C
James Ross	District D

3. NEW BUSINESS

Tonia Griffin (3000 Taylor St) spoke on behalf of the Parks Board, where she serves as vice-chair, stating that the city is almost midway through the fiscal year and the board is still unclear as to how much funding they have received.

3.1. Mid-Year Budget Review

Interim City Manager Pritchett gave a brief introduction and his hope that this practice will continue in the future.

Discussions began regarding the significant changes made in the city's Information Technology department, including the departure of the city's longtime System Administrator, and I.T. Assistant.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned the move to a single budget amendment. He is used to individual amendments, as this process is typically reserved for larger cities. Mayor Bell shared support for moving to a quarterly budget amendment process.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked clarifying questions, leading to a consensus of a monthly financial report to be approved by the council. This will include any notification of major financial changes as they arise for the council to authorize, with the budget amendments to be completed quarterly.

Interim City Manager Pritchett spoke about the financial constraints caused by the overtime in the Fire Department. Mayor Bell gave a brief history of the changes in the fire department that have led to this, starting with the Council's decision to create three captain positions. The council intended to have three personnel promoted into these positions. However, in doing so, the department "backfilled" the firefighter positions, which has caused financial constraints. This misunderstanding, in addition to the establishment of minimum staffing, has created a financial concern, because the department is growing, but the budget

has not grown at the same rate, leading to the department consistently exceeding their budget. A lengthy discussion clarifying minimum staffing and how overtime is accrued, ensued.

Interim City Manager Pritchett shared that while the police department's overtime budget is high, the city will receive reimbursements for certain overtime hours due to the officers that work with specialized task forces and other agencies, such as the FBI, DEA, etc. He also gave an overview of overtime for public safety at special events, both at city-sponsored events and outside events.

Interim City Manager Pritchett shared concerns and the need for public safety to have additional IT infrastructure and support.

*** Mayor Bell recessed the meeting at 11:52 a.m. and reconvened at 12:04 p.m.*

Mayor Bell summarized the earlier conversation by stating that the fire department is over budget, primarily due to overtime and minimum staffing. He questioned the increase in ambulance repairs. It was determined that while these are above the expectations, they are not as significant.

Mayor Bell reiterated the police budget is also a concern due to overtime, which was attributed to events, community policing, and the work of the Special Response Team. Interim City Manager Pritchett also attributed it to "hard costs" as this police department is the most staffed department in the history of this city. A lengthy discussion regarding revising the structure of the community policing program ensued encompassing thoughts regarding stipends, overtime, and necessary personnel.

Mayor Bell suggested a review of the sick time policy, identifying the number of personnel who can be out of office at a time, and reconsidering the number of officers who the city will send for additional certifications at one time.

Councilmember Lowry gave a brief history of community policing origins, and his belief that it is a waste of taxpayer dollars.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned if community policing is covered in the Collective Bargaining Agreement, and shared his discontent with officers receiving both overtime and a stipend for being a community policing officer.

Councilmember Yancy shared her support for community policing, and stated that there have been overtime issues since she has been on the council, prior to the initiation of the community-oriented policing program.

Mayor Bell shared his support for a Community Policing Coordinator position.

Discussions regarding overtime during significant weather and emergency management events ensued, with Mayor Pro Tem Compian emphasizing the importance of submitting those hours for reimbursement within 30 days of the event.

Councilmember Ross requested a number of minimum and overall staffing required for both police and fire.

Interim City Manager Pritchett expressed concerns regarding third-party inspection costs and practices.

Discussions regarding considerations of bringing an inspector on staff ensued.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested additional documentation in order to make a better informed decision.

*** Mayor Bell recessed the meeting at 12:56 p.m. and reconvened at 1:48 p.m.*

Finance Director Turner began discussing the utility fund after the break. She

stated that water revenues are "spot on" at approximately 52% but sewer revenue is a little below expectations at 47%. She attributes this to potential seasonal fluctuations, and did not have any concerns.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned how the water revenue is higher than the sewer revenue. Discussions regarding increased services from the Utility Billing department ensued, helping to identify billing and payment discrepancies that were missed previously.

Discussions regarding the correlation between the water and sewer rates ensued with a request for the Finance Director to research the discrepancy, the differences in percentages, further and present at a later date.

Finance Director Turner shared her heartburn with the revenues from the discharge agreement with Republic Waste. Discussions regarding the fluctuations of discharge revenues ensued. Mayor Bell recommended that these funds not be utilized for long-term expenses, such as salary, but for single purchases, such as equipment.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian concurred with not relying on this line item as a revenue source. He recommends that revenues from the discharge agreement be considered as a "licensing fee" under a special revenue fund that would be able to encompass any future agreements also. This item was requested to be researched by the Interim City Manager and Finance Director and brought back to the council at a later date.

Councilmember Yancy shared her contentment with the city no longer being in a deficit.

Mayor Bell brought up concerns regarding late payments reflected in the finance report. It was clarified this was due to end-of-year billing that the city received after the close of Fiscal Year 2024.

Mayor Bell questioned the stormwater expenditures, showing that only 6% had been spent, with a remaining balance of over \$282,000. He questioned if that money is dedicated to the salary of the personnel that is intended to clear culverts and ditches. Interim City Manager Pritchett and Finance Director Turner clarified that the current personnel are being charged out of Department 24, and this will be addressed in an upcoming budget amendment.

Mayor Bell asked additional questions regarding the 15% usage of the stormwater fund. Interim City Manager Pritchett stated that the staff would need to "dig in" to be able to fully answer the question.

Councilmember Ross questioned the varying utilizations. It was determined that some of the accounts are paid at certain times of the year, not on a monthly basis.

Discussions regarding personnel who are paid from both the general fund and the utility fund ensued, with the council questioning if this could be presented more clearly.

Finance Director Turner gave a brief overview of the sanitation fund, identifying budget fluctuations due to the city partnering with Waste Management for commercial accounts. She identified that the city has approximately \$915,000 that can be reallocated due to the change.

Mayor Bell shared his concerns with these projections, since the commercial accounts were supposed to be a "pass through". He pushed back, stating that those

monies were not in the city's possession as that is money that the city would have been collecting from the business owners.

Councilmember Ross questioned the 37% collection in sales tax revenue.

3.II. Budget Amendment

Interim City Manager Pritchett began by discussing positions and salary adjustments citywide. He identified that Public Works personnel do not get an annual raise in the same manner as other staff members. Their raise is split into two parts, once at the beginning of the fiscal year, and the other prior to the start of the summer. He followed by informing the council of the changes in the role and responsibilities associated with the Police Department's Administrative Assistant, removing purchasing requirements and reallocating them to the finance department.

He discussed the confusion in the naming of positions in Public Works and the intent to rectify this in the upcoming budget amendment.

Councilmember Ross questioned if these position titles are concurrent with the same positions in other cities. It was determined that the new titles were created to be in line with industry standard.

Mayor Bell reiterated a point that he has made many times before: the city has a small Public Works Department, and as such, the city needs to identify the 4 things the city does well, and the needs of the community, and focus on those.

Discussions regarding identifying the four as water: wastewater, stormwater, and freshwater, streets and traffic: maintenance and signs, parks and facilities: parks and other facilities, and areas surrounding the mitigation of illegal dumping.

Discussions regarding Public Works contracting ensued, and the desire to reduce the amount spent on contracting services.

Requests to hold a workshop with Waste Management and one with the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDoT) each is requested to discuss their operations in the city limits. An email was requested from the Council with information regarding TxDoT's schedule for debris pickup.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian stated, in relation to the public works position titles, that he has not seen any positions with the primary responsibility of clearing culverts and ditches, which have been funded by two budget cycles.

Interim City Manager Pritchett identified that those would be the responsibility of the Stormwater Technicians. Additional discussions regarding the grading of ditches and needs in areas across the city ensued.

3.III. Financial Projections

Finance Director Turner stated that the organization began the budget process earlier this year. The departments have already submitted their information to the finance department. Finance is reviewing those submissions, and is on track. Interim City Manager Pritchett asked that wholehearted decisions be made when allocating funding outside what has already been established. He does not plan to present very many new personnel requests. The priority is to maintain service and retain good employees. Both Bond Counsel and the Financial Advisors have asked the Council to take a hard look at both the I&S rate and M&O rate when determining tax rates this upcoming year. The city has cut expenses, and there are a lot of new businesses, but that money has not materialized yet.

Discussions regarding a possible sales tax windfall ensued surrounding a payment that is under investigation. The money is in an investment account until the investigation is complete.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian recommended that the city begin to diversify its investments, and discussed potential clean energy credits from the federal government.

Interim City Manager Pritchett spoke about the current fleet contract with Enterprise and the financial opportunities that have arisen with regard to the equity in the vehicles.

Councilmember Ross shared his support for a change in vehicles to hybrid vehicles and the conversion to solar power.

Additional discussions regarding the multitude of facilities projects ensued. It was determined that there were too many sectors of the city that were working in silos in relation to these projects. There needs to be communication, especially with consideration of the Public Safety Building.

Extensive discussions regarding the preparation requirements for the Public Safety Building ensued, including a conversation regarding the remaining balance of the Certificates of Obligation obtained to purchase the property known as the ABC Buildings (4916 Texas Ave La Marque, TX 77568) in the amount of \$2,666,037.84 that could potentially be utilized for a police station.

Councilmember Ross asked questions regarding the language surrounding the Certificate of Obligation Bonds, and asked for clarity in our documentation moving forward.

Councilmember Yancy asked for documentation showing the growth in the city from 2021 to current in sales tax, businesses, and property tax. She asked for a simple single-page graphic that the average resident could understand.

4. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

5. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

No action was taken.

6. REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no requests or announcements.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Ross seconded.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

***Meeting was adjourned at 4:11 p.m.*