



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MINUTES
of
January 27, 2025**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Keith Bell

Mayor

Joe Compian

Mayor Pro Tem/ District B

Kimberley Yancy

District A

James Ross

District D

ABSENT:

Joseph Lowry

District C

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Pro Tem Compian gave the invocation and Councilmember Ross led the pledge.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.I. Award: President's Lifetime Achievement Award - Joe Compian

Mr. Robert Young, a Board member of the Texas Coastal Plains Chapter of the American Red Cross, presented Mayor Pro Tem Joe Compian with the President's Lifetime Achievement Award.

4.II. Award: Certificate of Appreciation - Oscar Del Bosque Alas

Interim Public Works Director Shannon Breau shared that Mr. Oscar Del Bosque Alas provided aid to an injured gentleman while working on a pipeline. His heroic actions prevented loss of life. He was presented with an Award of Recognition, thanking him for his actions.

4.III. Introduction: Jason Ellison, Development Services Director

Acting City Manager Joshua Pritchett introduced Development Services Director Jason Ellison.

4.IV. Introduction: Monica Veliz, Budget Coordinator

Acting City Manager Pritchett and Finance Director Christine Turner introduced Budget Coordinator Monica Veliz to the community.

4.V. Presentation: 30 Years of Dedicated Service - Tyrone Griffin

Acting City Manager Pritchett and Mayor Bell honored Mr. Tyrone Griffin for over 30 years of service to the community.

4.VI. Presentation: Stifel

Brad Angst of Stifel gave a thorough overview of the current state of the city's bonds and financial status. He shared that the city has nearly doubled in growth over the last 5-6 years. He also spoke to a substantial decrease in the interest and sinking rate. He feels that stabilizing or being cautious in the amount the council decreases the tax rate each year could provide some opportunity for the city. There are currently 9 outstanding debt obligations with approximately \$25,500,000.00 remaining. In 5 years, the city will pay off the 2014 and 2017 General Obligation bonds. The city currently has an AA- bond rating, which is very favorable.

Approximately 1 year ago, the city applied for funding from the Texas Water Development Board, which was approved in December 2024 in the amount of \$9,985,000.00. This saves the city approximately \$1.9 million as opposed to applying to other funding abilities. This would be paid for through the city's utility fund.

Mayor Bell asked for clarity for the public as to where the city currently is in this process. Mr. Angst shared that the council approved an application, and the Texas Water Development Board approved the funding, however the Council has not at this time entered into a contract.

Jonathan Frels, Bracewell, the city's Bond Counsel, shared the process for obtaining this funding. He spoke to his recommendation to issue a Certificate of Obligation to the Texas Water Development Board to evidence the funding. He reiterated that this would be paid through the water and sewer revenue fund. He shared that this mechanism, while not the only one, it is the lowest impact to the rate payers.

Mr. Angst continued that the payment would be \$620,000 annually over a 20-year payment period. Currently, there is an estimated \$1.5 million in available revenue per the Texas Water Development Board. He shared that large scale projects are most often paid for through a "pay as you use" model, which is why bonds, and Certificates of Obligation are utilized to spread out the cost of these large projects.

He shared figures that showed if the council keeps the current tax rate moving forward, the capacity for bond issuance will grow. In the event that the council raises the rate, the capacity for bond issuance will grow at a faster rate.

He shared that at the 5-cent increase would impact a \$150,000 home at a rate of \$6.25 per month and a \$350,000 home at a rate of \$14.58 per month.

Mr. Angst also identified that if the council would choose to utilize a General Election Bond, this would likely not get before the voters until November.

Councilmember Ross feels that a General Election Bond would be better received in 2026 or 2027 as he does not feel that it is a good time. He asked how utilizing the Certificates of Obligation would affect current utility bills.

Mr. Angst believes that there is room within the current rate to prevent the need for a rate increase.

Mayor Bell questioned if that means the city is realizing some revenue in the

utility fund.

Mr. Angst shared that the answer would be dependent of the year in question however, currently that is the case.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared that historically the city had supplemented the utility fund through general revenues. Through proper financial planning, resolving water loss, setting realistic water rates, the city has now realized this new debt capacity.

Councilmember Yancy requested a workshop to help the community better understand the situation.

Mayor Bell questioned Standard & Poors as shown on Page 17 of the report. It was determined that they are one of the 4 major rating agencies. Historically, Moody and Standard & Poors are the top 2 rating firms in the country, and they have rated the City of La Marque at an AA- rating, which is one step below the top rating of AA. Mayor Bell emphasized that the city is in good financial health and the report shows that the city has a weak debt profile.

Mayor Bell questioned if Certificates of Obligation are tied to property tax. Mr. Frels shared that on the Texas Water Development Board loan there is a tax pledge, that will not be used, the city would utilize the revenue pledge. The tax pledge is in place to secure better terms on the loan.

Mayor Bell shared that, historically, the city has elected to purchase additional water as opposed to infrastructure repairs as it was more cost-effective and the community tends to disapprove raising taxes. He has personally vowed not to incur debt without a vote of the people. However, if it is the will of the council, he will support the decision made.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared some history, that this fund was created through a constitutional amendment at the state level. He questioned the timeline of this item. Mr. Angst shared that this would need to be accepted by December 31, 2025. The financial team brought this forward to be ahead of the budget cycle.

***Councilman Ross exited the room at 7:16 p.m.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian supported the idea of a workshop on this item. He is proud of the city for being considered.

***Councilmember Ross returned at 7:19 p.m.*

5. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

- Richard Holcolmb (2708 Magnolia) shared a complaint about the last council meeting. He doesn't believe in insulting anyone, and at the last council meeting a speaker insulted a council member and their wife. He didn't mean to offend with his "Make La Marque Great Again" hat, he just wants the city to be great.
- Sylvia Joiner Crawford (1110 Deats Rd, Dickinson, TX) shared that she does not have a lot of money. She has been paying \$1000 a month for the taxes on her childhood home as her sister was paying for them before she passed. She would like to hold on to the land because she wants to build a house there.
- Re'Chard Loftis (309 Johnson) started by saying professionalism and civility are needed here. He is tired of coming to council meetings and the council is arguing about things that have nothing to do with the city. If they are not here to do the people's business, "get out of public service". Personal vendettas should be

handled outside of this building, not on taxpayers time. If they keep it up, he will personally pull the paperwork to recall the members.

- Carolyn Small (1121 Prune) shared the same sentiments as Mr. Loftis. She shared her concerns regarding statements such as "political rivalry", "political opponent", and "political adversary". She shared the dictionary definition of a member. Individuals can say whatever they want in their personal time. However, in this room each member should be a "functional" member of the body.
- Sheila Lanese (2515 Boss St) stated that there are a lot of new properties in her neighborhood, and the property is going down. She spoke to the deterioration of sidewalks and culverts, asked for the light to be fixed at Cedar Road, high grass, and asked for the city to pay attention to detail.
- Joshua Pritchett (2801 Gulf Fwy) spoke as a private citizen. He promoted his annual Night To Shine event. He encouraged everyone to go to resonatetexas.org to see a quick video in relation to the event. This event is held the weekend before Valentine's Day at the College of the Mainland Conference Center. This event is a prom for individuals with physical or mental disabilities. He asked for volunteers to come in to assist and be cheerleaders, while the parents and caregivers get to take a break.
- Kimberley Kriegel Edwards (161 Lower Borondo) requested that the city allow her to remove the tree behind her home.
- Hayley Winkelmann (1413 Bowie St) spoke to say that racism will no longer be tolerated in La Marque. This is not a Democratic or Republican issue in La Marque, it's a problem with peoples' hearts. Racism needs to go back to the place that it should never have left, the intrusive thought that you should not have had in the first place. She encourages everyone to take a breath before communicating with their neighbor, stating "we are all better than this".

6. OLD BUSINESS

6.1. Wastewater Treatment Plant Project Update

Rick Garcia (Ardurra) stated that the plans for the Waste Water System were scheduled to be completed by the end of February. Following completion, Ardurra anticipates a workshop with the council to be held in March and, if everything goes well, bids and advertisements in April with awards in June. After this process, it will leave about a year and a half for construction, which he hopes will meet the deadline of December 2027 for completion.

Mayor Bell stated that since there are three (3) designs he requested that all three (3) designs be put to bid. He will not support changes that were made midstream, even if it was done to save money. The people of La Marque decide what is right for the community.

Mr. Garcia clarified that he will bring all of the information forward in March.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

7. NEW BUSINESS

7.I. Ordinance No. O-2025-0002

Councilmember Ross questioned if this is intended to transition all codes from the 2018 codes to the 2024 editions.

Chief David Merryman said he believes everything except for the Electrical Code, which is the 2023 edition and the most current, are from 2024. He also mentioned that a few local amendments were made in relation to the fire code.

Development Services Director Ellison spoke to the Building Code Effective Grading Assessment that was just completed. If the codes are not updated, the city's Insurance Service Office (ISO) Rating, which is currently at 2, would be dropped significantly.

Director Ellison shared that a letter was received by the city from Veras, the grading agency, approximately six (6) months ago, so the city is behind in this task.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested that in the recitals the ISO rating and Building Code Grading be added for historical value.

Both Mayor Pro Tem Compian and Councilmember Ross asked questions for clarity regarding specific elements of the code in relation to different classifications of spaces.

***Councilmember Yancy exited the room at 8:00 p.m.*

Discussions regarding "Knox box" and fire hydrant requirements in the city ensued. Councilmember Ross questioned labeling requirements and obtaining data are shown in the ordinance.

***Councilmember Yancy returned at 8:10 p.m.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2025-0002 amended to include the ISO and Building Code Grading as requested.

Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.II. Resolution No. R-2025-0004

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0004.

Councilmember Ross seconded.

Councilmember Ross requested that the city hire an individual that can handle the city's mosquito truck.

Acting City Manager Pritchett shared that there is an employee that is currently certified to operate that equipment.

Mayor Bell shared that the current item is in relation to the county spraying and the city's equipment is meant to supplement the efforts of the health district.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

7.III. Resolution No. R-2025-0005

Mayor Pro Tem Compian made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0005.

Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.IV. Resolution No. R-2025-0006

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0006.

Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.V. Resolution No. R-2025-0007

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0007.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.VI. Resolution No. R-2025-0008

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0008.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.VII. Resolution No. R-2025-0009

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0009.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.VIII. Resolution No. R-2025-0010

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0010.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.IX. Resolution No. R-2025-0011

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0011.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.X. Resolution No. R-2025-0012

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0012.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.XI. Resolution No. R-2025-0013

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adopt Resolution No. R-2025-0013.
Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.XII. Contract with OpenGov

***Mayor Bell exited the meeting at 8:22 p.m.*

Ray Kirkpatrick and Christian Cornelius of OpenGov gave a brief presentation on the OpenGov software. The City currently uses the STW software, which is the predecessor of the OpenGov suite. The updated software includes modules for finance, reporting, code compliance, permitting, utility billing, payments, asset management, procurement, and more.

***Mayor Bell returned at 8:25 p.m.*

Councilmember Ross asked clarifying questions about the utility billing system, such as how small of an increment the city can bill for water, and leak detection and notification services. He also questioned the cost and how the city will fund the implementation. This is an American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) expense, as well as migration of all applicable processes out of their current software into this one.

Councilmember Ross questioned how much data the city could lose in this process. Mr. Kirkpatrick shared that OpenGov will retain access to the current server until after implementation.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked if there is a service that tracks surplus assets. It was determined that this is tracked in multiple ways in the new software.

Councilmember Yancy asked that training be a priority and clarified that this software can create a budget.

It was determined that after the initial implementation fees, the system would cost approximately \$251,000 per year to maintain.

Mayor Bell is just asking for accurate, timely, and transparent information.

Mayor Bell questioned when the implementation will be fully completed. Mr. Kirkpatrick believes that this process would take approximately nine (9) months.

Councilmember Ross made a motion to authorize the City Manager upon final approval of the City Attorney to sign a contract with OpenGov, Inc., in the amount of \$721,180.83. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.XIII. Purchase: City Park Awnings

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the purchase and installation of two awnings at Westlawn Park in the amount of \$5,770, utilizing the Parks User Fees. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.XIV. Request for Rezoning Property

Development Services Director Ellison stated that on his second day he met with property owner Jack Mazzola regarding three properties that he intended to build houses on that were zoned commercial, unbeknownst to the property owner.

Mr. Mazzola gave a brief summary of the area, stating that there is light industrial and some commercial nearby, but there is also residential property "all the way back as far as you can see". He believed this zoning was done unintentionally.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian declared a conflict due to a familial relationship with one of the property owners.

City Attorney Knebel clarified that the item before the council is to begin the amendment process, as a zoning amendment can be done by either the owner or by the council. This is a request from the council to begin the process.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned if the owners of all the represented addresses were aware of the request.

City Attorney Knebel shared that the properties currently have residential homes on them and it was the idea of staff to address all at the same time in lieu of waiting for each individual to come before the council.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared his discontent with this strategy, as some of those property owners may prefer the commercial designation for future purposes and he does not believe the council is in a position to speak for the other owners.

City Attorney Knebel reminded Mayor Pro Tem Compian that he initially declared a conflict, and identified that this is just the beginning of the process. Notices would be sent to the property owners within 200 feet of the proposed rezone area.

After a brief discussion regarding the process, which will begin with the Planning and Zoning Commission, Councilmember Yancy made a motion to direct the Acting City Manager to begin the rezoning process. Councilmember Ross seconded. **MOTION CARRIED WITH 3 AYES AND 1 NAY (COMPIAN).**

8. CITY MANAGER REPORT

***8.I, 8.II, 8.III, 8.VI, 8.IX, and 8.XI were pulled for discussion.*

8.I. Monthly Reports

Councilmember Ross shared that the city is having a much better sales tax season than some projected.

Acting City Manager Pritchett also pointed out that the finance team has worked diligently to ensure that the city is collecting sales tax from all of the appropriate entities.

***Mayor Pro Tem Compian exited at 9:19 p.m.*

Councilmember Ross asked for Finance Director Turner to share the difference between the detailed vs actual report. This is a report that the Finance Director created in order to maintain accountability at the department level and provide information to council and the community regarding overages in the expenditures.

***Mayor Pro Tem Compian returned at 9:23 p.m.*

8.II. 2024 Quarterly Investment Reports

This item stood as submitted.

8.III. Crime Statistics for Calendar Year 2024

Mayor Bell just wanted to take the time to celebrate the constant and continuing reduction in crime. He shared that there was a reduction in violent crime of 11%, property crime of 15%, and an overall decrease in crime of 14%. He thanked the Chief and all of the officers for their hard work and dedication.

8.IV. Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership (BAHEP) Annual Report

This item stood as submitted.

8.V. Grant Application: Turkey Smoke Grant Program

This item stood as submitted.

8.VI. Invitation for Bid: 12-Inch Water Distribution Line from Newman Road to Stonewall Project

Interim Public Works Director Breaux clarified that this project is an Impact Fee project to assist approximately 33 connections between Newman Road to Stonewall, including approximately 25 fire hydrants.

8.VII. General Land Office (GLO) Public Infrastructure Grant Projects Update

This item stood as submitted.

8.VIII. Light up La Marque Project Update - Texas Avenue Grant through TXDOT

This item stood as submitted.

8.IX. All America Draft Marketing Plan

Acting City Manager Pritchett shared that this shows both what has already been done and what is planned in the future to celebrate the 2024 All America win. He shared the partnership with the Texas City La Marque Chamber of Commerce and the Bay Area Houston Economic Partnership, to put the City of La Marque in the "rooms" to attract businesses to the city.

8.X. Doorstep Democracy

This item stood as submitted.

8.XI. Summer Camp 2025

Library Director Amy Miller shared that initial conversations have begun with staff regarding the intended direction of the Summer Camp.

Mayor Bell believes that the camp should be longer, he requested an 8-week program, not just 2 weeks.

Library Director Miller shared that summer is the "Super Bowl" of library activities.

Mayor Bell shared his support for a seasonal summer camp director. He would love 8 weeks, but would be willing to compromise at 4 weeks.

Councilmember Ross supported a 4-week summer camp and questioned if there could be a fundraising element added.

8.XII. Items for the Good of the Order

Acting City Manager Pritchett spoke regarding Winter Storm Enzo, commending all departments for their unified approach to handling the needs of the community. He thanked select residents who reached out during that time to further gain information to help inform the public. He is pleased that there was not a mass power loss in the city.

9. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

10. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

No action was taken.

11. REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilmember Ross gave kudos for the communications during Winter Storm Enzo. He requested more information on Night to Shine and thanked everyone who had reached out to his family in the previous week.

Both Councilmember Yancy and Mayor Pro Tem Compian declined to speak.

Mayor Bell gave a brief recap of the events of the meeting, including celebrating the newly acquired financial software and reduction in crime. He spoke to the allegations made earlier in the meeting regarding free speech, and he shared that, due to certain potential liabilities, he was advised by legal counsel to allow for the free speech. He believes that as community leaders the council should set the example, as if they are going to speak recklessly, they cannot expect others to not speak recklessly. He remembers what it felt like to be a young Councilmember and having the gavel banged on him, and he has tried to be a champion for free speech since taking on his role as Mayor. He acknowledged the legal language that used to be under requests and announcements, and requested that, at the advice of the City Clerk and City Attorney, it be reinstated. He is learning to lead by example, and stated that it was an honor and privilege to be with everyone tonight as a lot of great work was done.

12. ADJOURNMENT

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

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

*****Meeting was adjourned at 10:16 p.m.***