CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
SPECIAL MINUTES
of
August 4, 2025

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL
PRESENT:

Keith Bell	Mayor
Joe Compian	Mayor Pro Tem/ District B
Kimberley Yancy	District A
Joseph Lowry	District C
Tonia Griffin	District D

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

4. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION
There was no citizen participation.

5. NEW BUSINESS

5.I. Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget
Interim City Manager Holly shared that she cannot support the budget presented today. She shared that the proposed budget is based on a tax rate that she does not believe the council will support and contains many errors. She stated that the department leadership has not had the opportunity to review the proposal, and she did not receive the proposal until after 5 p.m. on Friday night. She did state that the Council was sent an electronic copy of the agenda over the previous weekend. She will be working behind the scenes with a small committee as well as the department heads to reduce the proposed budget by approximately 2 million dollars, which is a big ask but needs to be done. She is recommending that the council remain at the current tax rate and intends to present a budget that reflects that.
Mayor Bell asked the council for their priorities.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian thanked Interim City Manager Holly for her honesty, as he looks forward to more of that. He states that there has been a lot of change in the City Manager's Office, and believes this process should have started at the beginning of the year. That is why the council elected to support a Budget Coordinator position. His primary priority is to focus on the

city streets. He is recommending a three-to five-year plan to address some of the major concerns in the community.
Councilmember Lowry shared that his priorities include public safety, drainage, and roads.
Councilmember Yancy welcomed Interim City Manager Holly to the team. She agreed that public safety is a priority, and included youth programming, public safety facilities, and communications, expressing her desire for a public relations plan. She believes that the city should focus on "glamorizing" what the city does well. She is asking for better communication with county and state officials, and a collaboration with the College of the Mainland for additional internship opportunities.
Councilmember Griffin shared that in her district the streets are the number one priority, focusing on those designated 1 and 2 by the street study, drainage is her second priority, and the third would be revitalization and beautification. She has asked for identification of maintenance areas that are not being accomplished due to lack of staffing. She also agreed that communications is a priority, because there are many things happening in La Marque, but the city is not capitalizing on them. She identified trees as an area of opportunity in the city. It was determined that a portion of the revitalization of District D is addressing illegal dumping.
Mayor Bell stated that the key to a productive budget is to have a competent City Manager's Office working with a responsive Finance Department. He is aware that for the past few years there has been a disconnect in this area, and if these two departments are not in concert, the budget process is in peril. He is excited about the possibilities with the current team.
Mayor Bell believed that the city's priorities could all be considered "kitchen table" items. There are necessities and then there is a plan for larger ticket items. He agreed to the need for a roads/street plan. He acknowledged the success in the reduction of crime in the community, but he does not feel that it is time to "take our foot off of the gas." He would like to continue supporting the Safe City Initiative and the police department, culminating in a discussion of the Public Safety Building. He declared the drainage and sewer system a priority. He spoke to the previous discussions by the council regarding a General Obligation Bond that was presented at the current tax rate. He also stated a desire to increase the homestead exemption for seniors, as they are looking for relief.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian shared his support for stability and maintaining the tax rate. He supports raising the exemptions, hopefully for all at some point, but he understands approving the senior exemption first. He did clarify that this would depend on the numbers.
Councilmember Yancy agreed to hold the tax rate.
***Mayor Pro Tem Compian exited the room at 10:34 a.m. and returned at 10:36 a.m.*

5.II. Review And Discuss Proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Departmental Budgets And All Funds

Information Technology Director Conrad Ferraris proposed changes to the

department's organizational chart. There is currently an IT Director, Administrative Assistant, and three IT Technician positions. He presented an ideal organizational chart which would include an Audio Visual Technician and a dedicated technician for the Police Department as well as additional Tier 2 and 3 support positions. He shared concerns regarding having entry-level technicians performing these high-level duties and tasks. He states that currently the department is operating on a priority system, what is the highest risk need, and then addressing tickets in that order. Discussions regarding personnel ensued clarifying the department's ideas regarding personnel placement, addressing public safety needs, and funding an IT infrastructure overhaul to increase cybersecurity and address vulnerabilities in the system. After much discussion, it was determined that the two most critical personnel needs would be the systems administrator and cybersecurity administrator. Director Ferraris spoke to the need for additional training if the city continues to employ entry-level personnel. Discussions regarding training current staff into the higher level, Tier 2 and Tier 3 positions ensued.
Interim City Manager Holly clarified that the requests are very high for a community of this size. She is reaching out to other communities to see what is comparable. She anticipated presenting the feedback at a future meeting.
Councilmember Lowry shared his support for increased cybersecurity infrastructure.
Discussions regarding the useful life of technology currently. Director Ferraris shared that most lifespans end at 5 years. Council addressed anomalies present in the estimates and projections of the proposed budget, which were determined to be corrected after the new review ensued. Discussions regarding the need for more proficient asset and systems management ensued.
***Mayor Bell called for a recess at 11:40 a.m. and returned at 11:57 a.m.*
Communications Coordinator Agueda Jimenez stated that her budget is consolidated with the City Manager's Office. She hopes that this can be adjusted in the next year. However, due to circumstances, she felt it was too much to change for the current proposal. Discussions regarding the communications department's transportation and fuel arrangements ensued. Clarification of the Communications division's staffing ensued, identifying the differences between the communications specialist and coordinator positions. Interim City Manager Holly shared that, based on the size of the community, it would be appropriate to have one communications position in lieu of two. Discussions regarding the requested increase in the advertising and promotions budget ensued with Mayor Pro Tem Compian requesting unified, not department-specific, "swag" items. Councilmember Griffin disagreed, stating that while in some cases that is appropriate, there are certain informational and educational materials that are department-specific.
Mayor Bell shared his support for the continuation of the second communications position, stating that information channels are "cluttered" and we need to be able to reach out to all of our residents who get their information on different platforms.
***Councilmember Yancy returned at 12:21 p.m.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned the audiovisual equipment in the Council Chambers. IT Technician Avery Bowers shared that the department has purchased new audio equipment for the chambers. However, the department is waiting for an opportunity to have it installed.
Discussions regarding emergency alerts, Public Information Officers, and citywide notifications and communications from the council by district ensued.
Discussions regarding council district communications ensued, considering a policy for the council to present real things that have happened within the district, not political discourse, as that is not legal.
***Mayor Bell recessed for lunch at 12:42 p.m. and returned at 2:13 p.m.*
Interim City Manager Holly presented the administration budget after the lunch break. She stated that she has not seen the individual numbers associated with the proposal. It is not in her priorities to hire a Deputy City Manager. She is looking to cut that position, and when a full time City Manager is appointed they could request that through budget amendment.
Mayor Bell requested that Interim City Manager Holly do an analysis on the Deputy City Manager's role and if that position, or another, is needed.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked questions regarding a large influx in the payroll expenditures, and the lack of funding for the Plan 457 Contribution. The council was amicable to putting a funding "freeze" on the Deputy City Manager position.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian also questioned where the expense for the city's attorney was placed. It was determined that this was paid out of fund expenditures, not a departmental item.
***Councilmember Yancy returned at 2:36 p.m.*
Discussions regarding professional fees ensued and which items were included in this item.
Discussions regarding the city attorney fees and other professional services and their expense allocation ensued.
Mayor Pro Tem Compian raised concerns regarding professional fees paid through grant funding, and its placement in the budget.
Mayor Bell addressed the change in projected amounts for the youth summer camp and the internship program, stating that if the city manager's office has established $35000 for the internship then the Waste Management donation should be utilized for the summer camp program, without objection from the council.
Human Resources Manager Mikala Halbrook shared that her goals for the next year is to rebuild trust and employee relations. She shared that she has requested an HR Assistant. She is proposing an update to the phone stipend program, and certification pay for non-collective bargaining employees.
***Councilmember Lowry exited the room at 3:06 p.m. and returned at 3:08 p.m.*
Councilmember Griffin questioned the reason for the increase from $50 to $100 for bilingual pay. HR Manager Halbrook shared that it is because it is heavily utilized.
HR Manager Halbrook shared that she has reduced her recruitment budget in

the current year to shift more towards employee retention.
She is also requesting a pay scale update to modernize pay ranges and ensure fair and competitive salaries. It was determined that in order to implement the new pay scale it would cost an approximate $500,000.
Interim City Manager Holly stated that the city should work towards an implementation plan for the salary adjustments. A healthy discussion regarding the city's updated pay scale ensued, with a request to ensure that staff are compensated, at minimum, at the cost of living rate of $18.65.
Mayor Bell questioned the newly implemented evaluation tool, as well as changes in the pre-employment background check process.
Councilmember Lowry questioned the staff's vehicle licenses.
Councilmember Yancy requested a third-party audit of the Human Resources files.
Interim City Manager Holly stated her belief that the employees should be able to present verification of those documents.
Additional discussions regarding drug testing, random testing, and scheduled ensued.
Interim City Manager Holly briefly reviewed the city library's budget, stating that, due to extenuating circumstances, the library staff was not in attendance, but had substantially the same budget as the year before. The only change is for an additional $85,000 to repair the air conditioning in the building.
A brief discussion followed regarding the building's air conditioning system.
Interim City Manager Holly opened the discussion with the City Clerk by saying that City Clerk Nance has been extremely responsive in the time that she has been with the city.
City Clerk Nance identified that the department has a base budget and not many changes from year to year. She did identify that additional funding was allocated to elections, as the council is preparing for a bond election that would potentially take place in the November election cycle, as well as the general election scheduled for May.
A brief discussion ensued regarding the scheduling of a bond election.
A discussion regarding staffing and departmental work distribution ensued.
City Clerk Nance shared that initially the department requested two additional part-time positions to assist with specialized work within the department, but those were removed from consideration early in the budgeting process.
City Clerk Nance explained that the councilmember's budget is essentially split into two segments, a travel budget of $5000, which typically covers attendance to the annual TML conference and one additional city business-related conference of the councilmember's choosing, and $3000, known as the "discretionary" fund, for each councilmember to do work in the areas they represent.
Additional discussions regarding renaming line items to better correlate with their purposes, such as professional services, and advertising and promotions ensued.
Interim City Manager Holly stated that it is really refreshing to see the professionalism the council is exhibiting to each other and the staff.

6. EXECUTIVE SESSION
   There was no executive session.

7. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION
   No action was taken.

8. ADJOURNMENT
   Councilmember Griffin made a motion to adjourn. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**
   ***Meeting was adjourned at 4:43 p.m.*