



**CITY OF LA MARQUE
CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MINUTES
of
January 26, 2026**

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Mayor Bell called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT:

Keith Bell	Mayor
Joe Compian	Mayor Pro Tem / District B (via Zoom - 1020 Duroux, La Marque, TX)
Kimberley Yancy	District A
Joseph Lowry	District C
Tonia Griffin	District D

3. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present voiced the Lord's Prayer and Deputy City Clerk Kasey Lott led the pledge.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.1. .Gov update - Communications and IT

Communications Coordinator Colleen Chilcoat presented an update on city communications and resident-focused initiatives. A website-first communication strategy is being implemented, making the city website the official source of information with social media used secondarily. She noted that the website cleanup and content updates are ongoing, including correcting outdated information. She also noted the Factual Fridays newsletter and Finance Director reports are now available online, with Public Works updates to follow. She also discussed that ADA accessibility improvements are underway, including back-end compliance work and activation of an on-site accessibility tool called AudioEye. She shared an update on the city's transition to a .gov website domain which will go live as of February 2, 2026, which will enhance security. She noted that existing links will redirect automatically with minimal resident impact. She stated that emergency communication capabilities are being strengthened through cross training of EOC staff on the mass notification system. Additionally, updates and new protocols are being implemented for Channel 16 to ensure timely and accurate information. Mayor Bell asked for clarifications on the Public Works Updates online and if this would include crew identity for locations where work was being done.

Communications Coordinator Chilcoat shared that the Public Works Updates will include regular summary updates focused on completed work rather than real-time crew locations, with maintenance efforts rotating by district on a quarterly basis.

5. CITIZENS PARTICIPATION

Hayley Winkelmann (*online - no address given*) encouraged voter participation on the upcoming elections. She provided key dates and emphasized the importance of local elections for meaningful change. She also requested a "see something, say something" approach for Public Works regarding misplaced signs and bandit signs throughout the city. She also requested updates on the zoom hack from July 2025 and an email allegedly impersonating the La Marque Police Association.

Harvey Freebird (*online - no address given*) addressed alleged misconduct of a councilmember. He spoke to several instances regarding threatening voicemails and public statements from the councilmember aimed at him, which had caused personal distress and concern from his followers. He questioned the councilmember's credibility.

James Osteen (2012 Jeridona) spoke against the proposed ordinance to consolidate the Planning and Zoning Commission with the Board of Adjustments. He asserted that the consolidation would violate the city charter. He cited charter provisions and Texas law emphasizing the need for separation to avoid conflicts of interest, particularly regarding zoning appeals and variances.

Re'Chard Loftis (*no address given*) raised concerns about Public Works operations, specifically undocumented ditch digging and improperly set culverts. He stated that the city staff were unable to identify who performed certain work and expressed concern over the lack of recordkeeping and oversight. He also noted an ongoing issue with unremoved bandit signs and disputed claims that Public Works performance has improved.

6. MINUTES

Councilmember Griffin made a motion to approve all minutes as submitted. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

6.I. Regular City Council Minutes 01.12.2026

6.II. Regular City Council Minutes 05.13.2024

6.III. Regular City Council Minutes 04.08.2024

7. OLD BUSINESS

7.I. Tree City USA

Councilmember Griffin made a motion to approve the application process for becoming a Tree City USA participant. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

7.II. Budget Priorities

Mayor Bell requested that this item be moved to the next Council meeting to allow for Interim City Manager Barbara Holly and Mayor Pro Tem Compian to

be present.
NO ACTION TAKEN.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.I. Ordinance No. O-2026-0001

City Attorney Knebel explained the distinct roles of the two bodies: Planning and Zoning addresses land use and zoning recommendations, while the Board of Adjustment hears appeals and variance requests and serves as a final authority only to district court review. He stated that the ordinance did not eliminate either board, but instead sought to address ongoing quorum and attendance issues by allowing the same members to serve on both bodies and by holding joint meetings, while maintaining separate powers, notices, minutes, and voting thresholds as required by law.

Mayor Bell addressed concerns raised by Mr. Osteen that consolidation could violate the city's charter and create conflicts of interest, particularly where the same body would recommend zoning rules and later hear appeals from those rules.

Councilmember Lowry shared concern over the charter implications, saying that it needs to go to the taxpayers to make changes. He stated that if members are meeting, then the boards need new members.

Discussion ensued regarding possible alternative solutions. Suggestions included allowing individuals to serve on more than one board, increasing the number of alternates, improving recruitment and participation before restructuring boards, and addressing attendance issues.

Discussion ensued regarding alternates and the type of system to apply for alternates.

Mayor Bell asked if a new ordinance would need to be created due to the discussion points and alternative considerations. City Attorney Knebel confirmed a new ordinance would need to be created.

City Attorney Knebel also requested guidance from Council regarding the use of alternates.

Mayor Bell requested that this item be tabled and reviewed in six months while revising the approach focused on keeping the boards separate, increasing alternates, and revisiting restrictions on serving on multiple boards. Councilmember Griffin made a motion to table this item. Councilmember Yancy seconded. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8.II. Ordinance No. O-2026-0002

City Attorney Knebel clarified that this ordinance would require boards and commissions to meet at least quarterly, and that the board chair would be authorized to call additional meetings as needed.

Discussion ensued regarding attendance issues and the number of alternates that could be assigned to each board.

Finance Director Ferguson shared that there are boards with vacancies as well as the need to appoint alternates. He strongly encouraged Council to be prepared for the next meeting to make the necessary appointments.

Discussion ensued regarding the need for increased recruitment. It was

determined that staff will conduct outreach to solicit volunteers for boards and commissions.

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Ordinance No. O-2026-0002. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8.III. Resolution No. R-2026-0002

Finance Director Ferguson shared that the city previously decided to have separate accounts for the City and the Economic Development Corporation. In order for the accounts to be properly updated, there must be separate account forms signed for each account to grant user access. He noted that the account for the City was previously signed. However, the Economic Development Corporation Account needed to be updated.

Mayor Bell asked for a list of names and their positions on staff.

Finance Director Ferguson shared that the Fire Chief, City Manager, City Clerk, and Finance Director would have full access, and a member from the Finance Team would have view only access

***Councilmember Griffin left the dias at 7:10 p.m.*

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve Resolution No. R-2026-0002. Councilmember Lowry seconded. **MOTION CARRIED 4 AYES AND 1 ABSENT (GRIFFIN).**

8.IV. Contract for Internet Services with Comcast

Finance Director Ferguson indicated that this is Phase 3 of fixing IT issues within the city. He shared that this contract would take the city to a singular provider for internet services, which would allow for smoother and faster connections. He also shared that Comcast is willing to complete fiber connections to all city buildings, which allows for a singular isolated loop and would make the internet speed faster. He noted that this process would take approximately six to nine months for completion of Comcast's installation of fiber lines. He shared that he feels this is an immense value add for the city.

***Councilmember Griffin returned to the dias at 7:13 p.m.*

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked if this would conflict with the Economic Development Corporation's plan with AT&T.

Finance Director Ferguson shared that the AT&T item was tabled at the prior EDC meeting because of this consideration.

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the contract with Comcast for internet services. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8.V. Forensic Audit RFQ

Finance Director Ferguson shared that this is the next stage on the topics from the citizens' desire for Forensic Audit. He stated that the Finance Committee reviewed the citizens' requests and provided a ranking sheet of recommendations, with the priority levels ranked from one to four and all others were listed as medium to low priority. He explained that the top four priorities would be very high dollar but low transactions, which would result in a "best bang for your buck." He noted that the medium and low priorities could be done internally versus publishing a Request for Qualifications

(RFQ). The Finance Committee's recommendation would be to allow for the RFQ respondents to pick and choose the topics available.

Councilmember Lowry stated that the top four priorities are items that the "AG is going to hammer on the city" and would be a waste of money. He thanked the Finance Committee and the citizens that worked on this list but wants to go after everything.

Finance Director Ferguson noted that nothing is being considered irrelevant or ignored. He shared that this was the Committee's best determination.

Councilmember Lowry stated that it is free to get a quote and should not have to choose but go for all fifteen items listed.

Mayor Bell asked if the city wanted to allow someone to bid on everything or individually. Councilmember Lowry responded by asking for both.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian asked about the Attorney General Audit.

Councilmember Lowry stated that he thinks there is going to be one.

Finance Director Ferguson responded that as of today, there is no communication of this happening.

Discussions regarding the significance of the dates listed and a potential statute of limitations ensued. It was determined that while certain statutes of limitations may apply, city civil cases may have different rules that apply.

Mayor Pro Tem shared that these types of audits do not happen overnight. Finance Director Ferguson concurred, stating that the smallest item listed would take several months to complete.

Discussions regarding obtaining quotes and costs ensued. Finance Director Ferguson noted that the RFQ was the best course of action, but it is not without cost. These audits require specific knowledge and expertise.

Councilmember Griffin made a motion to consider the four recommendations from the Finance Committee in an RFQ. Councilmember Yancy seconded.

Councilmember Lowry stated that "we are not listening to the taxpayers" and questioned why council was against getting a quote for everything.

Councilmember Griffin withdrew her motion and Councilmember Yancy withdrew her second.

Councilmember Lowry made a motion to create a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for all items listed on the report. Mayor Pro Tem Compian seconded, however he asked for clarification on if there would be an RFQ for each item or for responders to pick and choose. It was determined that the RFQ would allow for responders to pick and choose their options.

Finance Director Ferguson shared that firms are welcome to bid on any or all items for which they feel comfortable auditing. He also noted that a bid committee would need to review the submissions and return their recommendations to Council,

Mayor Pro Tem Compian requested for staff to prepare an RFQ for all items.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

8.VI. Finance Policies & Procedures

Finance Director Ferguson stated that significant updates to the financial policies were requested by the Texas General Land Office (GLO) during a recent audit.

Mayor Pro Tem Compian questioned if the language should include both state

and federal regulations.

Finance Director Ferguson stated that these policies would follow federal guidelines, as federal laws overrun state laws.

City Attorney Knebel noted that the GLO requested that the city approve these policies.

Mayor Pro Tem inquired if these policies came directly from the GLO.

Interim City Manager Holly shared that these came from the Grant Administrators as a response to GLO findings.

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to approve the updated finance policies and procedures. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

8.VII. Removing the Hiring Freeze

***Lowry exit dials at 7:41 p.m., returned at 7:42 p.m.*

Finance Director Ferguson presented the request to remove the hiring freeze to allow greater flexibility during the budget process.

Interim City Manager Holly clarified that the request was not intended to increase staffing levels, but to allow hiring for already authorized and budgeted vacant positions, as well as eliminating frozen positions through budget amendments brought before council.

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to remove the hiring freeze. Councilmember Griffin seconded.

Mayor Bell requested that, due to the political climate, the City Manager informs council of any plans to fill vacant positions through regular City Manager reports. He noted that the hiring power lies within the City Manager's authority.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

9. CITY MANAGER REPORT

***Item 9.III pulled for discussion by Councilmember Yancy.*

9.I. Municipal Court Stats December 2025
Stood as submitted.

9.II. Utility Billing Report
Stood as submitted.

9.III. Delany Traffic Update
Councilmember Yancy inquired about the status of the stop sign at the front entrance of Delaney Cove.
Interim City Manager Holly shared that the signs are ordered and will be installed once received.

9.IV. Financial Update
Stood as submitted.

9.V. FLEET Update
Stood as submitted.

9.VI. Main St. Sewer Update
Stood as submitted.

9.VII. City Clerk's Report
Stood as submitted.

9.VIII. Items for the Good of the Order
Finance Director Ferguson provided an update on the Winter Storm, sharing that the City of La Marque reported no damage, no road closures, and minimal service interruptions from the recent weather event. He noted the upcoming Municipal Elections being held in May 2026, which will be for Council Districts B and D. He shared that completed applications are due by 5:00 p.m. at City Hall on February 13, 2026. He shared information on the Texas Avenue / FM 1765 detour, stating that it began on January 19, 2026, and is expected to last approximately three months to allow for installation of storm water sewer infrastructure and reconstruction of the intersection. All detour information is available on the city website. He provided public works updates, noting that the Factual Fridays newsletter covered information regarding street assignments, road repairs, traffic control standard operating procedures and new streetlight reporting protocols. He encouraged citizens to submit issues through Request Tracker for improved follow-up and status updates. He discussed the South Oak Street Bridge repairs, noting that the city is working with TxDOT on the mandatory repairs and will keep the citizens informed once details are finalized. He shared that budget planning and training have begun for all departments with an accelerated timeline to allow for ample opportunity for council and public input. He promoted the H-GAC Parks and Natural Areas Awards upcoming on February 6th, in which La Marque will be receiving recognition for their all-inclusive playground at Mac McGaffey Highland Bayou Park. He also provided an update on the Civic Academy, noting it will launch in February.

10. EXECUTIVE SESSION

There was no executive session.

11. ACTIONS TAKEN FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

No actions were taken.

12. REQUESTS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councilmember Griffin reported that the Parks Board had requested the city to work with TxDOT regarding the installation of directional signage for Mahan Park and Mac McGaffey Highland Bayou Park at a nearby freeway exit. She also requested action on behalf of TxDOT to repair or remove a broken and outdated sign on Oak Street. She expressed concern about recent gang activity and requested an update from the Police Department regarding community policing efforts in District D. She noted that the Great American Cleanup does not appear on the city calendar and announced coordination with staff to organize a trash pickup along Oak Street and Highway 3 tentatively scheduled for April 4th or 11th, with details to be provided at a later date. Councilmember Lowry requested a review of the concrete sidewalks along Main Street,

citing concerns about the workmanship related to the TxDOT Project. He offered to walk the area with staff to identify specific issues. He also raised concerns regarding ditch maintenance in District C. He requested the reinstatement of situation reports (SITREPS) to keep council information about emergency incidents such as gang activity and drive-bys. He reported that residents of Omega Bay have experienced multiple burglaries and is requesting an increased law enforcement presence in the area. He expressed concern over lack of response to information requests and emphasized the need for timely information to fulfill council responsibilities.

Councilmember Yancy reported some remaining debris from a TxDOT project at New Hope Bible Church. She also requested coordination with staff to conduct a resident survey regarding renaming Historic District A. She asked the staff to review a state resolution regarding a proposed hotel and convention center and to confirm if funding was approved in 2023. She requested consideration of a city resolution to name the future convention center after Kay Bailey Hutchinson, noting her status as a La Marque native and the first female U.S. Senator from Texas. She reiterated concerns regarding ditch maintenance and reported renewed illegal dumping activity along Albert St. Mayor Pro Tem thanked the council for allowing him to participate remotely. He promoted the opportunity for citizens to contact the American Red Cross for help during the inclement weather.

Mayor Bell thanked staff for making it through another weather event, noting it is unusual that the city had another declared emergency in the months of January and February. He requested an update from Finance Director Ferguson on the plans for the police station and potential plans for utilizing Building A. He also requested an update on the Police Department operations and an update on the Safe City Initiative before the end of February.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Yancy made a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Griffin seconded. **MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.**

***Meeting was adjourned at 7:59 p.m.*